

El Salvador, about to erupt

by Nancy Ross

"They can kill me, but the clamour for justice among the people they cannot silence."

These words echo the spirit of the majority of those now living in El Salvador. Archbishop Romero, the utterer of these words, was brutally murdered this year because he had fought for justice. He described the situation in El Salvador in this way: "The struggle taking place today is a struggle between the majority of the people and a small wealthy elite who are using every means within their power to maintain their stranglehold on the economic and political life of the country."

Daniele LaCourse, a journalist who toured El Salvador, in August, '80, described the state of this country at a public meeting on October 16, at the Killam library.

During her stay she met with the commission for human rights, trade unionists, peasants and with revolutionary mass organizations.

She concluded that El Salvador is heading towards a revolution. The facts spoke for themselves.

Decades of political injustice, repression and violence have incited the people to revolt; widespread reform is needed.

El Salvador, about one third the size of Nova Scotia, has a population of 5 million. It has the lowest per capita calorie intake of Latin America resulting in 73% of all children under the age of five suffering from malnutrition.

Most of the land in this small country is owned by an agricultural and industrial elite, known as the 'Fourteen Families'.

The military junta protect the power of this elite. The junta took power through a coup d'etat on October, '79. This

new junta promised reform but by early this year it was evident that what was purported to be land reform was mainly a military campaign against the unions of landless peasants. Archbishop Romero wrote to President Jimmy Carter, pleading with him (unsuccessfully) not to supply arms to the junta. His letter said "the present Government junta, and especially the armed forces and security forces, have not demonstrated any ability to solve structurally or in political practice our serious national problems. In general, they have only resorted to repressive violence and this has resulted in a much greater toll of dead and wounded than in previous military regions."

More than 10,000 people have been killed since January and those are the ones that can be documented. The war is between the popular movements of workers, peasants, students, social democrats and others who represent close to 80% of the people and a tiny, powerful, wealthy, oligarchy who use the military and fanatical right wing to suppress all change.

The peasants have been forbidden to form unions since the 1932 peasant revolt was crushed with 30,000 massacred.

In June of this year, nine Christian Democratic mayors were assassinated and many more have received death threats. (Amnesty International)

ORDEN, is an army-directed civilian spy network held responsible for dozens of recent murders.

In a press interview in March of this year, Romero exposed the roots of the structural and institutionalized violence in El Salvador.

"The oligarchy, the small nucleus of families do not concern themselves with the plight of the people, except in-

sofar as they have need of them as source of cheap and plentiful labour. The industrial companies, national and foreign, base their competitiveness in the international market upon starvation wages and this explains the vehement opposition to any type of reform, or to union organization which seeks to improve the conditions of the people."

The oligarchy prevents peasant or worker unionization since it considers it dangerous to its economic interests. This is the fundamental cause of the political, economic and social underdevelopment in El Salvador, explained Romero.

Amnesty International, in addition to Romero, has made pleas to the U.S. to halt their military aid to El Salvador because it would be used to intensify the repression against the people. The Carter administration in February considered a plan to send U.S. Army advisors and up to \$7 million in military sales and credits in an effort to prop up the faltering new government and to block a leftist takeover. Many specialists on Latin America say that it marks a return to U.S. counter-insurgency techniques long used against the Latin American left but largely discarded as policy in the early 70's.

A peasant in El Salvador relates the desperation of his people in a message given to LaCourse. "Tell the people in your country why I could not plant my crops this year because the army bombarded us. Tell them why I am carrying a gun. It is not because I like violence or bloodshed. It is because my son and the husband of the woman over there and the brother of that boy over there were assassinated because they had had enough of all this."

Isolationism endangers

by Andrew Sinclair

"Isolationism has become the most dangerous element in our era", warns Soviet dissident Valentyn Moroz, and as long as the West continues to sleep the Soviet Union will grasp country after country.

Speaking at St. Mary's University, Moroz, a Ukrainian history professor who has spent thirteen years of his life in Soviet prisons, said that while the Kremlin scares the West with threats of war, "the Third World War started in 1945." Claiming that we live in "a world paralyzed by Moscow", Moroz said that it is "good that the West is beginning to wake itself."

As serious a threat as Moscow poses, however, it does have weaknesses, and Moroz pointed in particular to what he termed the "three fiascos of Brezhnev's regime": Afghanistan, the Olympic boycott, and the Polish strike. According to Moroz, the Soviets can not possibly win in Afghanistan—"it is a Soviet Vietnam"—and the Olympic Games have

provided the ordinary Soviet citizen something he has long been denied—proof that the Soviet Union can lose. This huge blow to Soviet prestige, he says, will have great results in the future. As for the strike in Poland, Moroz sees this as merely the beginning of years of unrest. The decolonization that has been going on in Africa for the last twenty years is just starting in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R., he says. Consequently, "the 1980's will be . . . explosive years and the center of these explosions will be Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union."

Moroz also suggested that the Soviet Union might not be under Brezhnev's regime at all. Pointing out that Lenin was totally senile for the last year and a half of his rule, Moroz said that it is very difficult to tell who is really ruling today. He was also in the dark as to who might succeed Brezhnev, whom he referred to as "an old alcoholic", but did not discount the possibility of a revolution. Himself an officer in the Soviet army at one time,

Moroz said that many young officers in the higher echelon are dissatisfied with the situation in the U.S.S.R. "A revolution is always possible but no one knows when it will occur."

Despite spending thirteen years as a political prisoner, during which time he was beaten, stabbed, kept in isolation and confined with the criminally insane, Moroz said that he has come to realize that a prison sentence "is not a punishment but a reward" in that it provides "a possibility for the rebirth of spiritual resources in the soul which is unavailable in daily life."

Sentenced in 1970 to nine years imprisonment for writing three essays in protest of civil and human rights violations, Moroz drew world attention to himself in 1974 when he went on a 145 day hunger strike. In 1979 he was released from prison and exchanged, along with four other dissidents, for three Soviet spies captured in the United States.

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