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The Comandante Speaks

Memoirs of an El Salvadoran Guerrilla Leader

EDITED BY

Courtney E. Prisk

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The Comandante Speaks

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Maps

Insurgent Organizations

AGEUS	Asociacion General Estudiantes University Salvadorenos (General Association of Salvadoran University Students)
ANC	Asociacion Nacional de Campesinos (National Peasants Association)
ANDES	Asociacion Nacional de Educadores Salvadorenos (National Association of Salvadoran Educators)
BPR	Bloque Popular Revolucionario (Popular Revolutionary Bloc)
CCS	Comite Coordinacion de Sindicatos (Union Coordinating Committee)
COACES	Coalicion Asociativa y Coperativa de El Salvador (Federation of Cooperative Associations of El Salvador)
CONAMAS	Comision Nacional de Masas (National Commission of the Masses)
CRM	Coordinacion Revoluncionaria de Masas (Coordinadora) (Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses)
DRU	Direccion Revolucionaria Unificada (Unified Revolutionary Directorate)
ERP	Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (Revolutionary Army of the People)
FAL	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion (Armed Forces of Liberation)
FAPL	Fuerzas Armadas Populares de Liberacion (Popular Armed Forces of Liberation)
FAPU	Frente de Accion Popular Unificado (United Popular Action Front)
FARN	Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional (Armed Forces of National Resistance)
FARPL	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Populares de Liberacion (Popular Revolutionary Armed Forces of Liberation)

FAU	Frente de Accion Unificado (United Action Front)
FDR	Frente Democratico Revolucionario (Democratic Revolutionary Front)
FECCAS	Federacion Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadorenos (Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants)
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberacion Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front)
FPL	Fuerzas Populares de Liberacion (Popular Liberation Forces)
FUERZA	Fuerzas Universitarias Revolucionario 30 de julio (University Revolutionary Forces 30th of July)
FUSS	Federacion Unificado de Sindicatos Salvadorenos (United Federation of Salvadoran Unions)
LP-28	Ligas Populares—28 de febrero (Popular League—28th of February)
MLP	Movimiento de Liberacion Populares (Popular Liberation Movement)
PCS	Partido Comunista de El Salvador (Salvadoran Communist Party)
PRS	Partido Revolucionario de El Salvador (Salvadoran Revolutionary Party)
PRTC	Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos (Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers)
RN	Resistencia Nacional (National Resistance)
UDN	Union Democratica Nacional (National Democratic Union)
ULTS	Unidad Ligas Trabajadores Salvadorenos (United League of Salvadoran Workers)
UNOC	Unidad Nacional Obrera Campesinas (National Unity of Workers and Farmers)
UNTS	Unidad Nacional de Trabajo Salvadoreno (National Unity of Salvadoran Workers)
UPT	Union de Pueblo de Tugurios (Tugurios People's Union)
UR-19	University Revolucionarios—19 de julio (University Revolutionaries—19th of July)
UTC	Union de Trabajadores del Campo (Union of Rural Workers)

Foreword

Miguel Castellanos was a hero of the revolution who fought and died for the idea that it was possible to bring justice and equity to his country. His story is a parable of courage and struggle, but assassins' bullets ended his life, as they have so many others, before he could see whether his efforts would succeed. He knew the risk he ran, and he accepted the prospect of his death as part of the price he might have to pay for personal commitment.

As with others, Castellanos's youthful ideals led him to join the FMLN in the expectation that only through armed struggle could the "Land of the Savior" itself be saved. It was the beginning of his education. He became a fighter and ultimately a "comandante." He learned the ways of the guerrilla: moving silently through the green forest trails; the hours of patient waiting for the tread of soldiers; the days of long tedium marked by sudden fear and rapid action, pursuit, and imminent death; of comrades lost and enemies killed. The youth matured into a man, the man into a leader.

Others around the world have made this progression unique in just cause or not. Guerrilla warfare and insurgency are very much with us, and so too are the veterans, many very young men aged too soon by seeing and doing too much, their societies torn by unending cycles of violence. What, then, makes Miguel Castellanos stand out, different from these many others?

His former companions, who would kill him in the end, would answer that he was the worst sort of man, a traitor. He shared their vision and their peril and then betrayed the revolution by joining the enemy. His former enemy—the army—probably suspected his motives and never trusted him. He became a man between two worlds, a part of neither yet drawn from both. But, unlike many who have forsaken a cause and disappeared, Castellanos did not take the path of obscurity; he did not surrender his ideas or his struggle. To both former friends and enemies he tried to show that the hope for justice could only come through reconciliation, that continued violence, no matter the cause, led everyone farther from the goal. Castellanos staked his life on this effort and died in its purpose. This sets him apart, and his life deserves to be noted.

The following account, based on extensive interviews with Castellanos, traces his progression and, with it, the story of El Salvador's struggle with itself. There is much here to take away. When I first encountered his story, I believed it was worth telling to a wider audience. To many Americans, El Salvador is a distant place of little interest; for despite our efforts there, it seems a struggle for obscure purpose. I hope that this story will help to change that just a little. I hope that it will make a contribution to the just end that Castellanos lived for. The last interview for the book occurred just days before assassins ambushed him and gunned him down. He knew the risk, but in the hope of peace, he still lived the hero's life. It was a life worth marking.

Wm. J. Olson
General Editor

Preface

Napoleón Romero Garcia, better known by his guerrilla pseudonym "Miguel Castellanos," who is the *comandante* interviewed in this valuable book, was assassinated by his former comrades on 16 February 1989.

I was deeply saddened but not surprised by the long-distance telephone call that came, ironically, as I was writing the foreword to this engaging book, which should become required reading for those who wish to understand the war in El Salvador—what has caused it, who sustains it, what motivates the guerrillas, and why they are doomed eventually to failure. According to the reports, the terrorists ambushed the small red vehicle with its dark, polarized windows at about 5:30 p.m. near the National Stadium shortly after the car had pulled away from the Center for National Studies (CEREN). The ex-commander and member of the Salvadoran guerrillas' high command was intercepted by two vehicles of terrorists firing G-3 and M-16 automatic weapons from their windows. More than fifty bullet holes perforated the sides of the car, the windows were shattered, and Castellanos's body lay in a pool of blood. His gravely wounded bodyguard writhed in pain beside him.

Shortly after the murder, Radio Venceremos, the official voice of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), announced this brutal murder as the guerrillas' *ajusticimiento* (the fulfillment of revolutionary justice) of Comandante Miguel Castellanos "for his collaboration with the counterinsurgency plans of the Reagan Administration."

Castellanos three days earlier had debated on television a leader of the FMLN's political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), about the motive behind the FMLN's 19 January 1989 "peace plan." Castellanos convincingly argued that the proposal was a tactical maneuver lacking good faith and intended primarily to advance the FMLN's insurrectionist strategy. The FMLN's objectives were to gain international sympathy, sow discord among democratic

political parties, pit the Armed Forces against the civilians, reverse the rapid decline of political support for the once popular guerrilla organization, and cause disregard of the law as embodied in the 1983 Constitution.[1]

I hung up the telephone and somberly pondered the tragic fate of Miguel Castellanos. I recalled the many times that he and his former FMLN friends had been in my residence between 1985 and 1988; the interminable, fascinating, and serious discussions in which we had engaged; and the fun we had shared as we ate, joked, and laughed during their education of this *gringo* ambassador about the origin, nature, and destiny of the Salvadoran guerrilla movement.

Years of risk, physical hardship, and struggle; ideological indoctrination, military training, and battle; observation and use of violence; international travel, dialogue, and comparisons of Marxist systems with one another and with non-Marxist polities; and a pilgrimage of intellectual and moral disenchantment with the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of history and society to which he had pledged himself all merged to give Comandante Miguel Castellanos uncommon powers of analysis and wisdom. I reflected on his humanity, intelligence, purity of purpose, courage, and dreams—aspirations for himself and visions of what his country could become. With a lump in my throat I remembered the treasured companionship and trust that had grown between this former guerrilla commander and me, the American Ambassador, as each of us in his own separate way worked to consolidate El Salvador's constitutional democratic process, to find peace for the war-torn society, and to improve the welfare of the country's long-suffering people.

Much of the information, revelations, wisdom, and analyses that Comandante Castellanos related to me is included in the interviews presented in this book. They are worth reading and study. He makes major contributions to our knowledge and understanding, especially in four areas: the origins of the insurgency in El Salvador out of resentment over exploitative social and economic conditions and a closed political system; the continuous Nicaraguan, Cuban, and Soviet support (at varying levels) for the FMLN and their intervention in the internal affairs of El Salvador; the Marxist-Leninist orientation of FMLN leaders and the FMLN's use of "front groups" to advance the guerrillas' cause by taking advantage of the freedoms offered in the consolidating democratic process; and the causes that induce individual guerrilla members to become disaffected and break with the FMLN.

There exists an intense debate between Salvadoran rightists and radical leftists over whether the revolutionary situation reached in

El Salvador derived from internal conditions of injustice and deprivation or from external training and material support of Salvadoran Marxist agitators and leaders. Within a very short time after my arrival as the American Ambassador to El Salvador in August 1985, I realized that with about five minutes of conversation I could ascertain what position the person I was talking with would take on about any issue, depending on which side he took on the reasons for El Salvador's revolutionary state.

Contemplation of the unanswerable question of whether internal structural problems in society or external support for guerrillas who took advantage of the internal problems was the critical factor in El Salvador's reaching a revolutionary situation can throw much light on the current situation. Examination of the literature of the sixties and seventies reveals that many observers were rather optimistic about El Salvador's development. The economic growth rate was high, infrastructure was being built, and some academicians suggested that through a sort of "controlled democracy" and rapid economic development El Salvador might avoid a confrontational showdown between the masses and the elite. Many Salvadoran conservatives argue that though there certainly were serious structural problems in the economy and polity, they would have been corrected without reaching a state of civil war, had there not been Cuban/Nicaraguan support for the guerrillas in the late seventies and eighties.[2]

The conservatives generally argue that the remarkably high economic growth would have eventually resulted in wealth trickling down to the poor, and that improved economic and social structures would have cured the ills and injustices suffered by the lower classes. Many conservatives insist that there would have been no revolution had there not been outside support for Salvadoran leftist radicals.

Opponents of this view argue that Salvadoran society was so unjust that it was only correctable by radical reforms and that it was obvious that those in power were unwilling to implement them. The leftists maintain that barring radical structural changes in how wealth and power were distributed, revolution was inevitable. Regardless of the rapid growth rate, trickling down wealth would lose the race to social explosion. These persons point to tremendously high population growth and to heightened expectations that swept over peoples of the developing world after World War II. They cite the tremendously high levels of unemployment in El Salvador that found the bulk of the peasantry working only four months a year picking someone else's coffee or cotton or cutting someone else's sugar cane. At the end of the harvest season, workers returned to eke out survival on tiny plots that they usually sharecropped rather than owned. Despite an emerging

small middle class, these structuralists point to the luxurious life styles of the wealthy, their transfer of earnings out of El Salvador instead of reinvestment, and their refusal to enact required reforms. The leftists argue that under such conditions revolution was certain with or without external support for Salvadoran revolutionaries.

The Armed Forces' historic coup d'etat of 15 October 1979 was the culmination of a decade of national disorder and strife during which the existing political and economic order lost its legitimacy. Institutions were breaking down and could no longer meet the increasing demands of a rapidly growing population in which more people had become politically aware and were no longer willing to accept worsening social and economic conditions.

The Salvadoran-Honduran War of 1969 and its consequences, such as the ruin of the successful Central American Common Market, resulted as much from the two countries' internal problems as from problems between them. Such external factors, combined with the refusal of the Salvadoran ruling power elite to recognize the 1972 presidential electoral victory of José Napoleón Duarte and continuing political and social disintegration, were creating a revolutionary situation.[3] Guerrilla groups began to emerge. Kidnappings reached new heights between 1975 and 1977. By the end of the decade anarchy prevailed. Mobs of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) numbering 50,000 to 100,000 persons owned the streets. Ministries, factories, and large businesses were under siege; management was held hostage. Bombings began at dusk and continued through the night. The Sandinistas seized power in Nicaragua in July of 1979 and threatened to spread their revolution through the region—especially to El Salvador where their Marxist-Leninist comrades, with Cuban encouragement and support, were already at work. Those days were indeed among the darkest of El Salvador's history.

Whether revolution was inevitable or could have been avoided had it not been for intervention of the Cubans and Nicaraguan Sandinistas, it is clear from Comandante Castellanos's interviews that guerrilla leaders of the seventies and early eighties saw no alternative to armed conflict. Perception is often more important in politics than reality. Castellanos makes clear that he and other FMLN leaders were convinced in the seventies that justice and development could come to their people only through revolution.

