

government's cover up and failure to prosecute the ESAF soldiers responsible. (Hampson, 1996:136)

After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, FMLN support from its Communist allies -- Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua -- was drastically cut. The fall of the Soviet Union and communism in Eastern Europe dealt a major blow to the insurgency. Without assistance in Cuba from the Soviet Union, Cuba was forced to reduce its support for foreign insurgents, due to its own increasing vulnerabilities. (Fishel, 1998:48)

In turn, the United States became less concerned over the possible insurgency over the El Salvadoran government. Instead, both the US and Soviet Union sought to end the proxy wars in Central America. The US goal for El Salvador became the "achievement of a situation in which all parties could represent themselves in a democratic process." (Downie, 1998:140) As the FMLN lost support from its former allies, it was simultaneously becoming more cooperative with the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador, the El Salvadoran and US government. (Fishel, 1998:48) Formal peace talks began in 1990, with the UN as the mediator, as the next section will describe. While the United States was strongly supportive of UN actions, it was not directly involved in the negotiations, and did not offer any mediated solutions. (Hampson, 1996:135)

In essence, despite globally renowned human rights offences, US intervention kept this oppressive government in power. Foreign policy interests in protecting the United States' sphere of influence superseded the protection of those in most dire need of assistance: the impoverished and the 'silenced'. It perpetuated the *legacy of violence* through its reliance on military solutions, and its negligence of social issues fundamentally fuelling public unrest. But, without the looming threat of the Cold War, would the United States have been compelled to intervene for the mere sake of the defence of human rights, at the expense of infringement upon a state's sovereignty? The apprehensiveness of the international community to involve themselves in the Rwandan genocide sadly demonstrates the complexity of the issue. How long would the civil war in El Salvador have lasted without US intervention? Would the FMLN and El Salvadoran government have been more cooperative and open to negotiation if left alone? Was the pursuit of 'democracy' a smokescreen for a self-interested US foreign policy?

These are several difficult questions to reflect upon in order to learn from the costs and benefits of foreign intervention in El Salvador, in the hope that it will prevent the darkest parts of history from repeating itself at another time in another place.

### **UN Peace Process**

By 1989, El Salvador was 'ripe for resolution.' On January 31, 1990, President Alfredo Cristiani of the National Republican Alliance Party (ARENA) formally asked the UN Secretary General to assist in the initiation of peace talks with FMLN, using the 'Procedures for the Establishment of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America,' which had been signed by the Central American presidents at the Esquipulas II Summit in August 1987. (Hampson, 1996:134) Talks began soon after with Boutros-Boutros Gali and the United Nations mediating the discussions.