

# ANOTHER VIETNAM?

As the armed struggle for national emancipation in El Salvador scores new and greater victories, so has the threat of a U.S. invasion of this tiny Central American country grown larger. SALVADOR MONCADA, representative of the FMLN/FDR in the U.K. granted DAWN the following interview:

**DAWN:** What is the FMLN/FDR?

**Moncada:** The FMLN (Farabundo Marti Front For National Liberation) is the organisation uniting all the politico-military organisations in El Salvador. There are five. The FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front) is a grouping of different political parties — the christian democrats, social democrats, professionals, etc. On the one hand you have politico-military organisations and on the other the political parties and other democratic structures. Three years ago both decided to have joint representatives abroad.



**DAWN:** What is the historical background to the formation of the FMLN/FDR?



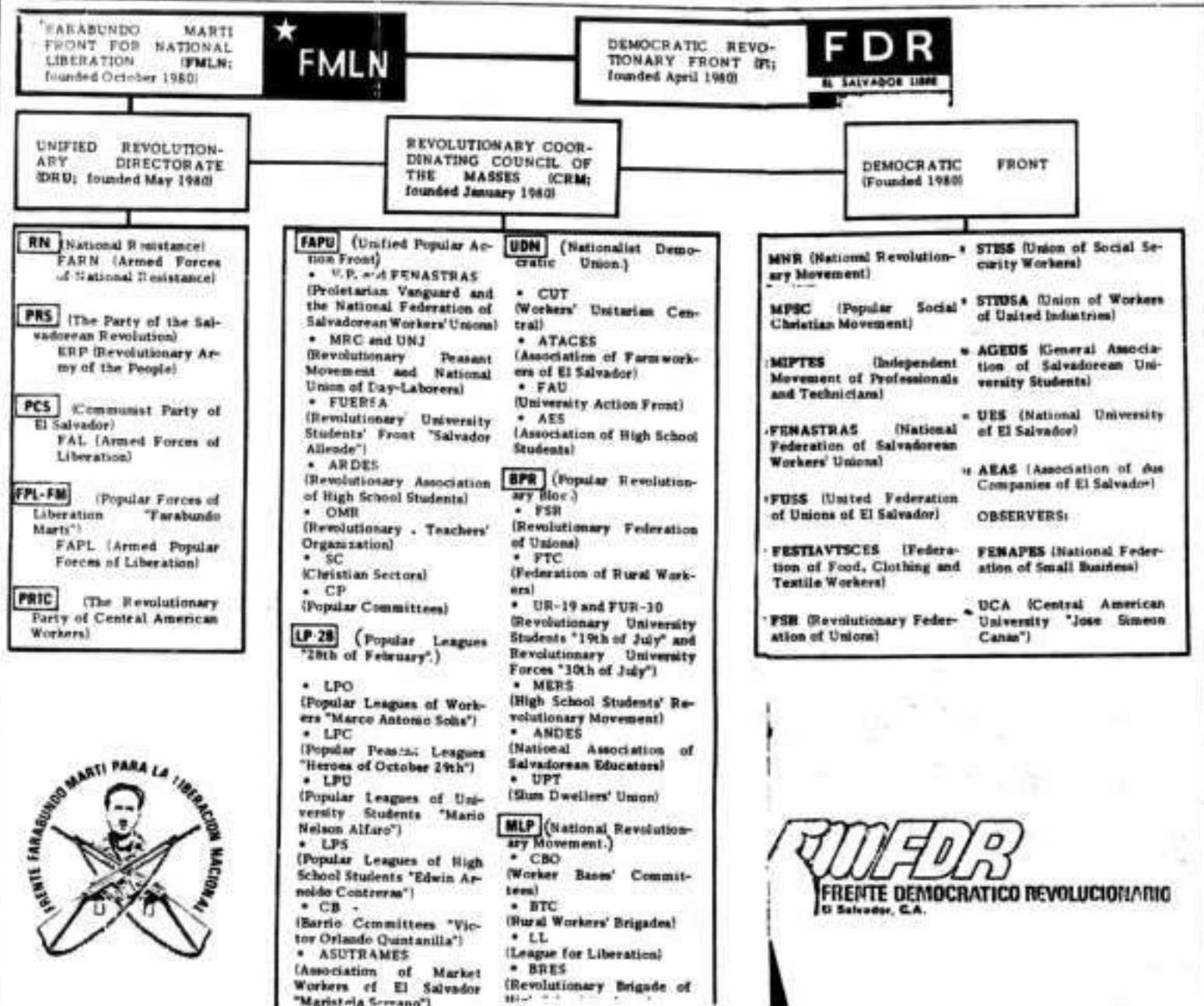
**Moncada:** The modern history and struggle of El Salvador can be traced from the 30's. The deep international crisis of capitalism (the great depression — ed.) had a telling effect on the country's