The Comandante's discussion also makes plain the intervention in El Salvador by the Sandinistas, Cubans, Eastern Bloc members, and North Vietnamese through active support for the FMLN rebels. This support has ranged from Castro's calling leaders of the various

guerrilla groups to Havana and forging them into the FMLN to execute the unsuccessful January 1981 "final offensive" to the supply of arms and munitions. More important than provisions of arms, upon which the American news media have focused and debated, have been the provisions of sanctuary, diplomatic and public relations support, communications, funds, and training. All the ex-FMLN commanders that I talked with received military training in Nicaragua, Cuba, the Eastern Bloc, or North Vietnam, and often in at least two or more such places. Comandante Castellanos's comments on his trips and/or training constitute only one of many examples.

The future of El Salvador is inseparable from that of Central America. The region began the decade of the eighties with four dictatorships and one democracy; it approaches the end of the decade with four democracies and one dictatorship. Nicaragua has not followed the area's transition to democracy and persists in its efforts to establish an authoritarian state. The Sandinistas' ties to the Soviet Union, support for the "national liberation movements" in other countries, and Marxist-Leninist ideology make Nicaragua a threat to neighboring democracies.

On 27 June 1988, Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega traveled to Havana to confirm Nicaragua's colonial status and its Marxist-Leninist commitment, and he returned again at the beginning of 1989 to celebrate with Castro the thirtieth anniversary of Cuba's Stalinist government. While claiming to have freed Nicaragua from external dependence, the Sandinistas have turned Nicaragua into a satellite state and seem bent on creating a society similar to Cuba on the American mainland. An integral part of Sandinista policy is to extend the revolution to the rest of the region, to turn El Salvador into a Nicaraguan dependency by subordinating the FMLN revolution to the needs of the Sandinistas.

During the visit to El Salvador in 1988 by the Esquipulas II International Verification Commission, the Salvadoran Government presented a note with seventy items clearly demonstrating Sandinista support for the FMLN.[4] The Salvadoran Government also gave copies of the note to the United Nations, to the Organization of American States, and to the Nicaraguans. The Sandinistas have not answered the note, which was barely acknowledged by the Verification Commission and received little notice in the news media.

The Sandinistas' active support for the FMLN began after the Sandinistas seized power in Managua in 1979. Robert Pastor, President Carter's adviser on Latin America, in his book *Condemned to Repetition*, cites Sandinista support for the FMLN as causing problems between the Carter Administration and the Sandinistas.[5] The support

has persisted, notwithstanding repeated Sandinista denials and even after the Sandinistas signed the Esquipulas II Treaty on 7 August 1987. In October 1987, as shown by public presentations by Major Miranda, the former aide to Nicaraguan Minister of Defense Humberto Ortega, the Sandinistas were training FMLN guerrillas in Nicaragua. Miguel Castellanos's testimony on this subject is well corroborated by other facts and events.

Castellanos also describes the FMLN leadership as Marxist-Leninist in nature and explains the FMLN's use of popular organizations and front groups to advance its ends. His description of the revolutionary associations within the universities, his work with the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR), and his matter-of-fact statements about the guerrillas' subversive use of the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) and other front groups reveal the duplicitous way in which the FMLN takes advantage of the consolidating constitutional system's freedoms to try to overthrow it.

Finally, Comandante Castellanos speaks of his growing disenchantment with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that had once been so attractive to him and of his eventual separation from the FMLN. Most important in causing his departure were splits and violence within the rebel groups, fears about expressing dissent, realization that the FMLN leadership had lost its autonomy to the Sandinistas and the Cubans, and knowledge that with the election of José Napoleón Duarte as president of El Salvador in 1985 political conditions were changing so that revolutionary violence was no longer necessary to change Salvadoran society.

Castellanos stressed to me in personal conversations that the starting point for guerrilla defections from the FMLN was nearly always a reflection on the FMLN leadership's use of violence against other rebel leaders. He was already well aware of strife within Joaquín Villalobos's Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP) that led first to the execution of Roque Dalton García, the revolutionary poet. Afterwards there was the death of rebel leader Ernesto Jovel because he disagreed with Villalobos and other ERP leaders. When similar internal killings occurred within Castellanos's own Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), the impact was decisive. The shock and sense of wrongness that troubled Castellanos when he was assigned to investigate Comandante Marcial's murder of rival FPL Comandante Ana María, and Marcial's own subsequent suicide, set in motion doubts that would lead to Castellanos's total disaffection. His later reports to the Sandinistas, Fidel Castro, the Soviets, and the North Vietnamese and their varied, self-serving, and conflicting reactions to the case further moved Castellanos toward defection.

Castellanos told me that, even though he was raised in a religious family and taught by his parents and church that killing was a sin, he was able to kill and be little disturbed by it as long as he could morally justify his acts as advancing historically determined socialism that would bring justice and liberation to his people. Realizing that the FMLN leadership employed violence against other Marxists merely because of personal rivalry or ideological deviation caused Castellanos to reconsider and question the use of violence against any human being and to begin to question the morality of Marxism-Leninism in its entirety. Similar reactions to FMLN violence against FMLN members have been related to me by every ex-guerrilla commander that I have talked with regarding their defection from the FMLN's Marxist-Leninist cause.

Comandante Miguel Castellanos left the FMLN in 1985 and began to speak out publicly, stating that the use of violence to attain political power was no longer valid in a country where a democratic process was being established. He formed with other former guerrilla leaders the Center for National Studies. Members of the Center wrote frequently in newspapers and journals and appeared often on radio and television to debate and denounce the FMLN's plans, strategies, terrorism, sabotage, and human rights violations. They also criticized the intervention of Nicaragua into the internal affairs of El Salvador and exposed front groups acting on behalf of the FMLN.

Comandante Castellanos and his colleagues were branded traitors by the FMLN. They were and are despised by FMLN leaders for their forceful logic, disclosures of guerrilla tactics, condemnation of indiscriminate and premeditated violence against civilians, and their recognition of the political and economic changes being wrought within the emerging constitutional democracy.

The FMLN's cruel assassination of Napoleón Romero Garcia is a great personal tragedy, felt strongly by those of us who knew him. Fortunately, death will not silence this brave and truth-seeking young man who sacrificed his life by abandoning revolutionary violence to work peacefully for democracy and development. Court Prisk's editing of these moving interviews and their publication will permit the Comandante to continue to speak and to struggle for freedom and the betterment of the lives of his people.

Ambassador Edwin G. Corr

Notes

1. See "Asesinado ayer ex Comandante del FMLN Castellanos" in *La Prensa Grafica*, San Salvador, El Salvador, viernes 17 de febrero de 1989, p. 3; "Motan a ex-Subversivo de las FPL Miguel Castellanos" in *El Diario de Hoy*, San Salvador, El Salvador, viernes 17 de febrero de 1989, p. 2; "Asesinato de Castellanos" in *El Mundo*, San Salvador, El Salvador, sabado 18 de febrero de 1989, p. 1; and "Testigo Narra Asesinato de Miguel Castellanos," San Salvador, El Salvador, viernes 24 de febrero de 1989, p. 3.

2. For a representative view of the concept of "controlled democracy" with development see Charles W. Anderson, "El Salvador: The Army as Reformer" in *Political Systems of Latin America*, edited by Martin C. Needler (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1964). A rather optimistic view of El Salvador was also presented in Howard J. Blutstein, Elinor C. Betters, John Cobb, Jr., Johnathan A. Leonard, and Charles M. Townsend, *El Salvador: A Country Study*, Foreign Area Studies, The American University (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979).

3. It is interesting to speculate upon how different Salvadoran and Central American history might have been if, in keeping with the Alliance for Progress and the growing spirit of democracy, the military and economic elite of El Salvador had allowed the Christian Democrats and Duarte to have taken power in 1972 instead of 1984.

4. The Esquipulas II Treaty, signed by Nicaragua in August 1987, states that the parties to the treaty will not support uprisings or conflicts in other Central American countries.

5. Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 226.

Acknowledgments

Without the persistence and tenacity of Dr. Max G. Manwaring this book would not have been written. I owe him a debt of gratitude for the gentle, and sometimes not so gentle, encouragement.

The Comandante Speaks is an interweaving of three interviews with Napoleón Romero Garcia, better known as Comandante Miguel Castellanos. As one of the insurgent leaders in the El Salvadoran conflict, Castellanos provides unparalleled insight into the organization, training, leadership, and psychology of an insurgency.

The first interview, conducted by Javier Rojas-P, in late 1985, was published under the title of *Conversaciones con El Comandante Miguel Castellanos (Conversations with Comandante Miguel Castellanos)* in 1986 by Editorial Andante in Santiago, Chile.

That work, which captured the attention of a fairly large Spanish readership in Central America, was expertly translated for this publication by Judith F. Marcella, Quarry Heights, Panama, July 1988. Her successful retention of the style and intent throughout the translation process has provided the English reader with a precise flavor and meaning of Castellanos's words.

The second interview was conducted by Max Manwaring in September 1987 and translated by Allison E. Letzer. She has also captured the emphasis, frustration, and meaning despite the difficulties of the transcription and translation. Excerpts of these interviews were published in *El Salvador at War: An Oral History*, edited by Manwaring and Prisk, National Defense University Press in Washington, D.C., 1988.

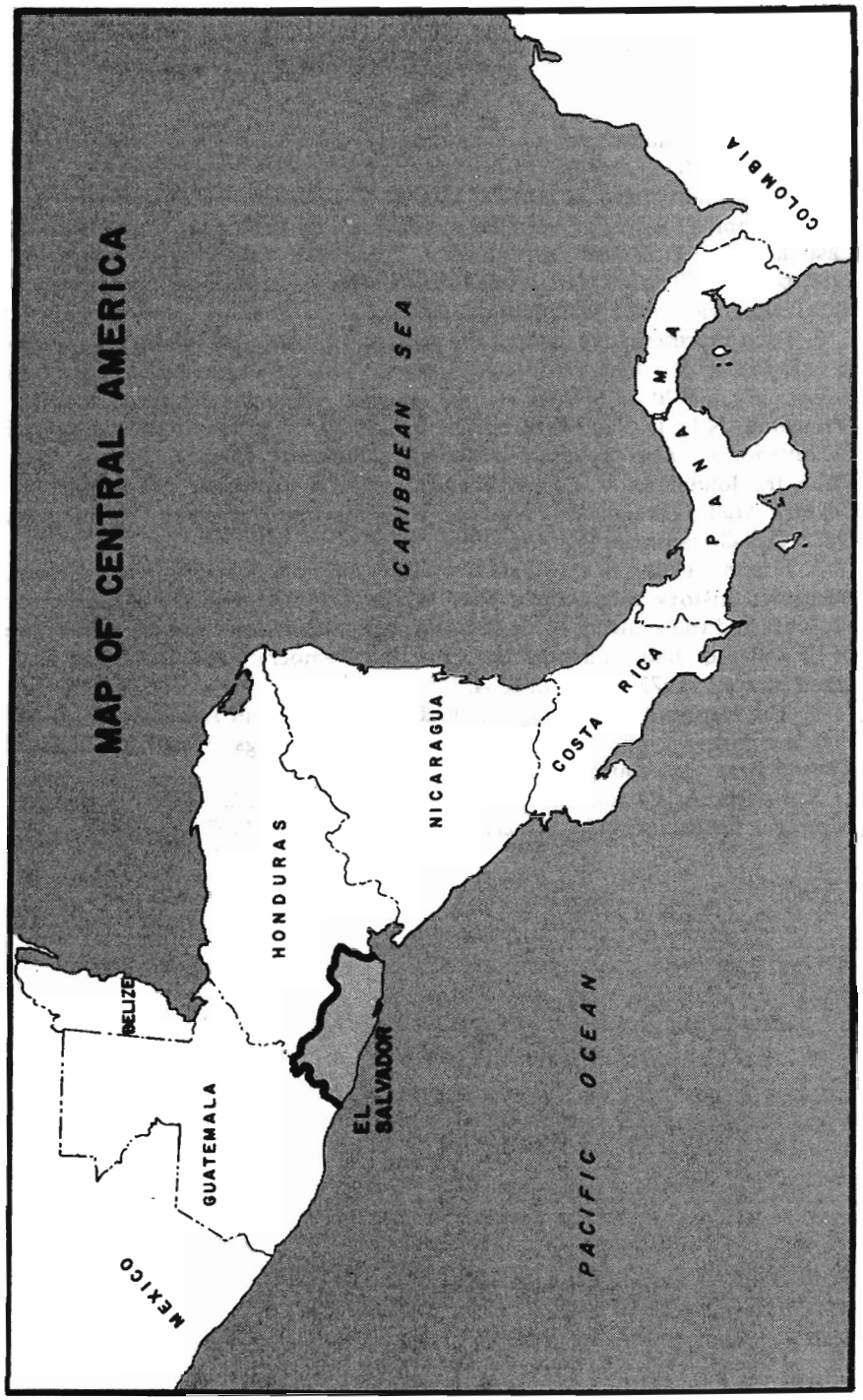
The third interview was conducted by Max Manwaring in February 1989. It was specifically requested in order to fill in some of the gaps and answer some of the questions concerning the FMLN's proposals regarding the March presidential elections. The interview was arranged through the offices of Ambassador William Walker III, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, and his Deputy Chief of Mission, David Deloughie. This third interview was also superbly translated by Judith Marcella, who worked her magic once more.

