

FMLN RADIO — Voices for Victory

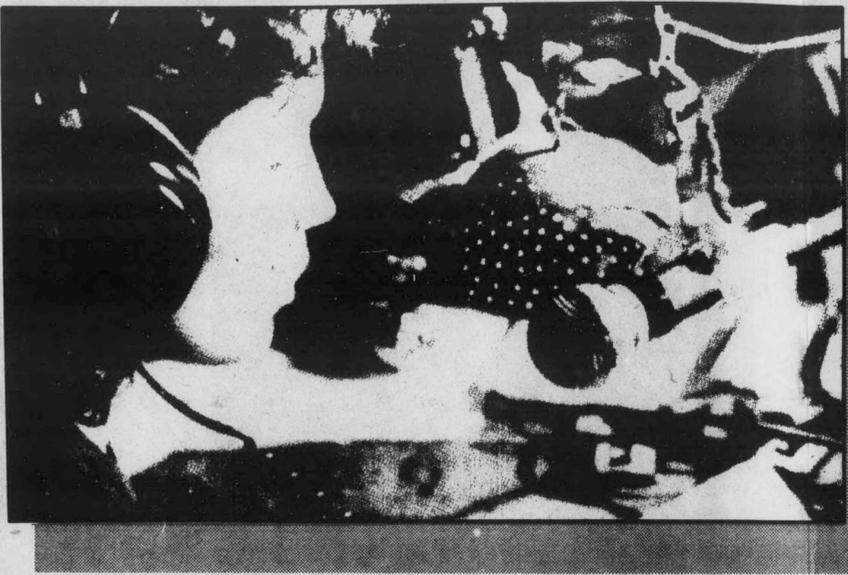
Feature By: Kira Schoch & Tim Judah

RADIO FARABUNDO MARTI - COMMUNITY RADIO AT WAR

The events of the past week in the tiny Central American country of El Salvador have gained the attention of the world as the people struggle for peace. But they are only the latest in a long struggle by the people against the repressive military based regimes that have controlled the country for most of the century.

The struggle in El Salvador is not East-West as the US government would like people to believe. Rather it is a grass roots struggle by the people, most of whom live in poverty, to design and control their own democratic systems. The US opposes that goal, pouring over \$2 million a day in military aid to the fascist regime of Alfredo Cristiani.

With the election of the ultra-right ARENA government in El Salvador on June 1st, repression and human rights violations have skyrocketed. The death squads, closely linked with ARENA, have re-emerged in full force. In the first three months of 1989 there were 844 assassinations carried out by the government security forces and death squads, 390 more than in 1988. Captures rose from 181 to 398 and disappearances from 59 to 69.*



The struggle in El Salvador is...a grass roots struggle by the people, most of whom live in poverty, to design and control their own democratic systems.

This massive repression is one element of the ARENA strategy against popular movement. On July 17th, the ARENA government put forward a legal reform proposal which would define most forms of public protest as terrorism. The reform would prohibit protest marches, peaceful sit-ins, strikes and campaigns for human rights, and would severely limit the freedom of the press. In effect, these new laws would legalize full-scale oppression.

In El Salvador, all legal media are directly or indirectly controlled by the government; ARENA particularly views alternative and foreign media as a threat. Since 1980, 28 journalists have been killed either by the death squads, security forces, or caught in cross-fires between the FMLN and the army. This number is higher than the Vietnam War.

The only non-controlled media in El Salvador belongs to the peoples movement; the FMLN. Radio Farabundo Marti in the northern province of Chalatenango, and sister station Radio Venceremos in the south, providing the Salvadorian people with an independent voice in the struggle for justice and peace in their country.

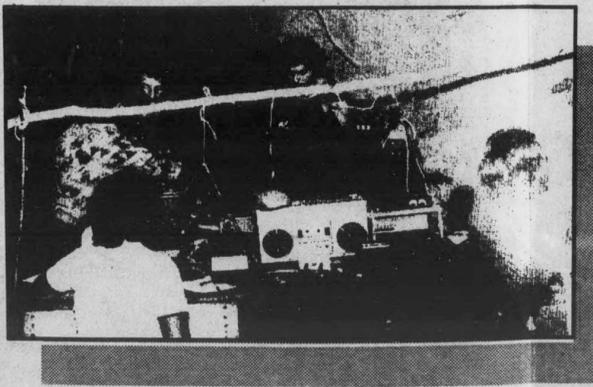
The creation of Radio Farabundo Marti and Radio Venceremos has meant the creation of a complete network including reporters and mobile units. Mobility is an important factor in the operations. RFM is constantly on the move in a game of cat and mouse with the troops. The government has launched special military operations to destroy the stations several times, but they have yet to succeed in silencing the voices.

