

EDITORIAL

Unlearned lessons

"The true lesson of the Vietnam war: Certainty of purpose and ruthlessness of execution win wars."

—Ronald Reagan

The guerillas (in El Salvador) have no support."

—Alexander Haig

In 1968, Ronald Reagan was in a minority at the Republican convention when he and the other "primitives" (as they were called at the time) failed to convince delegates to support total escalation in Vietnam: a march on Hanoi and, if necessary, the use of nuclear weapons. But now he's in control. Reagan and his advisors have a chance to do it their way, to prove themselves, to "save" El Salvador from the horrors of "The International Communist Conspiracy."

According to this view, supported by most of the mainstream American media, the military junta in El Salvador is a moderate, reasonable government bent on reforms, but is prevented from implementing them by wild-eyed extremists of the left and the right. The leftist guerillas in particular are said to have little popular support; it is the "terrorists brought into this hemisphere" from Cuba and the Soviet Union who are causing all the trouble.

Conveniently ignored are the real roots of revolution in El Salvador and elsewhere in Latin America. In most of this region, a small, tightly-knit landowning oligarchy relies on terror tactics, American military power and the traditional conservatism of the Catholic peasantry to maintain a tight grip on power and a shockingly disproportionate share of the national wealth.

Periodic economic crises, resulting from the grossly unequal relationship with the United States, create a cycle of revolt - repression - further revolt. Typically, the military government quashes the revolt using American weapons and American-trained troops; sometimes the U.S. intervenes directly, as in the Dominican Republic in 1965, Guatemala in 1954, and so many others; and sometimes the revolt succeeds, as in Cuba in 1959 or Nicaragua in 1979. In the last case, the American policy is to isolate the country and force it into dependence on the Soviet Union.

Inspired by the success of the Sandinistas and desperate after the collapse of world coffee prices, the Salvadorean peasants have crossed the line into revolution. Neither token land reforms nor intensified repression will convince them to return to their previous political apathy.

The U.S. has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to sacrifice thousands of lives and billions of dollars to overthrow nationalist revolutions throughout the Third World. And Reagan's administration is so intent on proving that America is still "number one" that it will probably "win" in El Salvador. But the spoils will be numbered in corpses.

Jim McElgunn

the Gateway

If it happens on campus... it's news to us.

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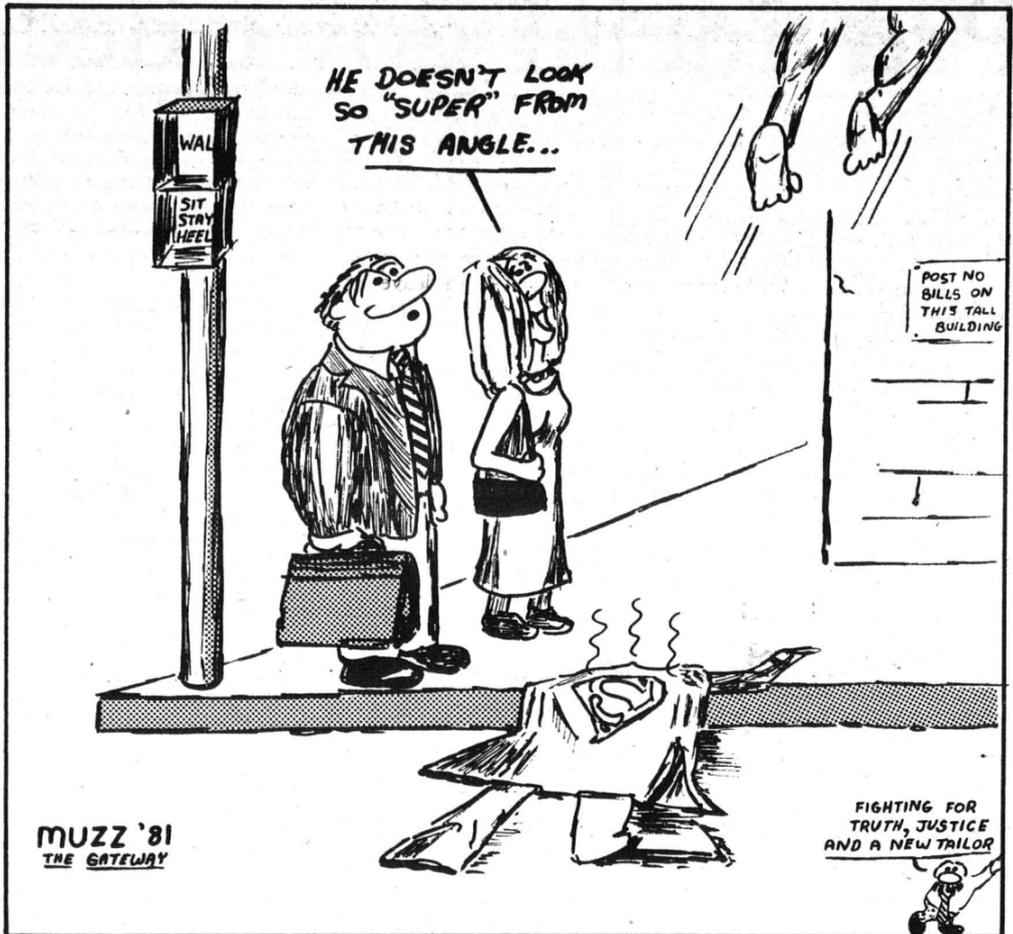