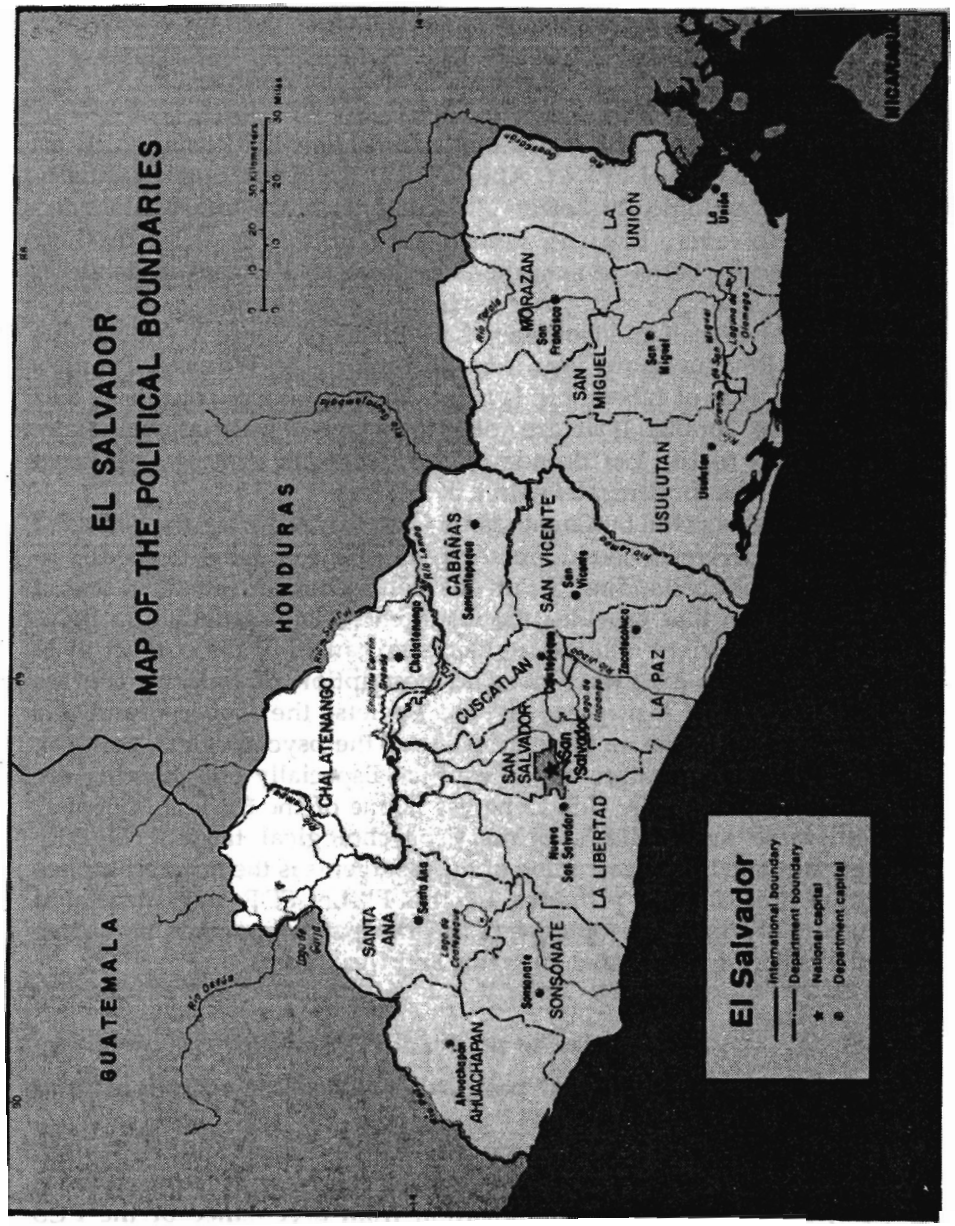
Portions of these three interviews have been interwoven into a

continuous text in order to keep repetition to a minimum and to preserve the chronological flow.

Finally, thanks to Bill Olson for his patience with the many delays, to Aileen Moodie, whose expertise in editing made the difference in smooth transition and clarity, to Todi Prisk, whose unbelievable patience and persistence in typing, retyping, reading, proofing, and indexing made the work enjoyable, and to Priscilla Arms, who provided the final typing and organizing.

Courtney E. Prisk
Panama





Introduction

Courtney E. Prisk

Despite volumes of newsprint, books, and articles, much is only vaguely understood about the war in El Salvador. The sad result is that after more than eight years of destruction and 60,000 deaths, the country is not quite the democracy everyone would like it to be, and it is not at peace. Nevertheless, one thing is clear. This type of prolonged struggle—like it or not, prepared for it or not—is going to continue with us for some time. It is incumbent upon U.S. policy and decision makers to examine seriously the fundamentals of the problem and to understand the nature of this type of conflict.

Understanding the past and correctly interpreting the lessons that it provides are the keys to improving the present—and, possibly, the future. In these terms, two basic requirements to succeed in any conflict are an understanding of the enemy and an understanding of the fundamental nature of the conflict. As Clausewitz stated:

> The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into something that is alien to its nature.[1]

As a consequence, it is imperative that senior decision makers and their staffs correctly identify the enemy and its potential and develop strategic and operational abilities that address the fundamental nature of the conflict.

A quick look at history can provide an illustration and perspective. In the mid-fifties U. S. military schools touted the pre–World War II French military as the archetypical example of the failure to understand the enemy and the nature of conflict.

Using the devastating experiences of the First World War, the French built the Maginot Line and prepared to defeat the Germans' next trench war by having the best and most technologically advanced trench. The fact that the Line was not a factor in saving France from defeat only serves to emphasize that the French understood

neither the enemy nor the fundamental nature of the conflict they would face.

Could the French military have prepared to fight the type of warfare served up by the blitzkrieg and Stukas? It is possible, if the conventional wisdom of the policy makers had allowed them to develop more offensive capability. Certainly there were sufficient writings and overt actions by the Germans to indicate the shape, the nature, the type, and the intensity any potential conflict would take. However, the difficulties General Billy Mitchell encountered in advancing the new concepts of air warfare in the United States during the period between the wars suggest that it would have been difficult and possibly politically impossible.

Coming out of World War II, and mindful of the abject failures of the French to prepare, the United States and later its NATO allies developed conventional military structures and doctrine to prepare for the next large-scale force-on-force confrontation. Arguably, one could postulate that, absent an unthinkable nuclear confrontation, the United States and its principal NATO allies are better prepared for a future large-scale war than any country or alliance has been in the history of the Western world. The current prospects for peace in Europe, after forty-four years of peace, are testimony to that preparation.

On the home front, there is likewise forty years of consensus that the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact are potential enemies that must be stopped. The idea that a belligerent armed force that overtly threatens life, property, or values should be met with equal or superior might is comfortable; it easily garners public support. However, what if the enemy is more covert and indirectly threatens the ideological values, the strategic and contingency interests, or the stability of a region or country? This type of conflict is not well understood by the public. Yet, it is often the type of conflict we are now engaged in, the type we most likely will face for the next two decades, and the type for which the United States is least prepared.

The excellent preparation for conventional war and the patient and successful refinement of operational military doctrine, structure, and equipment did little to prepare the U.S. military for Vietnam. There, the United States and South Vietnamese forces conducted a series of highly effective military operations that devastated the Viet Cong infrastructure and forced them and the North Vietnamese forces continually to withdraw from the immediate battlefield. Despite these traditional defeats, the insurgents and their allies kept returning and eventually prevailed. Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. made the point quite forcefully when he recounted the following conversation in Hanoi in April 1975:

> "You know you never defeated us on the battlefield." said the American colonel. The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment: "That may be so," he replied, "but it is also irrelevant." [2]

These remarks underscore the fundamental flaw in focusing solely on the operational level of war. After WW II the Americans essentially built a technologically better blitzkrieg with the most advanced Stukas. However, like the French in World War II, with their technologically better trench, the Americans in Vietnam understood neither the insurgent enemy nor the nature of the conflict.

Whether we call an insurgency Low Intensity Conflict, Ambiguous Warfare, Revolutionary Warfare, Uncomfortable Warfare, People's War, or a War of Liberation, is moot. For the sake of consensus let's call it "Rose" conflict. If we are going to engage in international affairs or relations in the last decade of the twentieth century, we must understand the fundamental nature of the Rose.

The insights given by Comandante Castellanos during the course of the three interviews herein recorded are precisely what is needed to begin our understanding. From his comments on the deep-seated dissatisfaction that provides the insurgents moral rationale to fight, we can gain insight into the fundamental causes of the conflict in El Salvador. From his rather detailed description of training courses provided to the insurgents by the Soviets, the Cubans, and the Vietnamese, we gain an understanding of the psychological, political, and international nature of the conflict. Especially enlightening are his comments that the U.S. Congress is one of the Soviets', Cubans', Vietnamese and FMLN's primary psychological targets. Equally important to our understanding of the insurgents is the rather complete picture Castellanos provides of the FMLN-FDR organizational structure, the rationale for some of its principal components, and some of the major organizational strengths and weaknesses.

An Overview of the War in El Salvador

Throughout the 1960s political education, agitation, and participation grew, primarily sponsored by the El Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS);and supported by the Cubans and the Soviets. In the late sixties, activity sponsored by the New Left prompted a slow, almost imperceptible transition from acceptance of the PCS approach of preparing politically for the socialist revolution by taking advantage of the democratic and capitalistic evolution to a more militant agitation of the masses. The New Left gained considerable credibility for a more aggressive and militant approach

after the 1972 Salvadoran presidential election, in which the military, through fraud and rigged election results, overturned the victory of the center-left coalition called the National Opposition Union (UNO), led by José Napoleón Duarte. The PCS gradual, political approach was subsequently further, if not totally, discredited when the military in Chile overthrew Allende in 1973.

Throughout the 1970s, as the military regimes became more repressive, the New Left moved from the development of cadres of future leaders, to the politicization and organization of the masses, to the unification of the various "democratic" elements in the country. The purpose of this organizational effort was to create a single revolutionary entity for the prosecution of a total military-political struggle.[3]

The catalyst that ignited the violence in El Salvador that continues today was the military coup of October 1979, in which General Carlos Humberto Romero was ousted as the last protector of the interests of the oligarchy. After that, the history of the country breaks down into four clearly defined periods. The period after the 1979 coup was one of almost complete disarray. None of the three major actors in the conflict—the military, the insurgents, and the United States—was ready for the aftermath of fifty years of authoritarian government. Then, from the end of 1981 to the end of 1984, the Salvadoran revolutionaries seemed to unify and appeared to be well on their way to a military victory and the assumption of political power in their own right . By the end of 1984, however, the Armed Forces had taken the best the insurgents could give and were beginning to regain control of the political-military situation: the war had changed direction. Finally, the period from 1987 to the present has been a time in which nothing really decisive seems to have taken place. The revolutionaries have been deprived of their military victory; yet, the U.S.-backed Government forces have not won either. There is a stalemate within a protracted war.

Using the general divisions described above, this book attempts to provide insights into the conflict in El Salvador and the nature of the enemy. While the interviews with Castellanos clearly focus on El Salvador, experience and observations strongly indicate that much of what might be learned from his insights can be applied to the threats of contemporary "low intensity conflicts" wherever they might be found.

Notes

1. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated and edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 88.

2. Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, 4th ed. (Carlisle Bks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1983), p. 1.

3. Joaquín Villalobos, "El Estado Actual de la Guerra y sus Perspectivas," *ECA Estudios Centroamericanos*, No. 449, marzo 1986, pp. 169–204.

1

The Period of Organization 1968–1979

Study of insurgencies shows that they can be analyzed by postulating a three-phase process—the organizational phase, the guerrilla warfare phase, and the war of movement phase. The insurgency in El Salvador generally fits this categorization.

At the midpoint in the organizational phase of the "New-Left" insurgency movement, Napoleón Romero Garcia was recruited by the FPL[1] because of his effectiveness in organizing and stirring the emotions of the students at the National University. Castellanos's move from being a politically concerned student activist to an insurgent leader responsible for forming a new student movement is made to seem a natural evolution by his commentary. At the time he entered, the University was a center for political agitation, especially after the February 1972 Salvadoran presidential election.