In the Salvadorian conflict, information plays an important role. Public education in El Salvador is non-existent. An illiteracy rate of 63% is a tool in the government's continuing repression of the people. Most of the poor cannot read or write leaving the radios as the only effective means of communication.

Radio Farabundo Marti works with the people in their communities, identifying their daily hardships and broadcasting their statements. RFM keeps the people up to date on the advances of their struggle and promote health, education and culture in the region through daily broadcasts. Spoken work and music reflect their culture and national identity.

To guarantee the flow of current information RFM correspondents must operate under the threat of capture and/or death. Correspondents in heavily militarized areas must collect news equipment is essential for mobility.

Now in its seventh year of existence, "La Farabundo" as it is known to Salvadorans, has successfully transformed radio into an effective tool to organize, inform and educate the population. A tool for social change.



We generally transmit three one-hour segments daily with a greeting, news and commentary. We study what the government is saying, what the U.S. is saying, and what the Armed Forces are saying, and analyze their actions for our listeners. We announce and explain political and military initiatives taken by the FMLN and the popular organizations.

We develop programs to encourage both traditional and new forms of artistic expressions of our people. Many Salvadorans are forgetting our cultural roots because of North America invasion of the country's commercial radio stations.

We nurture the buds of a new culture, not only through its artistic expression, but also in the way life of the people on the war fronts. New languages and new forms of living have grown in the people, in their fight to live in the middle of war.

Humor is very important in our programs... laughter is one of our most powerful weapons against demoralization and sadness.

For example, the music in the beginning songs of the war fronts had the same music as the popular traditional songs but new lyrics. Now there is different music. Many combatants carry their notebooks with them and record their thoughts - often in poetry. With was and the proximity of death the combatants struggle to express the intensity of their lives and in doing so bring to life a new form of culture. We want to make sure this new culture, that recently began to grow, takes root and flowers when we win our liberation.

Humor is also important in our programs. We have found that laughter is one of our most powerful weapons against demoralization and sadness. In the midst of the war, humor emerges spontaneously, as a human need. Sometimes we satirize the COPREFA bulletins - the information they give out on their military actions, we really don't have to change very much to provoke laughter. For example, when they announced that their helicopters suffered "mechanical imperfections" due to "a cloud of dust", or that they captured important military material from us such as back-packers and socks manufactured in the Soviet Union.

We sometimes have the opportunity to support health campaigns carried out by popular governments in the countryside. With interviews of our compañeros in the health field, and discussions of our popular medicine, for example, of the use of plants as remedies, we hope to encourage young people to become health brigadistas.

We have also developed programs with stories by characters in Salvadoran folklore, such as the ciguanaba, the cipitillo, the carretabruja, etc. We are also creating new characters who emerge from the guerilla struggle. We also try to illuminate our people's true history, and the lives of those who struggled for liberation in the past: Anastasio Aquino, Francisco Morazan, Farabundo Marti, etc.

Radio Venceremos was born in Morazan during the FMLN's January 1981 general offensive. This strategic instrument of critical importance was patched together with only a minimum of scarce resources: an ancient "Valiant Viking" transmitter, a bipolar antenna, a temperamental generator, a cassette of revolutionary music, and a microphone. An inexperienced team of young workers, students and peasants was assembled to write and report the news and to maintain the equipment. Radio Venceremos took its first awkward steps, feeling its way - like everything else during those first days of the war.

Radio Farabundo Marti began transmitting in early 1982 in Chalatenango, opening another base for the revolutionary communications system and initiating a dialogue of ideas, information and experience. The first radio networks were set up to cover major events like the taking of an army base of a prisoner exchange.

By 1989, Radio Venceremos and Radio Farabundo Marti have established international teams which expand their networks to Europe, Canada, Latin America and even Australia.



CHSR BREAKING WAVES



Kaye Brookland - CHSR 97.9 FM Photo: Alan Johnston

CHSR FM has a new program devoted to peace, development, and the environment. Every week, producer and hosts Charles Crossman and Kaye Brookland, takes you through the intricacies of working toward world peace. He will be examining issues facing Fredericton, Canada, and the world. The programming has an impressive list of guests and topics planned, spanning concerns of Fredericton students, to prospects for peace in El Salvador. Listen to - A HARD RAIN - every Tuesday at 7:00 PM.

Other programs:

UN PERSPECTIVE (Sun. 5:30 PM) - background on issues facing the united Nations.

PEACE AND CONFLICT RADIO PROJECT (Fri. 1:00 PM) - a national perspective on Canada and the world in the quest for peace.

RADIO FARABUNDO MARTI (Fri. 12:30 PM; 5:45 pm; Sat. 8:15 PM) Reports from El Salvador as the people fight for Democracy.

* source: UN governmental human rights commission for El Salvador.