

FOCUS ON EL

BASIC FACTS

Land Size - that of Lesotho
Population - 4½ million
Government - Military Dictatorship
2 percent of the population own 70 percent of the land.
3 million or three quarters of the population subsist on less than R7,50 a month.
Only 16 percent of the economically active are employed throughout the year.



OPPRESSION

For over half a century absolute power in this small and tortured country has been concentrated in the hands of 10 families (the oligarchy) and the army. This power bloc has been supported by the United States. The El Salvadorean regime has imposed its power on the people by the most oppressive means and with complete disregard for the rights of the population.

A tyrant who ruled El Salvador for 14 years, killed 30 000 peasants in 1932 during a peasant uprising against his rule. As the Salvadorean poet Roque Dalton wrote, 'We were all born half dead in 1932. We survived, out half alive...'

Military dictator after military dictator has perpetuated a system of exploitation and oppression defined by the Economist (London - Feb. 2, 1981) as one of the most unjust countries in the world. It is known for its extraordinary brutality - people are detained and systematically tortured in the most brutal manner. Both torture and assassination is carried out openly.

In one year (1980) alone, 10 000 trade unionists and peasant activists were killed by the regime.

HEROIC STRUGGLE

The history of El Salvador is a history of heroic struggle by the Salvadorean people against these tyrants. Organisations of the people have grown steadily since their formation in the mid-70's. Beginning in the mid-70's the 3 leading revolutionary groups - the National Resistance, the Popular Liberatory Forces, and the Popular Revolutionary Army - put a high priority on supporting the development of mass organisations in both rural and urban areas. Virtually every sector of El Salvadorean society from workers, peasants and teachers to students and clerics were incorporated into mass organisations linked to the political-military groups. The activities of the mass organisations, including demonstrations, strikes and the occupation of government buildings, were as important in challenging the existing economic, social, and political structures as was the armed struggle. By early 1980, it was estimated that more than a quarter of a million people were participating actively in these organisations. The mass organisations and their military

wings at this time overcame their historic differences and formed the FDR and FMLN respectively. Even the Stalinist Communist Party which all this time was part of the junta threw in their lot with the people.

Massive repression and genocide, with hundreds of people missing/ murdered every month, has been the desperate response of the U.S.-backed junta to this popular mobilization.

PEOPLE'S WAR

On the military terrain the junta is facing not just a guerilla conflict but a full scale 'people's war', fought and sustained by broad sectors of the population. What were once isolated guerrilla units have now been superseded by popular armies and militias, recruited mainly from among peasants and workers who live in the combat zones. There is also a vast support network among the local population that supplies food, medical assistance, and shelter, manufactures weapons, & provides intelligence on the movements of enemy forces.

At no time in Latin America has U.S. imperialism been faced with such a well entrenched and popularly based revolutionary army.

SALVADOR

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM AN EL SALVADOREAN POLITICAL PRISONER
TO HIS DAUGHTER (taken from Salpress Special Report)

"I begin this letter, my daughter, from the prisons of this regime...."

"One of these mornings, brilliant with light, the cold awoke me where I sleep on the floor....I sat up, fixed my eyes on a window with thick bars, and in a sky still filled with stars, your young and beautiful face appeared. It invited me to speak of things we used to talk about at home...."

I told you that we were living in a period of extreme political and social importance. We analysed the increase in repression, the innumerable mass killings carried out by the regime, the jailing of hundreds of patriots and the disappearance of many - all of the continual violation of human rights on the part of the regime. We also analysed the blows the organisation had had to absorb, blows dealt it by that band of criminals in power. You told me that it was precisely because of all the injustices the regime was committing against an impoverished and hard-working people, injustices which affected your feelings so deeply, that you decided to fight against against a corrupt regime

I fell silent for a moment, remember, my daughter? And my face, hardened by the years, apparently insensitive, suddenly broke. I was greatly affected by the things you shared with me, my feelings betrayed me and tears rolled down my face. You were immediately aware of this and broke off the conversation.

I told you to go on, because your words filled me with great optimism. Inspired by that precious moment, I felt victory even closer at hand. I know that the road we've both taken is a long and hard one, but when we are struggling for a just cause, all the sacrifices light a bright path towards our final victory.....

Now I am in prison and I don't know where to find you, but I want to tell you once again that all I have thought and believed about our family has not been in vain. If I am in prison it is because I have been troublesome to the regime. I am an obstacle to their criminal plans, just like thousands of other patriots who have become the victims of this repression...

Remember this, my daughter - victory will be ours. We will

continue our struggle until the final victory - you, from your place of struggle, and I from within the prisons of the dictatorship.

From your father in prison."