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Burn-out time. Karen Kebarle dragged her story in, paragraph by paragraph while Mary Ruth Olson managed to get home by midnight. Kent Blinston, Murray Whitby, and Michael Skeet heaved a momentous, collective sigh, leaning on one another in a humorous pose. Alison Thomson was so distraught she called home, and Dick Hancock listened on the extension. Helgi Eylford, Pat Marklevitz, and Sandy Gusnowski collapsed on a desk, but Wes Oginski and Rich Watts hauled the prone forms to a nearby piece of floor so that a worn-out typewriter was accessible. Cathy Emberley and Elda Hopfe could be forgiven for the odd typo, but David Orrell and Pat just gave up and in one great heave tossed the typewriter into Keith's office, waking The Great One, who merely looked irritated. Maureen Laviolette, tireless, continued the persecution.

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Plebiscite tightens shackles

After organizing a fraudulent plebiscite that gave no guarantees to the political opposition last September, Chilean military junta chief Augusto Pinochet has decided to promulgate his political constitution that transforms Chile into a "legal" prison. Tomorrow Pinochet will declare himself constitutional president of Chile. World opinion remembers perfectly that the last constitutional and democratically elected president of Chile was Salvador Allende.

The new Constitution permits the junta to propose the name of the new President for an eight-year period. The candidate's name will be selected from among the most senior officers in the army. The whole process of "institutionalization" will be completed in 1997, a total of 24 years. During this period the new Constitution does not allow political activity by individuals or groups. Political parties are banned.

Moreover, March 11 Augusto Pinochet will move to the Presidential Palace, "La Moneda." This Palace used to be the Government House of Chile's democratically-elected presidents. It was bombed and partially destroyed by the armed forces commanded by Pinochet on September 11, 1973. Inside in the Presidential Office, Salvador Allende, then President, was assassinated by the soldiers.

Pinochet's decisions have provoked a strong anger among the Chilean people. For many, "La Moneda" is a symbol that means the wide and deep democracy that Chileans had. This indignation is especially very profound among the Catholic Church's authorities in University circles (academicians and students) and in the powerful labor union movement. Although many people during the Allende government did not agree with his policies or fundamentals, nobody put in doubt the legitimacy of Allende's authority. Even more, 90% of the Chilean population feel, after eight years of brutal dictatorship, that Pinochet's political power is illegitimate.

The Chilean Community of Edmonton is deeply concerned about the new political situation that is emerging in Chile. Pinochet's attempt to promulgate his restrictive Constitution and Ronald Reagan's open support of



considered the two new big elements in the Chilean situation today.

These are the main conclusions of the round-table organized by the Chilean Community of Edmonton last Saturday at the Students' Union Building.

In this round-table participated the Alberta Federation of Labor, Edmonton and District Labor Council, U of A Students' Union, the Canadian Congress of Women, Edmonton Peace Council, Ed Ewasiuk, Alderman of the City of Edmonton and President of the Edmonton Voters' Association, the Canadian-Ukrainian Association, the Irving Socialist-Fellowship; OXFAM, and the Canadian Committee in Solidarity with a Democratic Chile. At the end of the meeting a declaration was signed by the participant organizations expressing the concern of the Edmontonians, for the rising repression in Chile, the imposed new Constitution and the open support for Pinochet from the American Government.

Javier L. Ramos
Chilean Community
of Edmonton

Needed Editors Wanted

The Gateway is in dire need of filling next year's editorial positions:

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Deadline: Wednesday, March 18