

Other observers have drawn attention to the connection between the Duarte Government's economic, military and diplomatic dependence on the United States, the power of the military, and the failure of the PCD's reform attempts.²

The main opposition to the Duarte government has come from the FDR-FMLN. The FDR, the Democratic Revolutionary Front, is a coalition of popular organizations (political parties of the Left, peasant federations, labour unions, community organizations, student and academic organizations) which emerged after the breakdown of official political institutions in the mid-1970s. The FMLN, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, is a coalition of five guerrilla armies. The FDR-FMLN was formed in 1980 on the basis of links, forged in the 1970's, among popular organizations, political parties of the Left and the guerrilla armies described above. Since the leaders of the FDR are based in Mexico City, *de facto* revolutionary leadership is now exercised by the FMLN.

The FDR-FMLN has been fighting since 1980 to overthrow the Salvadorean government. It has promised that its victory would be followed by basic economic reforms, the exercise of popular power within a legal and democratic framework, and a movement towards non-alignment in international affairs.

The continuing stalemate of the war prompted the FMLN to issue a new call for national dialogue in November 1985. The government wants the FMLN to lay down its arms and to participate in the next election. The FMLN rejects the legitimacy of the 1984 and 1985 elections, and claims that military surrender would be suicidal given the government's human rights record and the fact that it would then have a monopoly of force. The FMLN demands an immediate end to US military assistance and wants to see its own armed forces and leaders incorporated into a reorganized military and political system. These conditions are unacceptable to the current government and to the Military High Command.

NICARAGUA

In July 1979, the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza was overthrown by a broad popular uprising led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The FSLN was formed in the early 1960s, fought a long guerrilla war against the Somoza regime, and is currently the governing party in the Nicaraguan political system.

Since 1979, the FSLN campaign to extend basic social services to the rural and urban poor has led to impressive declines in the rates of illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition. In both social and eco-

nomic policy, the goal has been to devise practical policies within the framework of a mixed economy with public sector leadership.

The FSLN has also worked to build political structures which will represent the interests of those sectors historically excluded from power. Workers and peasants have been encouraged to form unions, women to form a national organization, and slum dwellers to promote their interests. The FSLN has maintained control over the creation and operation of the new defence and internal security forces. While this tendency towards one-party dominance has received much popular support, it has also created opposition among professional, business and other groups with different interests. Elections held in 1984 reflected these tensions. Many observers felt that they were fairly administered and that their results (an FSLN victory with two-thirds of the vote) genuinely represented the public mood at the time.³ Addressing the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark remarked: "There can be no doubt that, on election day, the people of Nicaragua expressed a very strong support for the Sandinista government." Some critics have contested this judgement.⁴

In order to safeguard Nicaragua's security, the government organized, trained and supplied a new army. It planned to build the force with advice from Cuba and supplies from the West. Repeated attempts were made to procure arms from the United States and other Western suppliers, but these attempts were largely unsuccessful.⁵ France signed an arms deal with Nicaragua in 1981 but, because of intense pressure from Washington, it refused to undertake new commitments. Nicaragua began to rely on the Soviet Union and its allies for defence needs. Accordingly, the volume of Soviet supplies increased dramatically and has grown steadily since 1982, undermining the credibility of Nicaragua's commitment to non-alignment.

Social tensions in Nicaragua have increased as a result of economic decline, the imposition of compulsory military service and the occurrence of some human rights violations. Internal security legislation and practices tend to be heavy-handed; the press is often censored and the most critical opposition newspaper was recently closed down. The Miskito people, an indigenous community in north-eastern Nicaragua, were victims of government repression in 1981-82, and pro-Sandinista factions have used intimidation tactics against some opposition groups.⁶

According to supporters of the Nicaraguan Revolution, these violations cannot be condoned, but they must be recognized as authoritarian tendencies in a regime that is otherwise respectful of basic human rights. Mass killings, assassination, kidnaps-