The controversy began when the center-left coalition known as the National Opposition Union (UNO) was declared the winner of the national election by the Central Election Board of El Salvador, lifted three days later when the Election Board announced that the military/oligarchy-backed National Conciliation Party (PCN) was the winner. As a result of this fraud, the approach advocated by the El Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS), of preparing politically for the socialist revolution by taking advantage of the democratic and capitalist economic evolution, was viewed as unworkable. In 1973, still more agitation and political discontent fomented within the University after the Chilean Armed Forces overthrew the popularly elected, leftist Allende Government.

Frustration with the Soviet- and Cuban-supported traditional communist strategy, reinforced by the perception that the Latin American militaries could not be apolitical, gave birth to a new militancy by the students and the clandestine "New Left" insurgent

groups. With the PCS considered ineffective, the situation was ripe for recruiting the students into new organizations promoting more aggressive and radical solutions. In this environment, the insurgent strategy became one of mobilizing the different sectors of the society and instilling in them a willingness to fight.

As an effective speaker and organizer, Castellanos was given the responsibility of forming a student movement aimed at gaining support from the masses—the general population. One of the first successes he achieved was organizing the highly effective "University Revolutionaries 19th of July" (UR-19), developed to attract segments of the masses by playing to their interests and grievances. Castellanos's success in developing the student movement led to promotions and increased responsibilities as the FPL built its organization and became dominant over the PCS.

Manwaring: Well, let's begin talking about yourself before those years—where you were born, who are your parents, what were your schools, all those social aspects.

Castellanos: I was born in 1949, in the Barrio de Mexicanos, located north of the city of San Salvador. I was brought up there and did my elementary school years in the public school. I moved to the National Institute Francisco Menendez, here in San Salvador, where I received my high school diploma. In 1973, I entered the [National] University, where I registered in the Science and Humanities Department to study psychology. In 1975, when I was already a senior, I was recruited by the FPL and that's where it all began.

Javier Rojas-P.: The psychology students at the National University in El Salvador were causing a great commotion. The harsh, categorical protest was against the professor of psychophysiology, who had flunked all the students. First there were allegations, then meetings, and finally strikes—first in the School of Psychology, then in the whole School of Science and Humanities, and then in the whole National University. Leading the protest was the young man Napoleón Romero Garcia, who, years later, would be known as Comandante Miguel Castellanos.

The young man spoke slowly, but banged his fist, putting emphasis on the points that he had read in the pamphlets *La Estrella* and *El Rebelde*. Something in his manner of explaining things, a mix of philosophic intuition and somewhat empiric knowledge, attracted the attention of one of the oldest students in psychology. He was Atilio Cordero.[2] He approached Castellanos, recommended some things for

him to read, and invited him to study university affairs and the reality of the country with a group of friends.

Castellanos: I was always interested in the University and during those years when I was looking for a career, trying to decide what to do after getting my high school diploma, I used to go there frequently.

I used to buy pamphlets and magazines that were sold in the kiosks, and I tried to interest myself in everything that was going on. In those days the University was one of the biggest centers of political agitation, where everybody debated, and there were many political fights. The PCS (Salvadoran Communist Party) was in charge there and managed everything through the Unified Action Front. . . . I remember that in 1969 I infiltrated a student assembly where it was debated whether or not to support the Government in the war against Honduras. . . . I remember that the Communists withheld support from the Government, even for the declaration of war.

Those members of the Communist Party, at that time, were talking about very different things from the rest of us who had begun to study and debate in the study circles to which I had been invited by Atilio Cordero (today he is known as Salvador Guerra, and is the third or fourth in command in the FPL).

They [the study circles] told me only that they belonged to a secret group, but they never spoke to me about the FPL. We began by studying the more concrete works of Marxism-Leninism, such as *The Red Book*, *The State and the Revolution*, and *The Writings of Lenin*..(sic).. The work requirements and the demands were so many in this new and complex matter that there arrived a moment in which my academic activities were in conflict with my new political activities. On a personal level, I always chose to continue with my studies first, but Atilio was always there insisting that I go to the meetings and demanding that I fulfill the tasks that were given to me.

Some months later, Atilio surprised me by saying that he was from the FPL, that I had been selected by the organization to be recruited as an active collaborator, and that now I had to choose between being an academician or a revolutionary.

"If you decide for the former," he said to me, "you are on the side of the enemy, because in war there are no neutrals or spectators. Decide if you are going to fight for the people," he emphasized. Confused, I asked him to give me a few days to think it over. I finally agreed and wholeheartedly entered the FPL.

Rojas: Then did you adopt Marxism; after having studied it, or because you were pressured by Atilio?

Castellanos: I was looking for a way to achieve my personal future identity, which was to serve a Supreme Being by serving the people, as I had read in so many religion books. . . . It was a doubt that was partly mystic, esoteric, and religious. When I entered the University, it began to assuage itself, giving way to more analytic, more scientific thought. The classes in historical materialism and dialectics and what we did in the University were very attractive to me as a way of achieving my goal, which was to fight for true and concrete social justice in my country. Marxism-Leninism was for me something totally unexpected . . . this finding, as I thought I had found, a basic ideological line that at the same time showed me a concrete way to act. This concrete line of action was very important to me, and when I agreed to join the FPL, my highest ambition was to enter the Urban Commandos; but their decision was to leave me with the masses.[3]

They explained to me that this was because of what was happening to the organization. In 1974, the FPL made a great change. The important thing was not only the armed struggle, but also the attempt to give great priority to the masses. In the beginning, the strategy of the organization was the armed struggle. It was deemed fundamental to the advancement of the process that political things were relegated to a secondary plane. The armed propaganda actions that the Urban Commandos took were part of the ideological struggle that the FPL was making to liberate itself from the Communist Party. But the leadership, among them Felipe Pena and Marcial,[4] realized that they did not have the organization of the masses that was needed to spearhead the movement, and that, besides, the masses were going to serve as a recruiting base for the commandos. The other fundamental task was to give a new twist to the movement of the masses, because the mass movement then pushed by the PCS was pacifist, economist. The masses needed to be given the combative spirit so that they could advance and incorporate themselves in the armed struggle. The ideological struggle now was not only on the level of thought and conceptions, but also already projected on a more concrete level with the masses. To me, they gave the mission of creating a new student movement in the University with a new organization and new objectives.

Rojas: What was the speech that you had to give to the Student Front?

Castellanos: In November 1974, the cell (by the cell we mean from two to five members) was made up of myself and Medardo Gonzalez Trejo (today Comandante Milton)[5] and was assigned the task of forming a

New Left group that became one of the most combative, UR-19 or the University Revolutionaries 19th of July.

We called the first meeting, and we were the first to begin working to form the organization. We produced the statutes of UR-19, and we determined the objectives of the political organization of the students. The most important objective was to create a combative student movement, making everyone see that this was a very different conception from the pacifist-economist movement that the PCS was promoting at the University. In doing this, we were very close to the RN and the ERP at that time.[6]

Rojas: Did the New Left come to take territory away from the pacifists of the PCS? What did the military coup against Allende in Chile mean to you?

Castellanos: For us, the FPL, and for all of the New Left, the coup in Chile reinforced our position against the traditional Communist Party. It completely annulled a line of political thought sustained and promoted by the Cubans and backed by the Soviets in all of Latin America—that is to say, to take advantage of the evolution of democracy in the capitalist countries in order to arrive at socialism through an accumulation of forces on the political level. With the triumph of Allende in Chile, the Communist Party had been encouraged in their theory of taking advantage of elections. We, the New Left, maintained that here in El Salvador it wasn't through elections that we were going to achieve change in our country. To a great degree, the overthrow of Allende showed the invalidity of the PCS's thesis. However, they didn't want to accept it and tried to give an explanation from another point of view.

We maintained that an army could never be apolitical. In the most classic Marxist sense, an army, an armed force, is the support of the dominant classes that makes it possible for an oligarchy, a bourgeoisie, to sustain its oppression of the exploited classes. In Chile, we said, it was concretely clear that the army was apolitical, it was on the edge...this was the conception that had existed for many years. However, when the army came to take a position that was a ninety degree change, it was evident that the army was the principal support of the bourgeoisie and Yankee imperialism in all of Latin America. This thesis that we defended came to be a triumph for us. It gave more strength to the ideological struggle in the University, which was the most important forum we had. It gave more strength, a new combative style, to the student movement, in the sense that the new student movement not only should support parliamentary and pacifist projects,

like those of simple dialogue with the authorities, but also should inject into the masses mobilization and combativeness, create organisms of self defense and attack.

Rojas: Did you begin armed action before the PCS and the Cubans?

Castellanos: That's the way it was. We were branded by the Cuban PCS as anarchists and even Trotskyites. These concepts were shared by the Salvadoran Communist Party around 1971, when they defended the pro-Chile line that was also supported by Fidel Castro.

One must take into account that at this time in Latin America, ideological diversionism was taking place—that is, discussions of theory about Marxism that never were put into action. We were going to abandon the polemics between the New Left and the traditional left, the PCS. They were going to have to fight us, and we were going to organize and develop a fighting movement of the masses in the same organizations. In spite of the PCS at the University the ideological struggle was gaining concrete expression. It was achieving a fighting presence at the national level, especially in the cities, through the new mass movements and the Urban Commandos.

The FPL designated someone responsible for the masses, and then others who were responsible for each sector: for the working class, for the farmers, for the teachers. The organization that we were developing at the University was at the national level. In the working sector, where the PCS had more roots, it was difficult to wrest the unions from them,...although in the end it was done. In the rural areas, in the country, the work was easier; there were more opportunities to create a new movement. Thus, we began in the University, in the city, and then we spread out toward the rural sectors. The task I had at that time was to work with my cell in the new student movement, to make the UR-19 grow politically, and then win over the student societies and the AGEUS.[7]

The first thing was to attract the masses by means of their immediate interests, the economic necessities, their platforms for recovery of their rights, without immediately going to political planning. At the University then, as now, the principal battle was that of the budget. There were other specific areas, like that of the campaign to get rid of the remnants of the general studies, which we insisted was a sieve and a waste of time for the student body, since the student studied subjects that weren't necessary to him. Then, by touching on everybody's personal problems, no matter what sector, we injected combativeness into the student body. We weren't into the purely parliamentary plane or the ideological debate as the PCS was.

We sought to touch each person with his personal problem and mobilize him until we brought him over to our side.

Rojas: And when do arms appear?

Castellanos: From 1974-1976 there were no arms in the University. It seems to me that the arms began to arrive in 1977; I wasn't there then. By 1979 the people of the various organizations were armed. There were tense discussions among the various organizations that were involved in the ideological struggle, but we knew that at the same time we had to carry the masses with us, *el gane* of the masses.

Rojas: What does el gane mean, win over the masses?

Castellanos: It means to go to elections and place our people on the governing boards. Elections with all the democratic symbols. . . . All the organizations that were won over were won over in the Allende style, democratic, with electoral rules.

Rojas: How could you reject using elections on the national level and approve it at the University?

Castellanos: This was an issue constantly raised by the Communist Party, but we pointed out that things at the University were very different from the national level, and the elections weren't carried out by means of corrupt symbols and rules. At the University the elections were honest. Afterwards we assumed control of the ANDES[8] (professors), the bus drivers, the farmers' groups . . . since in the workers' groups the elections were also clean.

For the FPL and the New Left, the situation was not contradictory, because they were different fields, where the method wasn't invalid. On a national level, the elections were invalidated by reality—that's the theory—because there was a dictatorship that controlled the elections and created fraud, and the official party always won—Fidel Sanchez, Molina, Romero.[9]

Why? Let's use as an example the protests of the Christian Democrats themselves: Duarte himself failed [in the 1972 election].[10]

This is evidence that using elections won't work—on the national level. (In other sectors, or better, in specific sectors, reality is very different. There is a different consciousness.) The students are really the ones who are going to decide what organization they want to be in charge on the AGEUSlevel. It is necessary to prepare the consciousness in the use of elections; one must be convinced that elections, and not

some other way, are the method at a specific time. For the FPL—and for the FMLN[11] right now—elections are an auxiliary element to the armed struggle. Elections are a bourgeois instrument in the capitalist system and can be used, as they have been by the Nicaraguans.

This is not a mechanical response. It serves to show other sectors what happens on the national level. We create the consciousness, the morality, the rules, and then enroll those organizations that fulfill the stipulated requirements. That is not invalid or fraudulent as happens at the national level. The AGEUS elections came, and we of the UR-19 defeated the FAU (PCS) and Roca's organization [the PRTC]. We carried Milton as president of AGEUS. The most important task the FPLgave me was to be political advisor to Milton. My UR-19 cell worked alongside Milton and AGEUS. My participation then was at the UR-19 level, and when there was an ideological struggle in some meeting Milton spoke for AGEUS and I spoke for UR-19, although we were both from FPL.

Around 1977, the FPL decided to take me out of overt work and put me in clandestine work. Other leaders were going to show their face, but I was clandestinely to direct the student movement through the cells. I met with them to review their working plans and the concrete work done in each sector. We did this in the house-barracks where we brought military archives, strategic plans, instruction manuals, and all the documentation.

