

face of American-backed terror

discredited as such in the international community. It was very clearly a sham that had concocted information and so forth. It was an attempt to legitimize the massive American intervention which was increasing tremendously at that time.

And Maguigan and the Canadian government seemed to have swallowed a lot of that even though most countries didn't. Canada became once again an ally in legitimizing the repression. MacGuigan said in the House of Commons that the Canadian position was one of "quiet acquiescence" to the American position.

This is what the churches and other groups have been criticizing, and calling on Canada to take a much firmer stand, and to respect the UN resolution of December. Even in international law it's illegal, what they're doing. They have military advisors, and military equipment there.

And so through the summer there has been a lot more activity and a lot more dead — the more arms the more dead. In late August and early September, the Mexican and French governments came out with a very important statement, recognizing the Democratic Revolutionary Front as the legitimate opposition force and calling on all governments of the world to work for a negotiated peace. This is what the Cana-

situation there — it's kind of a theological thing, but it's kind of an interesting background of how they feel about their revolution, because 95 percent of them are Christian people.

It's a very beautiful document — they see it basically as this: "An insurrection for the liberation of a people is not only a legitimate historical reality, but, for Christians, it is also a sign of the times through which God speaks to and calls us...."

Some of the things they point out are very beautiful and I think quite quotable — "The Salvadorean people has not chosen armed conflict; but rather conflict has been imposed on it. Over the years it has sought peaceful solutions in elections and used social and political pressure to achieve its aspirations. Everything has proved futile." And it goes on to talk about Monsignor Romero, how he and the church have constantly defended the right and legitimacy of self defense in the face of violence.

Gateway: I've got a quote of his here where he says, "Christians are not afraid to fight. They prefer the language of peace. However, when a dictatorship seriously violates human rights and attacks the common good...the Church speaks of the legitimate right of insurrectional violence."

"The same man who is in charge of 'agrarian reform' in El Salvador...was in charge of 'village pacification' in Vietnam"

dian churches and others are encouraging the Canadian government to do, to join up and to support the Mexican-French initiative. Many, many countries have signed this accord — Nicaragua, Sweden, Norway and so forth.

Remember in June that Broadbent was in El Salvador trying to negotiate something as well, and he received very little support from the Canadian government in that.

So that's more or less where it stands right now. The horrible situation is that a few weeks ago I was talking to a Bishop from Ireland — He came back and reported that every day fifty to sixty decapitated bodies appear. They are left in garbage heaps, and they find them with the vultures and the dogs eating them, and so it's a very serious situation.

But still, one third of the country is in the hands of the opposition forces. Especially up around the Honduran border.

Gateway: Are they making gains each day?

Chisholm: It seems that they are; they blew up the most strategic bridge in eastern El Salvador just a few weeks ago, and from the rumblings of Washington right now it looks like they are getting very scared and they're going to pump a lot more funds and military equipment into the country.

And so it's a really important moment for articles to appear on the anniversary of the death of the FDR leaders, and the death of the four American women. And do you notice that there is very little in the press?

Gateway: That's right — I guess it's old news that doesn't sell papers any more.

Chisholm: Well the thing is, I think that there is a purpose in that to control the information coming out, and that is very dangerous too. Again, the alternate groups are trying to publish as much as possible about what is going on in the country.

Gateway: What do you see for the future?

Chisholm: For the future, the people will win. The question is how many will have to die. If the Americans continue to pump arms into El Salvador at the rate they're going, and prolong the conflict, there could be two hundred thousand dead. People talk about that as if it were a cold figure of the cost — it's very very dangerous and very frightening. The darned thing is that you could have some solutions relatively quickly.

Gateway: One of the things that I wanted to talk about was the role of the church in El Salvador?

Chisholm: Yes. I wanted to leave something with you — this is a paper of reflections of Christians in the face of insurrection. How do they look at the

They are the groups that now tell us what is really going on in the country.

And so they said to Bishop Romero, "Aren't you afraid, they might kill you?" And he said, "Yes they can kill me, but the voice of justice in the people they can never kill...they can kill me but I will rise up in my Salvadorean people."

Gateway: As a theologian do you find yourself having to defend what he said

"...why is it that revolution has become a dirty word, when revolution in Canada or the States used to be a very patriotic and good word."

against other Christian doctrines?

