

EL SALVADOR

- Reginald Mpongo

PART II

Organised armed struggle with clear political goals began in 1970. The situation in Salvador was unbearable at the time as a result of the Honduras-Salvador War in 1969 and the crisis in the country's dependent capitalism which was characterised by the stagnation in the industrial and agro-export production; low prices internationally; increase in the unemployment and inflation; and a deficit in the balance of payment. The emergent politico-military organisations were directly or indirectly off shoots of the Communist Party. Salvador Cayetano Carpio, the then Secretary-General of the Party, resigned from his post and the Party to dedicate himself to the formation of the Farabundu Marti Popular Liberation Movement. The armed struggle achieved some notable successes mainly in the countryside but was somehow isolated from the working class and the urban population up to 1977, February.

The lack of nation-wide support was caused by the prevalent belief in the possibility of toppling the dictatorship through the elections. A common view existed that guerrilla actions were organised by the enemy to justify repression against the opposition forces. But following the rigging of the 1977 Presidential Elections won by the National Opposition candidate, Colonel Ernesto Claramount and the massacre of people who had gathered at the city square, Plaza de Libertad, to protest on the 28th February, the nation began to support the armed struggle whole-heartedly. The dictator, General Carlos Humberto Romero, assumed power following these fraudulent elections. On April, 1977, the Communist Party resolved to join armed struggle, however, the eleven years of legal struggle and election participation left their mark. It was not until April, 1978, at the Seventh Congress that concrete practical steps were taken in this direction.

CHANGES

The victory of the Nicaraguan Revolution in July, 1979, brought significant changes in Central America - the repressive Central American Mutual Defence System (CONDECA) lost a

strategic member. Against the background of increased mass political activities, the armed liberation struggle scored victories throughout El Salvador. The military junta of General Romero plunged into structural and political crisis; and a popular uprising became imminent. The most reactionary elements in the national army under direct orders of the US imperialists and the oligarchy, carried out the coup de grace against General Romero on October 15, 1979 - the dictator was sent into exile in neighbouring Guatemala. The Washington rulers received the fall of General Romero and the assumption of power by Col. Antonio Majono without too many regrets.

US military and economic 'aid' flooded into Salvador so as to 'stabilise' the country. Military 'advisers' were also sent in. At the advice of the new US ambassador Robert E. White the progressive young officers who took part in the October coup were replaced. The democratic and the liberation forces which had joined the military junta withdrew their co-operation and support when the regime failed to implement a programmatic platform which called for political and structural changes in keeping with the popular interests. Repression continued; order and other para-military fascist organisations were not liquidated as earlier promised. The Christian Democratic Party remained collaborating with the Junta in the running of the country.

The withdrawal of the democratic forces became a blow to US imperialism and the local oligarchy- between democracy and fascism they opted for the latter. Popular mass strikes and demonstrations flared throughout the country demanding the transference of power to the revolutionary forces. The regime responded with violent repression - killing of people, raping of women in the presence of their husbands and official 'disappearance' of people became common once more. Against this background of mass denunciation of the regime, the question of the vanguard was posed in Salvador more especially since the failure to wrestle power in September/October, 1979, was attributed to lack of unity and co-ordination amongst the revolutionary forces - the existing situation was not properly exploited. The people knew that Somoza was defeated because of unity and a single front in Nicaragua.

UNITY

• Towards the end of the year a process of unity amongst the politico-military organisations and amongst the mass organisations - a new stage in the struggle for a society which will

allow the broad democratic freedom and control over the national wealth was reached. A Front was announced by the Communist Party, Farabundi Marti Popular Liberation Front and the National Resistance. This was followed by the formation of the Broad Revolutionary Mass B o d y composed of the following: Democratic National Union, 28 February People's League, Unitary Popular Action Front (FAPU) and the Popular Revolutionary Bloc.

The combined and patient efforts of the revolutionaries led to the formation of the Revolutionary Democratic Front under the leadership of Enrique Alvarez Cordoba. It is composed of the country's Trade Unions, peasants organisations, National University of Salvador, National Federation of Small Businessmen, the Revolutionary Mass Co-ordinating Body and other armed organisations. Enrique Alvarez described the Front as "a political instrument formed by Salvadorean people to promote their liberation struggle and build a new and just, human, democratic and independent society".

Today the Salvadorean revolution is on the threshold of victory. The military junta is pinned against the wall. Even the US intervention will not save it. The h o m e l a n d of Farabundi Marti will win.



OBITUARY

Bishop Ambrose Reeves

On the night of Tuesday December 23, 1980, the lights of Bishop Ambrose Reeves went off in England, his homeland to which he was deported by the racist South African regime in September 1960. He was 81 years old.

The death of "Our Bishop", as as he was humbly called by our people, does not bring the sunset to the struggle against apartheid. It is a milepost of the journey to a democratic South Africa in which he has also left his mark. "Our Bishop", to repeat, is the deepest affection in our dictionary