The FPL had at the mass level a National Commission of the Masses, CONAMAS, and subcommittees for the various sectors. They all had their own premises. Everything was compartmented, which gave the organization secrecy and autonomy, even the individual cells. We four, those of my cell, did not know what the other four in the ANDES [National Association of Salvadoran Educators] were doing, or those of other sectors. At the national level we only knew about the general strategic lines, but on the specific level we only knew about our sector. We proposed and planned actions on our level, but there also were actions at the national level, as a front in coordination with other sectors. That's how we went about developing the fronts of the masses.

Rojas: Are these fronts those that have been called "union facades" (fachadas sindicales) of the guerrillas?

Castellanos: In the popular liberation movement, and in all liberation movements, there exist fronts of the masses which take as their point of departure the worries over rights of the masses. This is the history of certain fronts of the masses in the 1970s; they had their successes but later had to renew themselves. As in all the liberation movements, these types of structures wore themselves out, burned out, and one of the tasks of the FPL was to reorient their functions and give them a new identity. Now it became completely clear that work with the masses was part of military strategy. Thus arose the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses (CRM) that, outwardly, could not give any sign of identification with the FPL. It was a highly politicized front, although in work with the masses it was necessary to distinguish two kinds of organic statements: a political statement and a trade unionone. In the case of the Coordinating Committee their statements were more political than trade union since they were trying to adapt the fronts of the masses to the new situation brought about by the revolutionary struggle. At this time trade unionism had very little importance; what was important was the specifying and channeling of the struggles of the masses in order to achieve their uprising.

The transition from student activist to revolutionary leader was rather swift for Castellanos. Prompted by the growing dissatisfaction of the general population with the repression of the Molina government and the death of Carlos Fonseca during a demonstration that was brutally stopped by the military, Castellanos made the decision that the only way to effect change was to become fully committed to the New Left movement.

Manwaring: When did you become totally committed to the insurgent movement?

Castellanos: In 1975-1976, I left my studies and dedicated myself completely to the FPL university student movement. I was there from 1975 to 1979. We created a new type of student movement—combative, as we referred to it back then. Later, in 1979, I was sent to the Anastasio Aquino Paracentral Front, which is in San Vicente, Cabañas, Zacatecoluca, La Paz.

Rojas: The triumph of the revolutionaries was contagious the day that Napoleón Romero Garcia explained to his family that he was going to Guatemala for business reasons. At that time he entered the clandestine movement from which he would emerge eight years later converted into Comandante Miguel Castellanos.

He accepted the fact that he belonged to an organization which was not only political, but also military. Along with understanding and accepting Marxist dialecticism he had to learn to use light and heavy arms and to plan strategy and cover for guerrilla actions. On

two occasions he had to put together security groups to put nighttime vigilantes in San Salvador on trial, but what gave him the greatest status in the military area was the court-martial of Hibrido, a member of the FPL who had deserted and was accused of having stolen more than 30,000 colons in San Miguel.

Rojas: I have the impression that every time we touch upon the subject of the military part of your participation in the FPL you evade the subject.

Castellanos: That is not true. Political activity was the most important to me, but I had to carry forward at the same time military actions for the purpose of forming my military capabilities, and because at the practical level, it was a prerequisite for being a member of the organization and for rising to the highest ranks. This prerequisite doesn't appear in the statutes, but one realizes when one joins that one is required to do something in that area also.

Rojas: In order to ascend in the rolls, does one need more military experience?

Castellanos: In the statutes, the requirements stipulated for ascending to the highest leadership posts are (1) high level of revolutionary conscience; (2) a great spirit of sacrifice; (3) a profound love of the people; and, (4) a capacity for leadership. In the formation of revolutionary context the military area is contemplated in elementary terms—that is, the use of light and heavy arms, the formation of operations plans, the knowledge of military strategy, the unification of central command, the participation in military actions, etc. When they see that a militant does not do well in the military area, they give him more tasks in other areas, such as the handling of the masses, education, organization, propaganda. If this person does well as a soldier, they let him specialize and they give him the command of a guerrilla group. Whatever the case, ideology and the party line are the fundamental prerequisites. The political-ideological development has the priority; the military goes along with it.

Comandante Ana María, for example, was more politically formed and her work was more dedicated to the masses, but she directed the fundamental elements of military strategy, which permitted her to rise to the post of Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the FPL and hold the rank of Comandante.[12] Dimas Rodriguez has not been a leader of the masses.[13] His field is military, and nevertheless he currently has the job that Ana María had, which is political-

military. The political-military leadership in a Marxist-Leninist organization is complementary, and its membership is collectively integrated in such an organism, as well as separated on the basis of division of labor.

During the organizational phase lasting through 1979, there were many other forces at work assisting the "New Left" in fighting the growing repression of the military regimes. Castellanos discusses one of the most controversial elements at the time—the Church.

Manwaring: What was the role of Church during the period of time you were in the University?

Castellanos: Now, in 1976–1977 the Jesuit students played a large role in organizing the *campesino* movement; for example, FECCAS,[14] here in Apopa, Guazapa, Aguilares, all those places. The Jesuits contributed Rutilio Sanchez, who died, and Father Rutilio Grande. Rutilio Grande was killed by the army—the death squads. He was not a revolutionary, he was a sympathizer. He organized. From then on the Jesuits were incorporated into the FPL completely. Today, some are directors of the FPL—in Morazán, as well. They were involved a lot with the *campesino* movement, but not totally; because of this, many people believe that those who organized the *campesino* movement were the priests. That is false. They helped, but it was the students, seminarians. But from there the great majority of the *campesino* movement, the UTC, was formed under the efforts of the political-military movements.[15] For example, Facundo Guardado is a *campesino* in Chalatenango, in San Vicente, and all along that area who helped the priests also; but it was more work on the part of the *campesino* organizations, not the religious. The Church has played an important role in the organization of the masses, but (that was) in 1976 to 1978. Presently it is very minimal.

Notes

1. FPL: Popular Liberation Forces, one of the five political-military organizations of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FPL was founded 1 April 1970, by Cayetano Carpio (Comandante Marcial), José Dimas Alas, and others.

2. Atilio Cordero: Later known as Comandante Salvador Guerra. Recruited by the founders of the FPL, he rose in the organization to become second in command to Comandante Marcial in 1982-1983. Currently he occupies the fourth position in the FPL command structure.

3. Urban Commandos: Groups of combatants of the FPL with great experience in the cities and with strong political-ideological development. They performed the kidnappings of public officials and businessmen, the bank robberies, etc.

4. Comandante Marcial: Pseudonym of Salvador Cayetano Carpio, ex-secretary of the Salvadoran Communist Party, one of the founders of the FPL and the FMLN. In April 1983, he committed suicide in Managua, Nicaragua. Felipe Pena Mendoza also was a high ranking member of the Salvadoran Communist Party. Along with Marcial he split from the PCS to form the FPL. The FPL military structure under the FMLN is a Battalion Group named for him.

5. Comandante Milton: Pseudonym of Medardo Gonzalez Trejo, ex-student of philosophy and former president of the General Association of Salvadoran University Students (AGEUS) at the National University. Currently he is a member of the General Command, Third Secretary of the Central Committee, and member of the Political Commission of the FPL, First Military Commander of the FPL in the Anastasio Aquino Paracentral Front.

6. RN: The National Resistance formed from a splinter group from the ERP in 1975. Led by Carlos Arias, it sought to share power and to balance the insurrectionist concepts with development of mass organizations to carry out a prolonged people's war. It was one of the founding organizations of the FMLN.

ERP: Revolutionary Army of the People, which split with the PCS at about the same time as the FPL. It has been one of the major organizations in the FMLN since 1980. It is guided by insurrectionist and immediate armed confrontation mentality, as opposed to the prolonged war of the people.

7. AGEUS: General Association of Salvadoran University Students. Nationally and internationally it is considered a strong bastion of trade unionism and politics in the University. The organizations that make up the FMLN have always been involved in disputes with the AGEUS leadership, since AGEUS is important to the organization and mobilization and the agitation of the masses. For better cover, it is now part of the First of May Committee.

8. ANDES: National Association of Salvadoran Educators, founded in the sixties, as a predominantly trade union concept. In the beginning of the seventies, it was under the control of the Salvadoran Communist Party and then of the National Resistance's mass organization, the United Popular Action Front (FAPU). From the end of 1974 to the present, it has been under the control of the FPL. Now known as the ANDES 21st of June, it has been weakened by its politicization.

9. Fidel Sanchez, Molina, Romero: The last three heads of state in El Salvador before the military coup in 1979. General Fidel Sanchez Hernandez was in the presidency from 1967 to 1972. He faced the war with Honduras. Colonel Arturo Armando Molina was president from 1972–1977. He was a candidate of the PCN, the National Conciliation Party, and won by means of fraud against José Napoleón Duarte. General Carlos Humberto Romero's

government backed the projects of the most recalcitrant oligarchy, which sharpened the social polarization, and in turn led to rise of the extremist organizations. In 1977 the U.S. Government suspended its aid, and in 1979 he was deposed by the Revolutionary Junta of Government.

10. José Napoleón Duarte: The Constitutional President from 1984 to 1989. He was one of the founders of the Christian Democratic Party and twice served as mayor of San Salvador. After the presidency was wrested from him in 1972, he was imprisoned, beaten, and finally exiled. In 1979 he returned to his country and in March of 1980 became part of the Second Revolutionary Junta of Government, becoming president of the Junta. After the elections of 1982, he handed the presidency to Dr. Alvaro Magaña. Presidential candidate in 1984, he twice defeated his closest adversary, the Republican-Nationalistic Alliance Party (ARENA). The parties of the ultra right consider him their strongly "communistic" enemy, which for them is the same as being communist. The FMLN-FDR consider him their most dangerous enemy and call him a "demagogue, a pro-imperialist reformer." Both tried to overthrow him.

11. FMLN: Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, founded October 10, 1980. It bears the name of the highest leader shot in the 1932 insurrection. Within the FMLN are the ERP, the Salvadoran Communist Party, the National Resistance (RN), the FPL, and the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC).

12. Comandante Ana María: Pseudonym of Melida Amaya Montes, ex-secretary general of ANDES, Doctor of Education, professor of the National University, and builder-creator of the FPL, especially in leadership and the movement of the masses. When she was assassinated, on April 6, 1983, in Nicaragua, she was the Second Secretary General of the Central Committee of FPL (second in command).

13. Comandante Dimas Rodriguez, Ex-student of law at the National University, founder of the Urban Commandos of the FPL, and of the Felipe Pena Mendoza Battalion Group and the Select Special Forces (FES), military vanguards of the organization. His specialty is more military than political; he received military instruction in Cuba. Currently he has replaced Comandante Ana María as Second Chief of the General Command of the FPL.

14. FECCAS: Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants.

15. UTC: Union of Rural Workers.

2

The Period of Disarray 1979–1981

Throughout the 1970s, chronic political, economic, and social tensions began to generate another in a long list of crises in El Salvador. In 1977, General Carlos Humberto Romero was brought to power by those who thought that he could establish a regime strong enough to control the various forces agitating for change. At the same time a group of "New Left" revolutionary organizations was increasingly more effective in enlisting the support of the various sectors of the population to agitate for change—using force if necessary. The "New Left" began to concentrate on the more militant means of confronting the Government and were becoming increasingly effective. By 1979, the situation was beyond control by repression.

In late 1979, the insurgents initiated a series of indirect and direct attacks against the regime of General Romero and the civil-military junta that replaced him. The indirect part of the strategy was a psychological campaign, a War of Information to discredit the regime in power and claim the moral right to govern in the name of social justice.[1] *The direct attack, or the Guerrilla War, began in the form of what was then called the "final offensive" in January 1981. Within the insurgent movements, the FMLN leadership played down the classic Marxist-Leninist focus on political preparation.*

As a consequence, and buoyed by Sandinista insurrectionist successes in Nicaragua, the guerrilla elite attempted to override the preparatory tenets of Marxist strategy They sought, through immediate violent armed confrontation, the quick and total destruction of the junta's ability to govern.

However, despite fifteen or more years of preparatory work, the revolutionary movement was not ready to take advantage of the near anarchy of the time. They were unified under the FMLN at the insistence of Castro, but they were five separate armed groups with

only a loose umbrella coordinating organization. In pursuing violent revolution the FMLN overestimated the degree of popular support for their goals and underestimated the ability and desire to survive of the Salvadoran Armed Forces—who also were aware of the Sandinista successes and the fate of Somoza's National Guard.

Manwaring: Could you tell me how your role evolved in 1979?