economy — then a major exporter of coffee. It was especially felt in the countryside by people working in the coffee plantations. A peasant revolt that followed was brutally suppressed. About 30,000 people were murdered.

The Communist Party was born at that time. Without going into details about the ensuing 30 years, let me mention that for all those years the Communist Party was the most important section of the left, although it did not grow much.

Prior to armed struggle peaceful methods, including contesting elections were employed. Several centre-left coalitions participated in the elections. Not even once were the elections fair. They were always rigged, resulting in a number of people becoming disillusioned.

Inspired by the Cuban revolution, it started dawning that the only way is armed struggle. Politico-military organisations sprouted in early 70's. The first was the FPL-FM (Popular Forces of Liberation "Farabundo Marti"), founded in 1970; to be followed by the PRS (The Party of the Salvadorean Revolution). In 1975 the PRS split into two. Another new organisation, the RN (National Resistance) was formed. These three organisations (FPL-FM, PRS, RN) and the PCS (Communist Party of El Salvador) came together under the DRU (Unified Revolutionary Directorate) in 1980 which later gave birth to the FMLN.



## NOTES

**RN:** The name of the party is the National Resistance (RN), and its military arm is the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN). As a tendency the RN has existed since the early 70s, and in 1975 it began to act as an independent organization. Its mass organization is the Unified Popular Action Front (FAPU), founded in 1974.

**PRS:** The Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP) was formed in 1971 as an organization of a federative character, with the participation of several revolutionary tendencies. Since 1975 it has encouraged the formation of the Party of the Salvadorean Revolution (PRS), which held its first congress in 1977. Its mass organization is the Popular Leagues "28th of February" (LP-28), founded in 1977.

**PCS:** The Salvadorean Communist Party (PCS) was founded in 1930. Its first Secretary General was Ismael Diaz. Its most famous leader, and Secretary General during the insurrection of 1932, was Agustin Farabundo Martí. In 1979, the PCS began to encourage the armed struggle through its military arm, the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL). The mass organization that it leads is the Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN), founded in 1969.

**FPL:** The Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL) has acted with this name since 1972. Since 1979 it has called its military arm the Armed Popular Forces of Liberation (FAPL). The mass organization that it leads is the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR), founded in 1975.

**PRTC:** The Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC) began its activities in 1976. Its mass organization is the Movement of Popular Liberation (MLP), founded in 1979.

**FRENTE DEMOCRATICO REVOLUCIONARIO**  
El Salvador, C.A.

At the same time displaced elements from the junta who had some democratic inclination like the social and christian democrats; and independent technicians, scientists and teachers formed another organisation, the FDR. In October 1980 the FMLN was founded. It united all the politico-military organisations: FPL-FM, PRS, RN, PCS and the PRTC (The Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers).



**DAWN:** What were the essential differences among the organisations that subsequently formed the FMLN?



**Moncada:** The FPL-FM had a strategy they called "guerra del pueblo, guerra popular prolongada" (Protracted people's war). They were interested in developing the social base for the revolution. Their main tenet was that nobody makes the revolution for the people. It is the people themselves who make their revolution. So everybody must fight — Whether 5 or 95 years old — one can participate in one way or another.

