

# EL SALVADOR

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## PART I



El Salvador is a small country situated in Central America. The size of this country is approximately 21,400 sq km and her capital city is San Salvador. The population of this state is 5-million, of whom 89% are mestizos (mixed blood), 10% Indians and 1% whites.

The ruling military junta of El Salvador perpetuate national genocide on the people who have been living virtually under the state of siege for almost 50 years. Today their revolutionary struggle is on the verge of victory. But, first let us look at the background of this country and history of their struggle.

Before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores in 1524, the Indian tribes of Maya, Lenca and Pipil inhabited what today is El Salvador. These aborigines heroically resisted the intrusion of the colonisers until they were subjugated through the well-known colonial tactics of setting one tribe against the other. The country proclaimed its independence in 1841.

## RESOURCES AND ECONOMY

Despite the fact that the country has deposits of gold, silver, lead, zinc, copper and sulphur, it is a backward agrarian country. Coffee, which accounts for 50% of foreign exchange and cotton are the major crop. Maize, millet, rice, horicots, sugar cane, tobacco, fruits and vegetables are grown for internal consumption, but they never satisfy the

market, resulting in dependence on imported foodstuffs. Over 60% of the population are engaged in agriculture.

The economy of El Salvador is dependent of foreign capital, especially on United States capital. Industries which are found are mostly agricultural processing enterprises (textiles, footwear and food). There are small scale oil refineries, iron and steel and cement plants and several electrical power stations.

## SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Social life is characterised by inequality with 14 families controlling 80% of all arable land and the rest of the population living in absolute poverty and deprivation. Their living standard is continuously falling - over 70% of the children are undernourished, over half of the population is illiterate and in 1979, the rate of unemployment rose by 40% and yet millions of dollars are filling the coffers of US multinationals who had made deep ingrowth in the industry and agriculture of the country.

During the second half of the decade of the twenties sporadic revolts began in the country especially by peasant and agricultural workers in the countryside. These revolts reached the climax with the 1932 Popular Uprisings (the first of its kind since the anti-colonial struggle) and were led by the Communist Party. The uprising was brutally suppressed at the cost of 30,000 lives. The National Guard was unleashed against the people - army posts spread all over the countryside. Workers' and peasants' organisations were harassed and finally disbanded. A military junta under General Maximilian Hernandez took power and consolidated the hegemonistic absolute power of the coffee agro-export oligarchy. Since then the Salvadoreans have never known any happiness and respect of basic human rights. Patriots who are calling for genuine independence for the homeland of Farabundu Marti are ruthlessly suppressed - either killed or made to 'disappear'.

## LEGAL POLITICAL PARTIES

The political parties found in the country reflect the existent social relations and alignment of forces. The legal parties are as follows:

- (a) National Conciliation Party (pro-American party of commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, land-owners, military and priesthood.

- (b) The Christian Democratic Party (enjoys support of part of land-owners and the Catholic Church).
- (c) The National Democratic Union (represents petty and middle bourgeoisie, students and intellectuals).
- (d) The National Revolutionary Movement which is primarily a party of democratic intellectuals and has sympathisers from part of workers, peasants and students.

Government control exchanges hands between the conservatives and liberals which are always linked with certain sectors in the army - hence the frequent coups d'etat.

### COMMUNIST PARTY'S NEW STRATEGY

Under the impact of the historic victory of the Cuban Revolution, a big upsurge in the struggle emerged in El Salvador, in reality the whole of Latin American continent. The underground Communist Party of El Salvador began to build a broad popular movement, the United Front for Revolutionary Action with an aim of turning to armed struggle.

The new strategy was never implemented due to a new objective situation which emerged at the time.

1. Successful launching of dependent industrialisation process based on the Central American Commonmarket in 1962. As a result the industrial and commercial growth indicates increased, together with the gross national product (GNP);
2. Foreign capital, especially United States, began penetrating the countryside resulting in relative prosperity and the proletarianisation of the rural workers.
3. The regime consolidated itself - limited democratic and electoral reforms were introduced.

### TACTICAL CHANGES AND REACTION

The Communist Party; without casting aside the thesis of armed struggle; introduced tactical changes, that is, participation in the legal forms of struggle. It had to work hard to win the people from the reformist road and expose to the people that the so-called 'elections' are only a manoeuvre by the enemy to gain time. Parallel, but closely linked to the inflow of foreign capital to boost the dependent

capitalist development, was the emergence of reformist and ultra-leftist ideological and political shades, a feature of Latin American revolutionary movements.

From 1966 to 1977 the Communist Party, in alliance with other democratic organisations, took part in the presidential, mayoral and deputies elections. Throughout these eleven years the pro-imperialist and pro-oligarchy military regimes never respected the elections; ballot-rigging of elections became the order of the day. The candidates of the democratic forces grouped under the banner of the National Opposition Union were intimidated and terrorised, and some of them 'disappeared'. The perpetrators of these acts were the members of Order and White Hand Fascist organisations (both CIA creations). However, the deepening crisis in the country, increasing enemy brutality, and the growing mass popular resistance gave rise to a new situation. The Secretary-General of the Communist Party, Comrade Schafik Jorge Handal, characterise the alignment of forces at the time as follows:

- (a) There appeared popular movements of peasants and rural workers hitherto unknown since the January/February 1932 killings, in short, emergence of various organisations in the countryside.
- (b) The majority of the catholic clergy (the main religion in the country) gravitated to the left and began an active 'conscientising' work, especially in the countryside.
- (c) A configuration of progressive trends in military ranks;
- (d) Proliferation of actions of various guerrilla groups of the ultra-left, a phenomenon belonging to the decade of the 60s for most Latin American countries. These groups concentrated their armed actions in the cities; and
- (e) Regrouping of the rightist forces into new organisations with clear and pragmatic tendencies towards the fascism of Mussolini corporative state type, amongst them FARO (Front of the Farmers of the Eastern Region) the largest grouping of the oligarchical circles. (First QRT 1978 issue of America Latina). The regime and its National Reconciliation Party was effectively isolated from the masses.

The question of armed struggle once more came to the fore.  
To be continued  
in the next issue