

should be sought for El Salvador.

President Duarte of El Salvador has called elections for a constituent assembly for 1982. He has invited all political parties to register for the elections, including extremist groups willing to lay down their arms. He has indicated a willingness to open a dialogue with the left on the election process and the monitoring of it. He has also made clear that he would not negotiate the formation of a non-elected coalition government and has said that he would not accept mediation offers by third parties, whether from regional states such as Venezuela and Mexico or from the Socialist International, which is committed to aiding the Democratic Revolutionary Front, the FDR.

The leader of the NDP has said that he shares the feeling of the FDR that the elections proposed by the junta would be a travesty of democracy in current circumstances, not a viable political solution to the conflict. This view is not shared by many of Canada's friends in the area, such as Venezuela and Costa Rica.

We agree that the obstacles to holding elections are formidable. After all, El Salvador has no tradition of democratic rule and is beset by violent armed opposition from extremists of both left and right, none of whom has any real interest in seeing the implantation of liberal democracy.

It should also be recognized that there are many within the power structure of El Salvador, particularly in the security forces, who are not happy with the prospect of elections. President Duarte has made great progress in obtaining their agreement to abide by the will of the population as expressed in the elections called for 1982 and 1983. There is no doubt, however, that if the President were forced into negotiating the formation of a non-elected coalition government or some other form of power-sharing as advocated by the FDR and the leader of the NDP, he could well be overthrown and the prospects for the institution of true democracy spoiled.

President Duarte's reluctance to be drawn into negotiations with the left are also understandable in the light of information contained in documents captured in April. The FDR has not denied the authenticity of these documents, which spell out the objectives of the left in negotiations as follows: first, to draw out the conflict, which is going badly for the revolutionary forces; second, to drive a wedge between the Christian Democratic Party of President Duarte and the armed forces; third, to enhance the image of the left as a peacemaker; and fourth, to seek to expose the Christian Democratic Party as a facade for a military-controlled government.

Fair elections
feasible

However, Canada refuses to dismiss out of hand the feasibility of holding fair elections, as the leader of the NDP does. Elections were possible in Zimbabwe in similarly difficult circumstances. President Duarte is on public record as saying that the Organization of American States (OAS) would be welcome to monitor them. His words as quoted in the March 6 edition of *The New York Times* are:

"We are going to request from the Organization of American States not only to send us a protocol mission, but to send us contingents from all of the Americas to come