Chisholm: I think that is very much the church's teachings over the centuries. We are perhaps encouraged by media and other sources to forget that or to warp that. For instance why is it that revolution has become a dirty word, when revolution in Canada or in the States used to be a very patriotic and good word. The last thing we want to do is take up arms — and nor would I ever suggest it for Canada in 1981 — it's just not appropriate. But I think the whole idea is historically appropriate and it is something that is very much in tune with Christian doctrine over the centuries. I don't have any problem with that theologically whatsoever.

Gateway: Could you talk a little bit about the Sumpul River massacre?

Chisholm: We were in Honduras in April at the refugee camps. The river Sumpul borders between Honduras and El Salvador. In May of 1980, people were constantly fleeing across the border. The Honduran troops stopped them — 600 people were murdered there. We talked to survivors of the massacre, we talked to a priest who was there at the massacre who saw the river full of bodies. And we talked to the American ambassador and he said nothing had happened. Nothing.

Gateway: He denied that it ever took place.

Chisholm: He denied it completely. His

Pintade. The reason they were murdered was they fled into this cave and then they bombed the cave — the entrance and exit — and they asphyxiated one thousand five hundred, mostly women and children.

Now how can you prove that? Well it's awfully hard when there are no survivors, and it's an area which is now controlled by government troops, but we do have information and we interview

people.

There was another massacre called the 'River Lempa' which is also up around the border not too far from Sumpul. Around the fifteenth of March the government troops surrounded seven thousand refugees and were going to murder them. The FMLN troops broke through in that area and distracted them and attacked a hydro-electric plant. Over four or five thousand were able to cross the river at Lempa. On the eighteenth they were telling us there of one young lad of about twenty who brought across many people and then drowned himself from exhaustion — tremendous signs of heroism.

I don't know if you saw *Apocalypse Now*, the movie —

Gateway: I did...

Chisholm: Remember in the village scene where the helicopters started coming in and strafing the village? — It was exactly the same thing...exactly. They were killing people in the river, the Honduran military killed several people, they know of twenty or thirty dead in Honduras.

Gateway: The whole thing is quite shocking. It's hard to understand the bald-faced lies coming from the United States.

Chisholm: Absolutely.

Gateway: You talked about *Apocalypse Now*. It seems that there is much wider support from the religious community for what is happening in El Salvador than there ever was for what went on in Vietnam.

Chisholm: I think there is, yes. I think we're more aware of what is going on. There are an awful lot of similarities between El Salvador and Vietnam. The American Church too has been very strong — the American Bishops and the National Council of Protestant Churches have constantly condemned Reagan on this.

I think there is a lot more participation in this.

Gateway: What would you suggest people do about all this?

Chisholm: I would suggest that they write to Maguigan. The Canadian government has received more letters on this issue from Canadians than any other issue since the conscription crisis of the forties. Thousands of letters are coming from across the country. One letter in itself doesn't mean much but when you're part of a bigger process from St. Johns to Victoria, it does mean a lot. There is a lot of pressure on the Canadian government to do something about this. And a lot of people are working on it — it's awfully discouraging, but it does make some difference.

Gateway: Do you think Canadians are apathetic? I think for Canadians in general and young people in particular it's very difficult to comprehend and understand the incredible destruction that's taking place there.