### DIFFERENT ANALYSIS

The FPL-FM appeared with a radically different analysis of the Salvadorean society than the Communist Party, and for that matter all communist parties in Latin America. They all had an analysis which said there is a national bourgeoisie and therefore a possibility of creating a democratic front with it. The aim should be a democratic bourgeois revolution and the left should push for that.

The FPL-FM's analysis came to the conclusion that there was no national bourgeoisie, and therefore no possibility of a national bourgeois democratic revolution. The bourgeois oligarchy sides with the United States, clearly. So the only possibility was to create a social base which would have as an axis the workers and peasants, towards which dialectically, the petty bourgeoisie would gravitate. And if you have to do all that work, create that base, inevitably you are going to confront the United States. Then the people's struggle will be long and protracted.

In the beginning the PRS was influenced by the Guevara foci experience. However, they had a very clear military line. They developed a very well organised and sophisticated military structure with a very narrow political base, while the FPL-FM had an enormous base with a small military apparatus. The split (RN) occurred mainly as a result of this difference in approach: whether to lay emphasis on the political or military.

The Communist Party had a base in the working class but lacked experience of armed struggle. They were strong believers in the creation of an alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie. Seeing the disillusionment of the people with elections, they too started to develop their own military organisation.

Lastly, you have the PRTC which is identified with a very grand idea of creating a proletarian party for the whole of Central America. It is a small group though. But their idea is not crazy in Central America where there is a very strong tradition of unity of democratic forces. So they might not be so wrong in the long term.

**DAWN:** With the formation of the FMLN and the emergence of the FMLN/FDR alliance has there been a merging of the political and the military structures?



MAP OF EL SALVADOR

**Moncada:** There has been increased coordination of forces of supply lines, of effort. There was an attempt — something which always happens in the beginning — to make a unified structure in an unrealistic way. The “From-tommorrow-we will be all together” kind of approach. That did not work and so for the last two years we have had to work in the slow process of increasing understanding and coordination to a point where for the first time, in October 1982, we managed to have a coordinated plan for the offensive launched at the time. The coordination is without doubt becoming increasingly better. The controlled territories are very firm now.

**DAWN:**



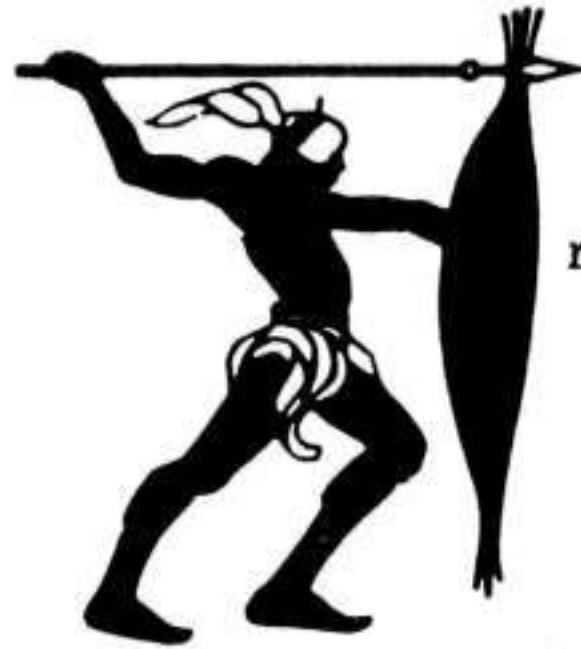
What percentage is controlled?

**Moncada:** About 15 — 20% of the country. Permanently. The main objective in the controlled territories is to develop political bases. In general, we clearly see in El Salvador that the only way to achieve this is through intensifying the political education of the population.

### PODER POPULAR

Two years ago popular structures have been created. Called “Porder Popular”, they are practically taking over the government in the zones under our control. Health and education are underway. That is the only insurance for long-term security in terms of the revolutionary struggle. We know that as the tension increases in Central America, it is highly

likely that we are going to confront directly the U.S. military forces. Moreover now that Reagan has been re-elected. So we have to be prepared for that.