Castellanos: Well, first I was a student leader. Then, I later moved up to CONAMAS, *Comision Nacional de Masas* (National Commission of the Masses), which is a counselling committee of the FMLN Central Committee. In 1980 I was elected to the Central Committee. In 1981, I was elected to the commission by unanimous vote [of the FMLN leadership]. By then, I was already a member of the Staff Directorate. I was something like the sixth or seventh in command. By the way, Comandante Marcial would ask me for political analyses of the city; that was one of my tasks as I evolved until I reached the top.

Rojas: The military coup [that toppled Romero in 1979] was not foreseen; it was not taken into account. For the FPL, as well as for the rest of the organizations, their principal goal was to form and develop their armed groups, to build up a popular army, and to build their structures and national and international working plans for bringing in arms. In its work with the masses, El Bloque was proceeding well.[2] All that year and the following one, its principal mission on the political plane was to unmask the new Revolutionary Military Junta, to show the people that the Junta was not responding to popular demands, but that the Junta was just a strategy to readapt imperialism, a concession to the reform movement while trying to found a constitutional normality.

The new junta fundamentally wanted to win popular support for reforms[3] and thus avoid an insurrection that would carry the left into power, as in Nicaragua.

Rojas: Who decided to help you?

Castellanos: The Cubans. They were working to consolidate the Sandinistas in power in Nicaragua, but at the same time they concerned themselves with El Salvador. They are the ones who decided to found the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front), in order to break the civil-military Junta that was in its infancy and to force the Communist Party to retreat.

In the seventies, the Cubans gave their official support and

recognition only to the PCS. Upon seeing that the FPL was developing, they began to pay attention, as they did later with the RN (National Resistance).[4] I believe that if it hadn't been for the Cubans, specifically Fidel Castro, it would not have been possible for the FMLN to achieve unity. I mean this not in the sense of an organic unity, when the structures, objectives, strategy, and tactics to be followed are fused. This is not the case with the FMLN. I mean a unity capable of presenting a front. In a front only coordination, tactical agreements, and operations are planned. Each organization goes ahead with its own structures.

Rojas: What did Fidel do [to form the FMLN]? What did he tell you?

Castellanos: Fidel, with Comandante Piñeiro, personally took charge and called for representatives (*responsables*) of the organizations. These were Marcial, Ana María, and Shafik.[5]

The most obstinate toward unity was Marcial; he was the one they considered the strongest, and who ought to have had the most recognition. He was always arguing about official recognition of the party by either the Cubans or the Soviets.

In the meeting of the Central Committee in the middle of 1979, Marcial told us about his conversations with Fidel and about how after the first soundings between the FPL and the PCS, Fidel also talked with the RN. Fidel, according to Marcial, called him personally after the meeting to tell him that they had agreed to unity, and he (Marcial) had promoted a change of party line in the PCS, a change that would be determining the actions of the Latin American Communist Parties. Marcial was very satisfied with himself. He considered it his first triumph, and above all, on the continental level.

At that time, when unity was planned, all the organizations had to make concessions, on the political level and in the strategic line, as well as in logistic aspects. On the political level it was planned that this unity ought to be based on the character of the current government—reformist, fascist, a tool of Yankee imperialism—and from there proceed to the fact that armed struggle is the only way to obtain power. Afterwards they would take care of the logistics and the division and distribution of weapons.

The one to make the greatest concessions was the PCS, since up until then they had denied the use of the armed struggle and only accepted elections as a way to conquer power through the accumulation of forces. This implied that the PCS had to structure organically its armed units . . . something it hadn't done before. They had the arms, but they

didn't have an operational capability. They had some leftovers, about seven or eight units compared to the other organizations, and it would be difficult for them to reach equal strength, but at least it wasn't a barrier in the revolutionary process, and . . . as it always happens, the Communist Party joined the front late. It always happens like that in the whole history of the PC in Latin America; in all of the revolutionary processes it hangs back.

The PCS had to make a total readjustment of background and mentality, and if not for the initiative of the Cuban PC and of Fidel directly, they would not have joined the front. The most attractive thing that Marcial saw in this front was that they made the PCS submit, which he felt to be a triumph. Finally the PCS would begin the armed struggle after so many years of accusing him of revolutionary infantilism!

Rojas: But . . . the PCS entered this group with a big disadvantage. What did it do?

Castellanos: What the PCS did in order to insure that its ideas would have some assimilation within the FMLN was throw them out to the Cuban PC, which took care of transmitting them as their own to the other organizations. Those who managed all of this diplomatically were the Cubans. They even satisfied Shafik, who saw the possibility of taking power away from the FPL by developing a strong force at the mass level—but without getting hegemony in the military group.

However, at the same time, what the PCS wanted to achieve with unity was the neutralization of the hegemony and all the development achieved by the FPL. By the time Marcial thought of it, it was already too late to turn back.

Rojas: What was the system that the PCS used of arriving late at the revolution and later taking charge of the government?

Castellanos: It is not that the Communist Party took charge of the government. In Cuba, Fidel Castro is not a member of the Communist Party; in Nicaragua, the principal leaders are not from the PCS. The third level leaders are from the PCS.

The PCS systematically has used this method in matters of alliance politics: give battle to the principal or secondary enemy from within, in order to tie it up and neutralize it. In this sense it had achieved a series of alliances: with the UNO (National Opposition Union), which in 1972 was joined by the UDN (National Democratic Union), an open arm of the PCS; with the MNR (National Revolutionary

Movement), a group with social-democratic tendencies represented by Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo[6] as a candidate for the vice-presidency of the Republic; and with the PDC (Christian Democratic Party), whose candidate for the presidency was José Napoleón Duarte. At that time the PCS tried to use the PDC and the MNR as a springboard to attempt the political arrangement used in Chile to elect Allende.

There is another, more recent alliance. In 1978, the PCS became part of the *Foro Popular* (along with the PDC, the UDN, and the MNR), who, along with the younger officers in the military and with the consent of President Jimmy Carter of the United States, overthrew the Government of General Romero in late 1979. Later, it did not appear in the Revolutionary MIlitary Junta, but it had power elements in the Government Cabinet and in the Legislative Assembly. This latest alliance came to no good because, as part of the Government, it was implicated in the repression that was unleashed at that time. Also because the FPL, as well as the RN, made it a precondition for joining the Political-Military Coordination Committee (CRM)[7] that the PCS leave the Government... and it left.

The Communist Party had to readapt, and what was going to give it greater validity in the future was the backing of the Cubans and the Soviet Union as the officially recognized party. In that sense, the PCS was a party that didn't move a finger if it wasn't told to do so from abroad. The other organizations fighting along the same lines were very different. . . . It's not that they were anti-Cuban or anti-Soviet, but that they were another organic expression inside of Communism that was not the Communist Party. I repeat: these new organic expressions were Marxist-Leninist, but they were not part of the Communist Party.

Returning to the theme of unity, as the FMLN became unified and left behind their differences and even their personal resentments—as in the case of Marcial and Shafik—the Cubans offered arms as a symbol of proletarian internationalism. Then, it was established that the arming of the People's Army was going to be taken care of by the Cubans and that it would be receiving all the solidarity of countries around the world.

The Cubans became the managers, and Nicaragua the warehouse and the bridge to transfer solidarity to the FMLN. Nicaragua, by the Cubans' decision, was made the base of operations for political, diplomatic, and logistic affairs. The Sandinistas arranged how and by what means the arms would come to the FMLN and how they would be divided among the organizations that had joined the front.

Rojas: What was the work that was being done in El Salvador?

Castellanos: Our principal job in the Paracentral Front, where I was in 1980, was to give all possible support to the arming of military units, squadrons, and detachments and to make them operative.[8] Our other job, on the political level, was to prepare the masses for the uprising in the cities and in the countryside, inciting the fight for rights in the different areas. This task was not just for the FPL, but for all the organizations.

Rojas: What happened with the fronts of the masses?

Castellanos: Greater importance was given to the rural areas, because from there they were able to extract more elements to incorporate in the People's Army. At that time there was no realization that we had debilitated the structure of the masses in the cities. The masses seemed very sensitive to their weakening, especially because of the repression let loose by the junta. We estimated that we were almost in total reflux. We were not able to maintain the structure of the masses on the political level, but we did succeed in structuring military units, but without arms. Of the five or six thousand people belonging to the FPL, not even one-fifth were armed. They were given training with wooden arms, combat exercises, and political work to bring the masses to the uprising...to go about consolidating a general strike.

Manwaring: Would you elaborate on the training you received in Cuba and Moscow during the period before the "final offensive"?

Castellanos: Well, in La Habana, in March, April, and May of 1980, a course requested by Marcial was given for the members of the FPL. It was something special for us. Fidel agreed to a special course for Marcial's men, because we were the ones who were going to ascend to the higher levels. We, of course, were going to lead the organization.

The first part of the course included the Principles of a Guerrilla Organization—how the guerrilla zones are divided in order to function, such as a rear guard zone, an intermediate zone, and later a theater of operations zone. That's the classic style of a guerrilla organization, which we did not apply here. The other part we refer to as a *foquista*[9] guerrilla, *foquista* in the sense that the guerrillas are separated from the rest of the population, in a large measure. They have a relationship, but the guerrillas are clearly distinct from the rest of the population. That also was not applied in El Salvador.

Now, that explains a lot because in addition to performing as we did, it led to mistakes, because the guerrillas were exposed to the people. As a result, the people suffer combat. The Cubans' war was

quick; for that reason, we felt their experience somewhat limited. However, when one looks at the Vietnamese courses, the concept of war is broader.

In the Cuban courses, the first subject dealt with the principles of the guerrillas and how they function in a specific area. Another subject dealt with the defensive battalion, a battalion with its companies very well armed, including tanks, artillery units, even anti-aircraft units like the SAM 5. We'd say, ". . . We are not at that stage. . . ." We'd even do it in the terrain—the distance between units, the fire sector of each unit, the commands, the distancing of positions (in this case the health brigades), their location in the terrain, the defense of a position with a battalion, and also the attack with an offensive battalion. We'd do mapping exercises using maps that weren't from here at that time.

They would conduct the exercises. "Here is your battalion, here is your position." Each was given a map and a position to defend. Then an instructor would come and the student would say he thought he was going to be attacked on the northwest. We'd see which one was more vulnerable and weaker, what the heights were and how were the confrontations, and how to divide the units, which was interesting because we were already on the terrain.

Those were the exercises, and they would grade us and say, "Ah, this one is very good." In that exercise the instructor would tell the student who had to defend the position to strengthen his defense and await the attack. The instructor said, ". . . this cuartel will fall because of what you have done, but when they attack here . . . those who move all of the available men in order to defend themselves, they lose their headquarters." We did more or less okay on those exercises.

Another subject was how to form an army—a regular army. How should it be constituted, in other words, the general staff, the sections that make it up, its role, the only centralized command, the different structures of the battalions, companies, detachments, lines, etc., in addition to all the structure and functions of an army.

They also taught another subject that focused on how the Marxist-Leninist party functions within an army, and how it must be structured within the army. Another subject dealt with conspiracy and security methods and how to file information. They taught us that very well.

Those were the principal themes. There were others, among which were those concerning the party. What is the party and how does it function? That was in La Habana. Only officers and people who had been in Angola and Ethiopia participated as instructors in the course

held in La Habana. They handled the subjects and the situation very well. In La Habana, they form part of what is referred to as the *Direccion de Operaciones Estrategicas*, or DOE.[10] It is the unit in charge of the training and military instruction at the international level for people who arrive there. And they spend a lot of money, many thousands of dollars.

Manwaring: You talked about several groups, including the popular Church, which maintain their own identity. Do the military groups also maintain their own identity? The groups within the FDR-FMLN? Could you also comment with respect to the unity of the total organization?

Castellanos: From 1970 to 1979 there was no unity. The FMLN didn't even exist. It was a terrible struggle, death. On 10 October 1980 the FMLN was conceived. However, the FMLN is not an organic unit. It is a coordination of organizations. The General Command? That is not a command! A command has a leader, and he commands. But in that command everybody commands. Shafik, Leonel, etc.

The FMLN is a group of organizations. Each one has a small army, in other words, its own guerrilla lines. The ERP has the BRAZ (Brigada Rafael Arce Zablah). The FPL has a battalion here, the RN has the Carlos Arias Battalion there. Each organization has its own territory. The FPL has Chalatenango, the ERP has Morazán, and in Guazapa there are several organizations. In other words, there is no organic unity. The FMLN is a front. And that is why they want to create the ultimate party—the ultimate party to unite.

Since 1932 in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh has made the three political currents function as one: "We won't have three armies or three organizations. Only one." Now, the FMLN wants to form one party, but it hasn't been able because each organization wants to be dominant. In other words, it is a struggle amongst themselves. No one wants to be told what to do by another.

Despite the lack of real unity within the FMLN, its creation gave impetus to the revolutionary struggle. The strikes, the terrorist activities, and the loss of life increased the pressure on the Government, and a terrorized oligarchy took reprisals. On 24 March 1980 the Archbishop of El Salvador, Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, was killed, and his demands for justice and change were silenced. The apparent success of the insurrectionist methods, à la Nicaragua, buoyed the insurgents belief that they could win with an immediate violent revolt.

