

International Relations

In 1972 there was another election which was turned over by the army. In 1977 there was another election. Once again the army did not like the results and once again the results were denied. In one of those elections—and perhaps in two of them—a man named Duarte took part and had the pleasure of the army overturning his election.

The result of the present conditions has led the bar association of El Salvador to refuse to participate with the government in existence now in drawing up electoral regulations. Its bar association recognizes exactly what we recognize, namely, that elections under present circumstances would be a complete and utter travesty of democracy. This is something we must clearly understand as well.

● (1550)

Beyond that, beyond the factual reality that you cannot have elections in an atmosphere of terror, there is another concern which I have about governments, including our own. Our government has made statements—and I am looking for revisions in them—in support of the electoral process under circumstances which are totally unjustified to a person committed to democracy.

Our government does another and more subtle disservice to humanity in that country, and I had this pointed out to me, too, when I was there. This government says we must support the Duarte government because that government is committed to elections. In this argument a veneer of respectability is given to what is going on, which causes people who are genuinely concerned about elections to say, "Oh well, if the government is concerned about elections there, I guess it must be a pretty good government". So there is a more sinister aspect, conscious or otherwise, to the argument that the government in El Salvador is committed to elections and therefore we should support it. I repeat, this argument gives a veneer of respectability to a government, a junta, which civilized people would hold in utter contempt in terms of what is going on in that society.

Myth No. 4 which I would like to deal with is the claim that terror is being used equally by both sides. I wish to make the distinction here between violence and terror. Violence is an inescapable aspect of civil war. By definition, what is meant is that one part of society takes up arms against another part and, of course, there will be killing on both sides, which is regrettable. But when I talk about terror I talk about the killing for political purposes of innocent men, women and children who are non-combatants. They are innocent victims.

Therefore, when people have said that terror is being done by both sides, as a Social Democrat I was concerned to find out if it was being done by both sides. I spoke to people who I thought would have credibility, who would have a sense of integrity with regard to what is going on. In this case I spoke to people connected with the church. In Mexico City I met Mr. Roberto Cuellar, the director of the legal branch for the Archbishop of San Salvador. I put to him the following question: Who is practising terrorism? I asked him who commits the abominable acts—and photographs are available of

the most grotesque kinds of torture which is going on. I asked him who is indulging in this kind of inhumanity toward man. The answer I received was that it was not being done equally by both sides. That is not the case.

I repeat, I received this information from an official of the Archbishop. He assured me that when he received the terrible information about a mutilated human being, man, woman or child, he would go out and verify the facts before they were counted. As a result, their body count, to use very unpleasant language, is much lower than other figures which I have seen. The figures are lower because an actual inspection has been carried out, and when that inspection is done it is found out who is responsible for the killing. The report I received from Mr. Cuellar was that 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the acts of terrorism are being carried out by the security forces in El Salvador. They are not being carried out by the Front, in the main.

Of course, there are some acts of violence of a terrorist nature which are isolated acts of terrorism being carried out by the Front. Mr. Cuellar pointed this out, too; but that is precisely what they are—isolated. They are not part of a systematic policy, a systematic, barbaric form of politics which is being practised, at least with the full knowledge and co-operation of the army in El Salvador by the security forces.

Myth No. 5 goes like this: Both sides are equally responsible for the continuation of the civil war. Once again, this is not true. There is only one side which has said that it is open to a negotiated settlement, and that is the Front, that collection of Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and, yes, Marxist-Leninists in the guerrilla movement as well. That broad spectrum of Salvadorean society represented in the Front has said—and they alone have said it—that under the circumstances they want a negotiated settlement. They want an end to the violence by means of negotiation. It is not the case that the government is interested in a negotiated settlement. It is committed to the present program to which I have already alluded—elections a year from now for part of their intended democratic structure, and elections two years from now for another part.

What is important to stress is that they are totally implicated, therefore, in a military victory. That is what is meant if they say they do not want negotiations now. To put it bluntly, they mean they want more killing. They want more violence until they emerge triumphant. I also want to say that if they are implicated in the perpetuation of violence, those who have come to their aid and who remain on their side are equally implicated. I refer specifically to the United States of America which is directly implicated.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I also say that the Government of Canada, when it says that it supports the Duarte government in its commitment to democratic elections, is equally implicated, by logic, to a violent solution to this civil war.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!