

have not been prosecuted for abuses against Salvadorean citizens. The Army's historic fear of Christian Democrat reformist rhetoric turns out to have been exaggerated, and this lesson has not been lost on Guatemala's senior military command.

Since 1982 Vinicio Cerezo, who comes from the progressive wing of the Christian Democrat party, has deliberately moderated his own rhetoric. Once a defiant critic of military rule (himself the target of at least four assassination attempts), he adopted his new approach following Gen. Ríos Montt's coup. He failed to condemn the President's complicity in widespread rural human-rights abuses. Since then the framework for a *modus vivendi* between the Army and the Christian Democrats has slowly evolved.

Return to Civilian Rule

In order to placate lingering military opposition Vinicio Cerezo made two far-reaching concessions: one in the area of human rights, the other regarding social reform. Speaking in October 1985 Cerezo said,

Alfonsín-style trials would be very difficult here, because the Guatemalan Army is not an Army in defeat like in Argentina. . . . We can't have an amnesty for the guerrillas and then put the Army officers on trial. If I did that, I'd be committing suicide.

As for fundamental social reforms, Cerezo discarded the options of land reform and tax reform (80 per cent of revenue comes from indirect taxes, only 20 per cent from direct taxes).

At the same time Cerezo is trying to dampen expectations. Before the elections he predicted:

My government would not be one of social reforms – which the Army would not allow – but one of transition to democracy. Only my successor could begin the social changes that Guatemala so desperately needs, including agrarian reform.

Any attempt to usurp military

control could provoke another Army coup. And there is little likelihood that the Army will voluntarily relinquish effective control over national life. A pre-electoral study of the Army's security and rural development institutions by two American anthropologists, Chris Krueger



Tom Hunt

and Kjell Enge, *Security and Development in the Guatemalan Highlands*, concluded:

The military is well-positioned to maintain control of these institutions and programmes: pull out and blame failures on the next government which will face a highly polarized and traumatized society and an economy in crisis; or, maintain parallel institutions, operations and control of resources which in effect undermine civilian control of development activities.

The Future

The election of Vinicio Cerezo has certainly won Guatemala a positive turn in world opinion, but what are the prospects for President Cerezo's and Guatemala's future? Will Cerezo be able to make his promised contribution towards democratization?

The inauguration of an elected president now means that the US Congress will release its conditionally-approved \$10 million in military aid and \$80 million in economic aid. The new civilian government expects to successfully entice foreign aid donors, win greater sympathy on the part of foreign banks and the International Monetary Fund to renegotiate the debt,

and attract foreign investment.

The military intends that the transfer of formal power to civilians will serve twin goals: funds will be forthcoming for the integrated national security and development arms of counter-insurgency; and the inauguration of a civilian president, if popu-

larly perceived as legitimate, should help stabilize the political-military situation.

However, without fundamental reforms, Guatemala's deeply rooted social, economic and political instability cannot be addressed. The oligarchy has served notice that it will not allow economic reforms. President Cerezo is left with economic austerity as the central plank of his administration.

During the electoral period killings and disappearances continued. The Guatemala Human Rights Commission documented 626 civilians killed by government forces in the first six months of 1985. Immediately prior to Cerezo's January 1986 inauguration the Army issued a decree absolving itself of crimes since 1982. One week after Cerezo took office, authorities discovered six tortured bodies around Guatemala City, suggesting that the new President lacks the power to control the secret police and paramilitary forces.

In Guatemala, elections are not synonymous with democracy, nor does occupancy of the presidency signify power over the government. And foreign aid,

especially military and militarized aid, cannot generate economic recovery and development.

Guatemala has long been treated internationally as a pariah. Canadian aid, for example, was suspended in 1981 due to the gross and systematic violation of human rights. In December, 1985, Canada co-sponsored a United Nations resolution which:

deeply deplore(d) the continuing gross violations of human rights . . . which are largely due to the failure of the military and security forces to conduct their activities with the necessary respect for protecting the human rights of all Guatemalans.

Before any country considers renewing bilateral aid, the following conditions should first be addressed:

- a definitive end to the systematic violation of human rights and the dismantling of the structures of repression;
- an investigation into the fate of the disappeared and the prosecution of those responsible;
- the establishment of civil rights and freedoms allowing open and uninhibited freedom of association;
- the implementation of both structural reforms (such as agrarian reform) and political reforms.

President Cerezo is an extremely adept politician. He will certainly last for months and might even survive his five year term. But will he have changed the structure and abuse of power in Guatemala? The international community, by stipulating that economic aid will be forthcoming only if structural reforms are implemented and human rights are effectively respected, would assist Guatemala in recovering political control over its nearly omnipotent military. A premature resumption of aid will merely strip an otherwise powerless civilian sector of any leverage over the Generals – and thus further postpone reconciliation and equitable socio-economic development in Guatemala.