**DAWN:** What led to the radicalisation of the church?

**Moncada:** El Salvador is a deeply catholic country and the peasants are very religious. They used to believe that they suffer because God ordained. Theirs was to prepare for the new life, in the new world where things will be better. Then suddenly the church comes and says that it is not like that at all, things can be improved here.

What was behind this radicalisation of the church was the 1968 Medellin Conference of Bishops, an event of great importance in Latin America politics. The conference developed what later came to be known as the theology of liberation, which comes from the second Vatican Council.

The priests who subscribed to the theology of liberation were those who were living with the people and confronted injustice everyday in villages and small towns in the countryside. They became conscious of the evils of the system and the need to awaken the people to the possibility of a better life.

They started organising the people for survival, through the establishment of peasant co-operatives. The successes they scored incensed the enemy and it unleashed its wrath against them. The national oligarchy felt threatened when the peasants achieved this little form of organisation which was not even political.

We have numerous cases of priests who were killed when the regime let loose its terror.

At the same time the politico-military organisations were growing. The most developed priests joined them and became political cadres. And, very often, the biographies of peasant leaders show that they emerged from christian communities.



**DAWN:** How would you describe the role of the youth?



**Moncada:** The Salvadorean revolution is a movement of young people. The majority of the leadership of the struggle is below 40 years. And they are people who have been fighting for ten years. So they were below thirty when they joined the revolution.

The participation of students is also very glaring. Enemy repression has concentrated on them quite a lot. The intermediate rank in the leadership consists mainly of former university students. Also, the most radical part of the petty bourgeoisie in the cities are young people.



**DAWN:** What are the particular characteristics of the enemy you face, and how is it linked to the United States of America?



**Moncada:** The enemy has been changing as the struggle develops. In the beginning we were confronting the national oli-

garchy. As the popular movement challenged it effectively and efficiently, the United States intervened. At the moment, we are confronting the United States government directly almost. The only thing missing are troops. But the direction of the war, the whole programme of counter-insurgency, the training of the military, the propaganda machine, and so on, is directed by the U.S.

### CONTRADICTIONS

There are contradictions of course, which are very important sometimes. For example, contradictions between the modern counter-insurgency line of the U.S. — in which they know how to combine psuedo-reforms, psychological warfare, social warfare, military warfare — and the national oligarchy which is primitive and does not understand one of the main tenets of counter-insurgency: that something has to change in order not to change anything. So those contradictions flare up from time to time. I am sure that does happen in South Africa.

Some months ago the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador was accusing the right of nurturing and maintaining the death-squads. He was complaining that nobody in the junta wanted to do anything about them, although it (junta) knows who they are.



**DAWN:** Can you tell us more about these death-squads which, in the context of our struggle, take the form of vigilantes?



Salvadorean patriots march confidently to victory.

**Moncada:** The death squads are mainly formed by people from the army. The right wing in El Salvador is responsible for them.

**DAWN:** What is the imperialist strategy for El Salvador and the region as a whole?

**Moncada:** The U.S. strategy is clearly to dominate the whole region. They cannot stomach the revolutionary government in Nicaragua, and they want a military victory there. They are also devoting all energies to arrest the revolutionary process in El Salvador. Puppets like Honduran, Salvadorean, and Guatemalan armies are handy weapons in the hands of the U.S. to gain hegemony.

But as they continue suffering defeat, I think in the next year or so we will see U.S. troops fighting in Central America. Shortly before the total col-

lapse of the Salvadorean army they will be "invited" by the Salvadorean junta to intervene as a "peace keeping force". The morale in the Salvadorean army is very low already.

**DAWN:** Recognising that fact, what preparations are being made to defend the gains of the struggle so far?

**Moncada:** The only thing that can defeat the United States is the war of people. Everybody in El Salvador doesn't want them there. If every knife, fork, pair of scissors — anything they have — becomes an arm to fight, then the U.S. has lost.

The only hope we have is ourselves. That is why the work in the controlled territories is so important. The people are having a taste of real democracy, proper health care and education. They have something to defend. **Venceremos!**