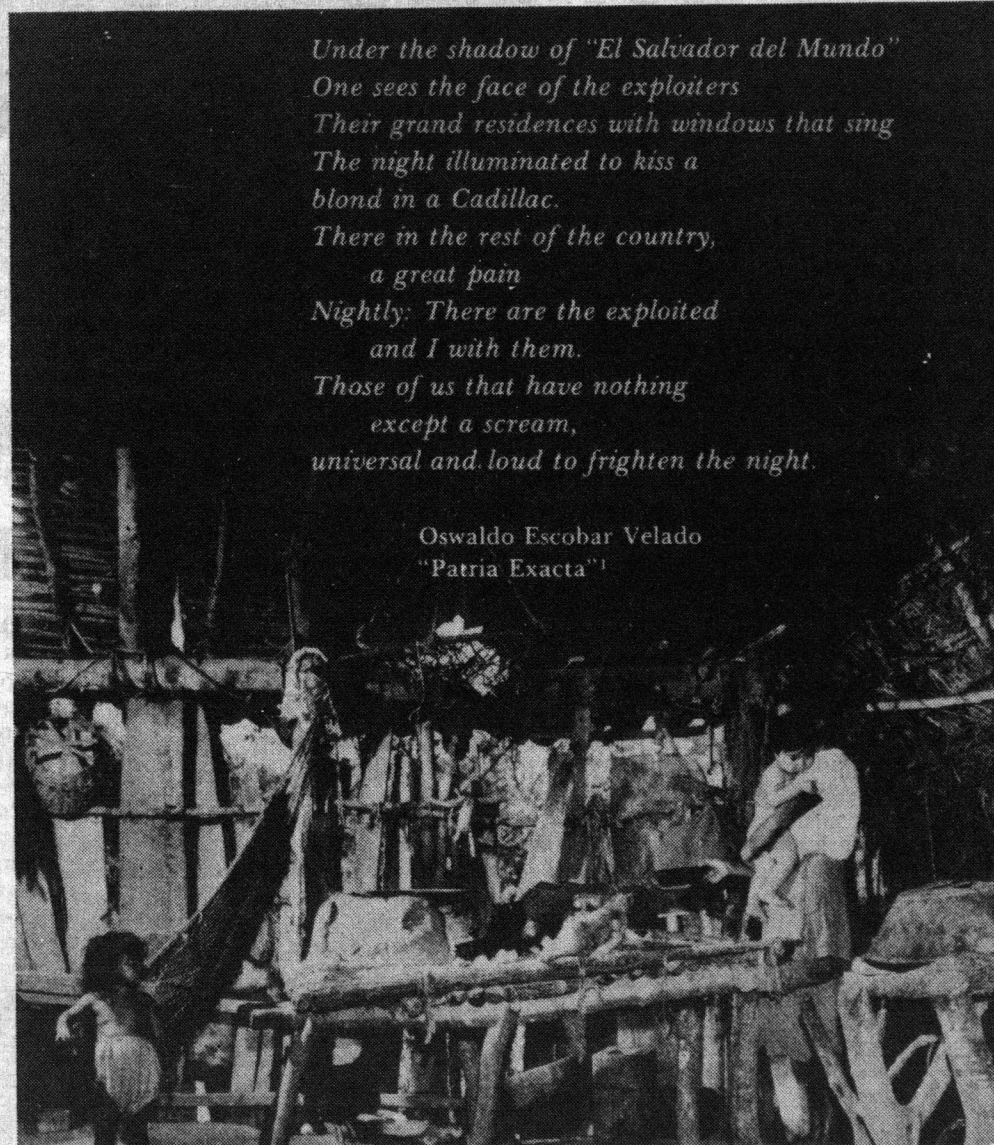
Chisholm: It really is. It's meant to be. We see so much violence on television that it is meant to be make-believe or made in Hollywood but the fact is that people are dying, and I think there is a very conscientious attempt on the part of those in power to keep Canadians and others apathetic.

One example is the Canadian constitution. Did the process ever ask university students what they felt. Did they ever ask young people, did they ever ask women — eleven men made the constitution. Well, ten — we exclude Rene Levesques. What about our native people? What is the political process?

But I think students are becoming more politically acute, or alive. This is one challenge — we could take Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, or our own

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Chisholm: That's right — that's a very clear statement. The other thing about Romero is that he used to be part of the rich oligarchy — that's one of the reasons why he was elected to the seat. He himself spoke of his own personal conversion in 1977. Shortly after he was elected, they murdered Rutilio Grande who was the first priest murdered, and who was Romero's private secretary. Romero had a major conversion experience where he realized that while



*Under the shadow of "El Salvador del Mundo"
One sees the face of the exploiters
Their grand residences with windows that sing
The night illuminated to kiss a
blond in a Cadillac.
There in the rest of the country,
a great pain
Nightly: There are the exploited
and I with them.
Those of us that have nothing
except a scream,
universal and loud to frighten the night.*

Oswaldo Escobar Velado
"Patria Exacta" 1

violence was on both sides, that the overwhelmingly disproportionate violence was with the right wing. From then on he began to speak out. In the cathedral every Sunday he would have a list of people who were either detained, or tortured, or murdered or missing. Not only would he do that, but he would say, "who did it?"

And he created the legal aid office of the diocese to defend that to the human rights commission — they are still there.

own attache told us that only forty or fifty were killed. Only forty or fifty. The first international magazine to publish this a year later was the *Canadian United Church Observer*. And then the London papers picked it up. But the attempt, the systematic control of that type of information is there.

For instance, in March while we were in Honduras they killed one thousand and five hundred people in a cave called La