

El Salvador student speaks to the CFS

by Thomas Vradenburg

OTTAWA - The fact of civil repression in El Salvador seems apparent enough, but one's impressions are much enhanced by meeting one of the repressed.

Armando Paredes, a medical student at the University of San Salvador, came to Ottawa to speak to various meetings of the founding conference of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) two weeks ago.

Paredes has not been able to study medicine for over a year, since the military closed down the University last spring. One per cent of El Salvadorans are able to attend university.

A short, modest, slow-speaking man, Paredes does not fit the Che Guevara-revolutionary stereotype. He seems shy when speaking to interviewers, perhaps surprised at the attention.

His escort on his cross-Canada speaking tour, Steve Shalpert of NUS in Vancouver, said Paredes' grasp of English has improved greatly in the six weeks he had been in Canada.

Shalpert said Paredes was exiled to Costa Rica in April because of his membership in AGEUS, the Salvadoran student group allied to the FDR/FMLN movement.

Paredes told little of his personal background, likely for fear of government persecution of his family and associates back home. Shalpert said Paredes was chosen to come to Canada probably because of his grasp of English and his prominence in the AGEUS organization.

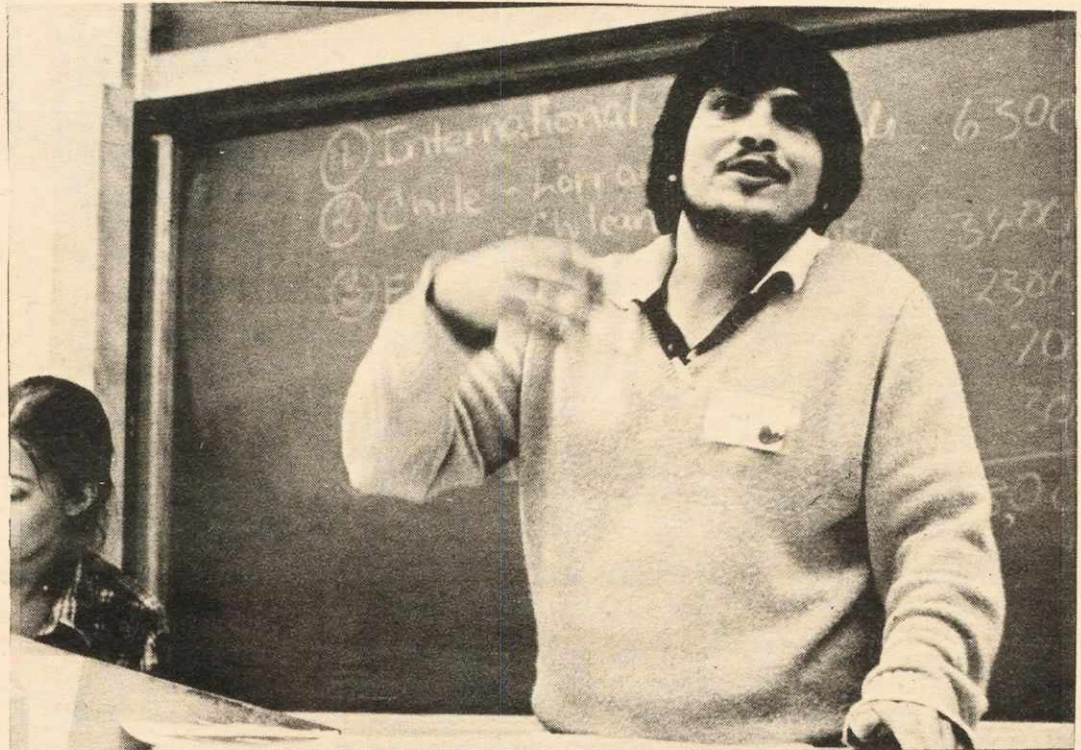
In speeches to several audiences including the CFS conference's international affairs workshop, Paredes outlined the platform of the FDR/FMLN, or Frente.

The Frente still wants to negotiate a political solution with the government. For the sake of fairness they want mediators, and some principles or guidelines to conduct the negotiation, he said.

The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador has acknowledged that the Frente enjoys the support of the majority of Salvadorans. They have received official recognition from the governments of France, Mexico, Holland and Eire.

Paredes is seeking funds from Canadian students for AGEUS to finance projects and to establish links with other student groups in the world.

At the CFS workshop, chairman Kirk Falconer made it clear that the Canadian student movement's activity in interna-



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Armando Paredes, former student at the University of San Salvador, came to Ottawa to the Canadian Federation of Students founding conference, to tell of the situation in his war-torn homeland. The El Salvador junta exiled Paredes and closed his university last spring.

tional affairs has been 'almost nonexistent' and that no money has been allocated in the CFS budget to carry out projects, attend other student groups' conferences or even keep up correspondence with them.

Peter Rans, Dalhousie delegate to the conference, said CFS expressed its concern for the rights of students in other countries to quality and accessible higher education that are denied by some dictatorships.

He said this is consistent with the role of a national student organization and is not necessarily a desire to interfere in the

politics of those countries.

AGEUS wants the government to reopen the University and recognize the existence of the *capturados* - those who have disappeared at the hands of the civil guards. One of these is Anna Maria Gomez, a member of the BPR a popular umbrella group. She was whisked away in a civil guard car one morning this spring.

Her name and that of Margarita Pena, AGEUS's Vice-President Academic, are on a petition Paredes will circulate while on tour. The petition demands that the junta

acknowledge their detainment and release them.

Gomez was on the government's list of 100 top revolutionary leaders, but no one knows why she was kidnapped at that particular time. "No reason," Paredes said.

This is one of the most disturbing aspects of the government's repression tactics: No one ever knows who will be taken next, and one never knows why.

"It is a crime to be a student in El Salvador," Paredes said. "It is a crime to be young."