Rojas: For more than one year the Cubans had insistently demanded political-military coordination among the guerrilla groups. In May they had been able to achieve the first sketch of unity: the DRU: Unified Revolutionary Leadership (Unified Revolutionary Directorate), in spite of the great resistance the RN had towards the ERP. They had had a strong ideological battle, political and military, between the two that the RN could not forget, especially those arbitrary attitudes of the ERP in condemning all those that dissented. The ERP had condemned the poet Roque Dalton García and had gone on to form their own organization. Now, at the behest of the Cubans, the RN had to accept the ERP first in the DRU and then in the General Command of the FMLN, which had only been precariously formed three months before the much publicized "final offensive" of January 1981 began.

Castellanos: The first supposition which launched the "final offensive" was that among the people there existed insurrectionist conditions; ...partial uprisings would begin initially in the cities and towns in which they [the FMLN] had done careful political work. Also, a general strike would take place as part of the "final offensive."

Second: the Popular Army of Liberation of the FMLN (some three thousand men all together) would make some decisive military blows, like taking some of the barracks in Chalatenango, Morazán and La Paz.

Third: there would be uprisings in the units of the Armed Forces that would break the resistance. Under those conditions, the actions of the newly born popular army would be much more significant.

Fourth: the Government was unstable and the Revolutionary Military Junta would be repudiated (rejected) by the people. There would be serious opposition from the bourgeoisie, since the reforms made by the Government provoked great tremors in the ultra right. We had to take advantage of this situation.

Fifth: it was necessary to take advantage of the elections in the United States. There was a period of transition between the elections and taking of power (November 1980 to January 1981). Neither Carter nor Reagan was going to choose that moment to start an interventionist adventure. We knew that since Reagan had won, the prospects of intervention were going to increase. The Cubans kept insisting that that was the best timing for a final offensive, that the international solidarity generated by the FMLN offered great expectations.

Upon these five propositions, the offensive was launched . . . afterwards came the reality.

Rojas: Did this offensive have a date, a beginning?

Castellanos: Yes, it began the tenth of January 1981.but the surprise was gone. First they said that it would be in December 1980; then they suggested other dates, and they kept putting it off. In order to arrange things, the order was given five days before...and then it was put off. The Armed Forces and the Government knew. Everybody knew what day the offensive would take place; and surprise, a fundamental element of these things, was gone.

That day we attacked Zacatecoluca Garrison, but because of the lack of artillery, we had to retreat, and the relief troops did not arrive on time. We varied the plan in order to try to take a guard post of Fecoluca, and we weren't successful there either.

Rojas: What information did you receive on how the offensive was going elsewhere?

Castellanos: We got what we heard on Radio Liberacion, but we couldn't trust it. The radio said that they had taken the garrisons of San Vicente and Sensuntepeque and that the guerrilla columns were marching towards the city of San Salvador. We hadn't triumphed; how were we going to believe what they said was happening on the other fronts!

One of the worst weaknesses that we had at that time was communications. After the fifth day of harassing patrols and camouflaging ourselves, we got direct word that the attempt had failed, that the people had not risen up, and that the general strike hadn't succeeded.

Rojas: In making a critique, the most objective possible, what did you conclude?

Castellanos: For us, the FPL, the most positive conclusion was that we had not favored a final offensive; and therefore, our frustration was not as great as that of the other organizations. The most frustrated were the RN and the ERP, because they were the most supportive of the insurrectionist theory. They were confident and spoke of the uprising of the Armed Forces; and there was the case of Mena Sandoval who was later almost killed in one of the few battles in which the Army killed great numbers of guerrillas.[11]

In making a balanced critique of the offensive that the FMLN made, one of the great deficiencies that I notice is that they give it the focus of a front. Of course this is good from the propaganda point of view, and it creates the appearance that the FMLN is a large cohesive force, politically and militarily. That's how they generally see it.

For us, the negative point is based on a poor appreciation of the reality of the country. They took off on a series of suppositions that did not correspond to what was happening.

Militarily, we proved that we did not have the capacity, the operational technique, or the centralized command. Each organization did what seemed best to it in its territory and with its military units acting independently. Our units were not capable of taking a garrison. That is vital in a military confrontation. Our units did not have the necessary firepower; they did not judge correctly the necessary human resources, the relief, the units of replacement for those who are fighting. We did not know how to judge well the distances, nor how to calculate in how much time a unit could arrive at a determined point. Also—and this we know from experience—we positively insist that communications are vital, in order to know how the support units are proceeding, what is happening, what problems there are, when the relief will arrive.

The other serious problem was artillery. . . . To attempt to take garrisons without artillery to soften the enemy is practically impossible. One must at least have 81mm. mortars and, if possible, cannons. We improvised with what is called artillery without cannon. We used a wood roller with a fuse bomb, and we propelled it with an explosive charge, but there were a lot of problems with the precision of the shot, and the most one could achieve was to put a charge in the garrison. If we had had four more that were successful, the garrison would have fallen, feeling that they were being bombarded with heavy mortars.

Politically, we realized that we had failed in the uprising, that we needed to do much more work with the people, and that the mobility and the agitation that had unfolded were not sufficient. Really, there was no general strike nor a popular insurrection.

For us in the FPL, who had not, I repeat, supported the idea of the "final offensive," the most positive aspect was the general experience and fire experience that our unit acquired in combat; we could see that there were possibilities.

The FMLN seemed frustrated to the point that some of the organizations proposed entering into the dialogue that the Government was proposing at that time. The Communist Party alleged

that this was a way of gaining time, but the Government felt stronger and it withdrew the proposal that it had made before the offensive.

The frustration of the FMLN with its frontist concept was evident: almost 90 percent of the plans formulated had failed. We, of the FPL, reflected that this offensive (not final) had put us in a new stage of military struggle, because the FMLN had never [before] demonstrated a simultaneous fire capacity on the national level. It was the first time the regime had been pressured, which meant that it was necessary for us to continue developing the army. The war was beginning. We argued that one could not speak of a total disaster because we had not been able to take power and control the country; it was the first attempt at uprising. There would come others until we arrived at *el gane*, at victory. Then a new line was planned for the FMLN: resist, develop, and advance.

To resist militarily was to try to confront the regime. It was supposed that before the defeat the regime was going to be strengthened, encouraged, and have a higher morale, and that this defensive attitude of ours was going to permit growth and more operations among the units. We looked for organic growth of the organizations, their operational adjustment, their arming. Politically, we decided to go for a greater penetration and politicization of the masses. Thus would we advance to higher stages of the struggle.

Notes

1. Villalobos, "El Estado Actual de la Guerra."

2. *El Bloque*: Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR), an organism of the masses directed by the FPL, founded with the active participation of Comandante Ana María in 1975. It was formed by ANDES, UTC (the Union of Rural Workers), FECCAS (Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants), UPT (Tugurios People's Union), CCS (Union Coordinating Committee) and UR-19 (University Revolutionaries 19th of July).

3. Agrarian reform and bank and foreign trade reforms implemented by the Revolutionary Military Junta in 1979. The coup d'etat of 1979 marks the beginning of space for the development of the democratic process. The Revolutionary Military Junta formulated a proclamation of marked constitutional and democratic content, which was the political basis for the application of the reforms.

4. RN: National Resistance.

5. Comandante Shafik: Shafik Jorge Handal, formerly a permanent student of law at the National University. During the seventies, he was the Secretary General of the Salvadoran Communist Party. In 1980, when the PCS came to be part of the FMLN, he became a comandante, later becoming the General Commander of the FMLN, a position he holds now. He is one of the men in whom Fidel Castro has the greatest political confidence. For almost twenty years he had a strong rivalry with Marcial for hegemony and leadership within the PCS, within the organizations of the masses, and finally within the General Command of the FMLN.

6. Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo: Lawyer and professor at the National University. Since 1970 he has been Secretary General of the National Revolutionary Movement, a clearly social democratic movement. He has been president of the FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front) since 1980.

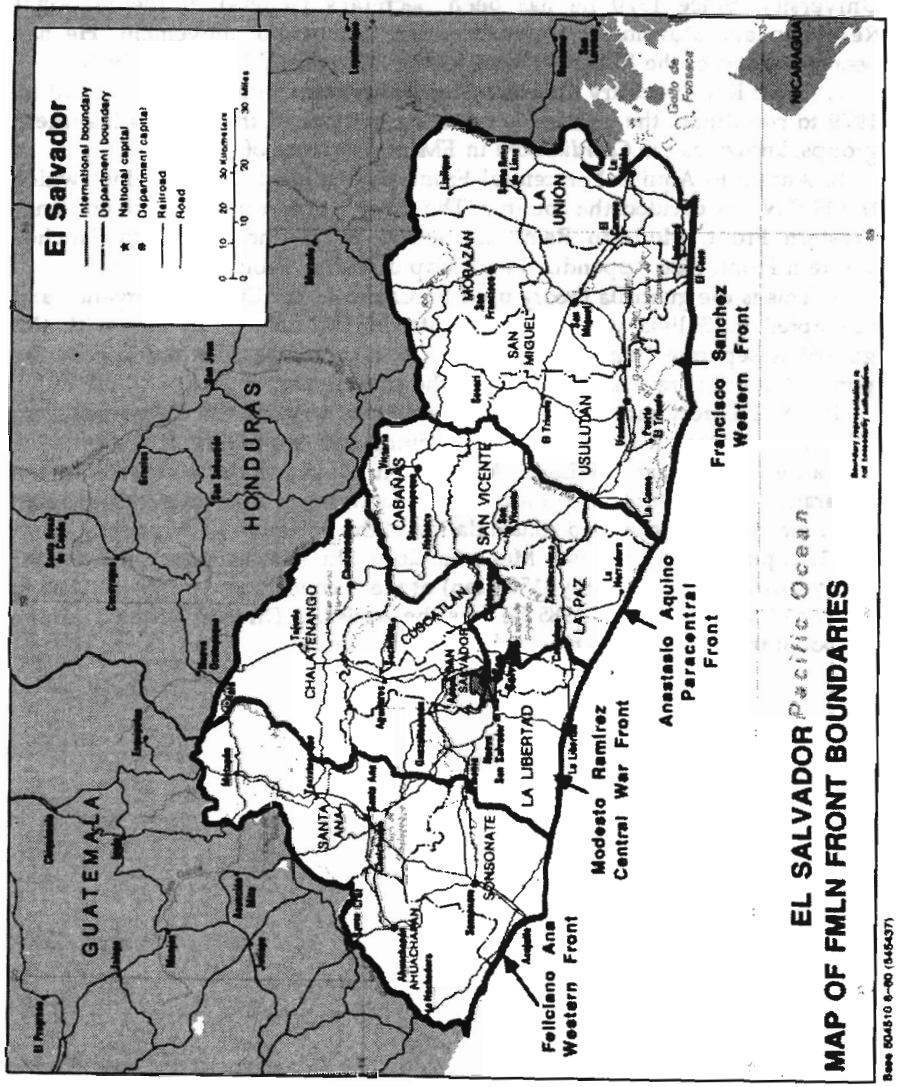
7. CRM: Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses, formed in 1979 to coordinate the political organizing activies of the various insurgent groups, known as the *Coordinadora* in FMLN literature of the period.

8. Anastasio Aquino Paracentral Front: One of the four fronts into which the FMLN has divided the country. The other fronts are the Feliciano Amas Western Front, Modesto Ramirez Central Front and Francisco Sanchez Western Front. (See Appendix B and Map of FMLN Front Boundaries.)

9. This is the guerrilla theory used by Castro in the Cuban insurgency and attempted in Bolivia in 1968. The center of the insurgency lies with the guerrillas separate from the population and therefore does not expose the population to the retaliatory attacks of the government.

10. DOE: Directorate of Strategic Operations, which is the Cuban entity in charge of military assistance to and training and supplying of the popular liberation movements in Latin America. It played a decisive role in the Nicaraguan revolution (it had a base of operations at that time in Managua) and in the development and consolidation of the FMLN in El Salvador.

11. Captain Juan Francisco Mena Sandoval: In 1981 he deserted from the Army along with a company (150 men) of the Second Brigade in Santa Ana in order to join the ERP. In 1985 he was the Assistant Director of the Training School of the ERP in Morazán.



3

Insurgent Ascendant—Insurrection 1981–1984

The majority of the FPL leadership generally understood the importance of moral power in the strategy of conflict. They also were responsive to the need to put into operation the classical principle of unity of command in the conflict. Nevertheless, the more military-oriented senior leadership throughout the FMLN prevailed and kept the five separate armed elements—giving the FMLN organization only umbrella status. Their determination to pursue a quick military victory over what was perceived to be a completely incompetent enemy lent continuing rationale for an almost completely military-oriented operational strategy.

Despite the failure of the "final offensive" of January 1981, the FMLN had sufficient organizational unity, manpower, arms, sanctuaries, and outside support to generate a more or less continuous and growing military effort from the end of 1981 through 1984. During that period, they were able to organize, train, and logistically support units that were capable of mounting attacks with as many as 600 men at virtually any time. They were also capable of controlling large portions of the national territory during that period. Given the admittedly poor internal support given to the guerrillas by the Salvadoran people, the ability to achieve this level of warfare is remarkable. This degree of military capability can only be explained in terms of the great amounts of external support enjoyed by the FDR/FMLN.

Rojas: The Government Junta of El Salvador came out of the much-publicized offensive strengthened, and it achieved its political objectives in the Apaneca Pact.[1] The military seemed definitely resolved to follow the democratic process and the coup d'etat so

desired by the FMLN did not materialize. To the contrary, everything seemed to be waiting for the March elections the following year. The FMLNwas looking for a way to resist, to develop, and...to advance in any way possible.

Castellanos: Militarily the Junta planned to annihilate the growing FMLN army by means of a strategic plan of pacification and counterinsurgency. If things didn't go well [for the Junta] in the interior of the country, the FMLN would capture international attention and solidarity. Later that solidarity would permit the FMLN to obtain the recognition of belligerency status that would crystallize in the French-Mexican Article of recognition.[2]

The FMLN—in an error that it was going to pay for very dearly later—gave absolute priority to military development, practically leaving aside the masses or, better put, not offering the masses any alternative except to join the people's army. At that time, some fifteen or twenty thousand people joined the army. They were people who, frustrated by the failure of the "final offensive," went looking for the arms abandoned by the deserters and the fallen. At that time there were only about three thousand armed men. It was 1981 when the massive influx of arms began to be routine. The influx of arms depended on two things: the routes they were going to use and the political situation in Nicaragua.

The first route was by air from Managua, landing in various haciendas that had runways (like the San Carlos hacienda near the coast in San Vicente). Later they dropped the arms and ammunition in heavily protected boxes, until the Costa Rican pilot—Romero Talavera—was arrested and the air corridor almost completely abolished.[3] However, the maritime corridor between Chinandega in Nicaragua and Usulután (on the Jucuaran coast) was functioning, managed by the ERP. That is where the greatest number of weapons entered. I calculate that from the end of 1981 to the end of 1983, about seven thousand arms with ammunition entered the country.

The other factor that affected the flow of arms was the situation in Nicaragua—something that they don't admit. The rhythm and flow of logistic supplies were affected by favorable or unfavorable political conditions. Suddenly they [the Nicaraguans] would feel that they were going to be attacked and they would cut the flow. However,the most interesting thing is how they took advantage of the situation in order to determine how they were going to distribute the arms and when the arms were going to arrive.

Rojas: At that time did the ERP seem to be the best armed?

Castellanos: They were the ones who managed the principal corridor, the maritime one. The Cubans and Sandinistas gave out arms to the whole FMLN, but they gave more to the ERP. It was evident that overnight the ERP was able to produce nine thousand armed men. The intention of the Cubans was to equalize things, since earlier the air corridor had been fundamentally managed by the FPL. There was a whole series of maneuvers by all the organizations, maneuvers that were managed by those supplying the arms and munitions.

Rojas: If each organization controlled a corridor, what happened to those who didn't have a corridor?

Castellanos: Not every group had a corridor, but those who did could maneuver, by acting as customs officers, and thus could keep part of what belonged to another. There were times in which there were serious discussions and friction between the leaders of the various organizations about this topic—discussions that the Cubans and Sandinistas mediated. There came a time, however, when the Cubans said, "If this continues the arms shipments will stop!"

As a result of this ebb and flow of arms, the best equipped were the ERP and the FPL. Some other organizations such as the PCS and the PRTC had more arms than people, and they then buried some of the arms. The Cubans found out and established a new criterion for arming—according to the degree of development that each organization had achieved. This struggle reached its culmination in 1984, when it was decided to give more arms and munitions to the ERP and the FPL.

Parenthetically, here one can see that each organization only looked after itself, that it was only a pragmatic unity, and that the unity was not formed in order to achieve victory and develop a program for the majority. How else can one explain that there were some people without arms and others who buried arms? That disparity was the exclusive result of the Cubans' decision, made on their own, to give more arms to the ERP in order to put them on the same level as the FPL. At that time, the ERP was a day-to-day movement that thought little about ideological things.... Ideologically they weren't Marxist-Leninists. Therefore, the Cubans thought that the best way of grabbing this strong, decisive organization was to compromise it, by giving it preferential treatment in the distribution of arms.

That wasn't the case with Marcial and the FPL. He was a Marxist-Leninist and a great admirer of Fidel; however, he was autonomous and tried to attract the ERP in order to get the General Command of

the FMLN. The National Resistance was not very trustworthy, because it had already separated from the ERP, and the PRTC wasn't very relevant. The Cubans—who had already discounted the PCS as an appendix of their own—constantly maneuvered to attract the ERP and at the same time secure Marcial and the FPL.

This arming of the organizations is what permitted a new military stage in 1983: annihilation and requisition. The operations of the FMLN had arrived at such a point that the Armed Forces were converted into a source of arms. This stage would have been impossible without the help and solidarity of the Cubans and Sandinistas. By 1983, 60 percent of the arms came from the exterior, and 30 percent were acquired by the FMLN by requisition and the black market. Requisition refers to the means by which the FMLN took arms from the army; these arms principally enabled them to augment their fire capacity: artillery (90mm and 57mm cannons, 81mm and 60mm mortars, and 50 caliber and M60 machine guns).

All this time, the FMLN was acquiring a certain power to act and—something it hadn't had before—operational techniques. Its organic growth is evidenced bythe Brigades,[4] each constituted by a group. A battalion would have at least 300 armed men, with 150 cartridges for each weapon.

Encouraged by this gradual growth, they [the FMLN] almost abandoned attacks on mobile objectives and went on to attack fixed targets like garrisons, such as the Fourth Brigade.[5]

During their period of ascendancy, the General Command of the FMLN developed a strategy which emphasized large-scale operations complemented by sabotage and terrorism in the urban areas and the countryside. While the revolutionaries were concentrating their efforts on the military aspects of the war, the Second Revolutionary Military Junta under José Napoleón Duarte made the gaining of legitimacy—and, thus, internal and external support—its first priority. The first stage of the Junta's national political plan was the elections in March 1982 to select the representatives to the Constituent Assembly.

Rojas: After the failure of the "final offensive," the street fighting that had characterized earlier years was greatly reduced. Did the people feel very defeated?

Castellanos: The negative experience that the masses had, in what I call the "try-out" for an uprising, made them very frustrated. To create a front of the masses takes years; it can't be done overnight. One has to

win sectors, consolidate them, win over the people...and one must also consider the political situation—for example, the repressive conditions enveloping the country. Evidently, the military work had left the work with the masses behind, and there was always pressure to enter the guerrillas. There are people like Salvador Guerra and [José] Dimas [Alas], who are only preoccupied with the military—forming platoons, battalions, filling the ranks.[6]

Rojas: What happened in the FMLN after the elections of 1982?

Castellanos: In my judgment, they fell into error. They stopped talking about the "final offensive," and began talking about a new offensive. There hadn't been any elections for five years, and that was the first time the FMLN had to face up to an event of that type. The elections bothered the FMLN because they were taken by the FMLN as a measurement of strength. If the regime managed to hold the elections, even minimally, it was going to mean a military defeat. Then the FMLN proposed to boycott the elections, at least 80 percent, and they laid plans to capture garrisons. Those who took the lead in this, again erroneously in my opinion, were the ERP. The ERP with its units were going to take Usulután Garrison, principally. The Forces of the Paracentral Zone were going to stop the reinforcements who would be coming from San Vicente. This time they were not planning an assault; they were going to make the CIFA Garrison and the Fifth Brigade fall by siege. There would be an attack on the garrison at Chalatenango. The units of Guazapa would attack San Salvador on the periphery.

Rojas: But what happened with the masses?

Castellanos: The ERP gave the order for the masses to rise. If this was a mistake in 1981, it was even more so now. Nevertheless, the order was given again, but it wasn't made public. What is the criterion that they used for an insurrection? It wasn't because they had been working on the bases, and there had been a lot of mobilization (as in 1979–1980), but because they believed that simple military action was going to generate a spontaneous uprising among the people. That is why they attacked on the periphery (Mejicanos, Cuscatincingo, Apopa): because they believed that the people were going to rise and support them militarily.

I was in San Salvador when we received the order to rise, or call for an uprising, but we thought—"How are we going to call for an uprising if the conditions aren't right?" I took the order to the nearby cadres and we all felt the same—that the people were retrogressing, that the

masses were in an enormous reflux, that they couldn't stick together, and that it was a preposterous idea.

The ERP—which was always more short-term, and didn't view the war as a long-term thing—wanted triumph now, or at most in one or two years. The RN was the same—desperate people. They thought that if the elections were held and they did not succeed in putting the regime in a difficult position, we would go backwards. And they made the craziest proposals. Joaquín Villalobos came to the point of suggesting the evacuation of the rear guard, taking everything out that was in the controlled zones, the armed units, the militia, everything, and throwing it all into the cities in order to generate insurrectional fervor.[7] Marcial, with the FPL, suggested that if as in 1981 the uprising didn't succeed, this [plan] would be the end of the FMLN, that they couldn't evacuate the rear guard, and that it was necessary to work up a military plan for the peripheries of the cities, but at the same time they had to leave units, the indispensable ones, in the rear guard. Fidel supported that view.

Rojas: When you say, "Fidel supported that view," what does that mean?

Castellanos: That upon seeing the plan of Villalobos, Fidel and his officials of the Directorate of Strategic Operations objected to the idea of evacuating the rear guard.

Let's return to the 1981 offensive; it, I repeat,was not a final one. Instead , they spoke of an offensive which put the regime in a destabilized state and, after that, in a short while they were going to defeat it and take power.

This offensive has a common denominator with the one in 1981: they were influenced by an insurrectionist mentality. The basic thing would be the uprising of the masses; all one had to do was to provoke them. This mentality was well established throughout the FMLN, and I believe that was for two reasons. One was the recent experience of the Sandinistas. What happened in Nicaragua wasn't insurrectionism; there the uprising took place, and the Sandinistas took power. The military aspects of the overthrow of Somoza were not decisive. The military was an element that assisted, but the decisive element was the uprising of the masses, the general strike. The Sandinista army had no more than five thousand men. What definitively shifted the balance was the uprising of the masses. The Cubans and the Sandinistas possessed by a triumphal euphoria, transmitted it to them and incited the FMLN. And the FMLN believed it.

The second thing was that inside the FMLN were organizations that have a short-term mentality, congenital to their political-ideological development, and they believed the arguments and the flattery of the Sandinistas, who believe in insurrectionalism. The FPL is more in tune with the theory of a prolonged popular war, in which each opportunity, each offensive, means a step forward in the process, and an advance to higher stages of the struggle that will culminate with the winning of power. The ERP, the PRTC, and the RN believe that opportunities are decisive, and they form the majority in the FMLN, blending the Cuban and Sandinista positions. The Cubans, by managing logistics and giving their opinions, orchestrate FMLN actions.

Rojas: In an insurrectionary scenario we have the idea of a revolutionary army that comes, and the people go out into the streets and dig trenches and take up arms and in some way participate in the taking of power. At what time did you foresee this in those years?

Castellanos: At no time. What happened was sporadic, partial. The FMLN was under the impression that because some leaders and commanders were influential in such and such a quarter or neighborhood, that quarter would submit. They thought it would be like that. The leaders of the FMLN are guilty of ignorance of reality, but even more guilty are the Cubans and Sandinistas who kept on saying, "That's how it happened in Nicaragua, and that's what will happen here." They strengthened the short-termers; they had their protégés, whom they put in positions of leadership. It was an abortion arranged by the short-termers and the Cuban-Sandinistas. They caused the defeat . . . and the current state of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement. It seems that the advisors are responsible for the greater portion of the disaster because they were not simply advisors but also implemented the logistics, and gave arms so that things would be done as they wished. Because...who decides? He who has the frying pan by the handle.

Rojas: Political work or a good intelligence service would have warned you that the people weren't going out into the streets. Don't political conceptualization and the military go hand in hand?

Castellanos: The insurrectional aspect in this case wasn't based on political work. It was only a speculation on the part of the spontaneitists, skillfully implemented by the Cubans and Sandinistas. That was the sharp rock that they were seated on.

Rojas: How did they evaluate this inside of the FMLN?

Castellanos: There was no evaluation—that is what is so sad—there was no collective evaluation of what happened in 1982. It was evaluated by the Cubans and Sandinistas, but they did it directly with each one of the organizations.

They spoke of errors and said, "War is like that; there are stumbles, that's okay, there is progress." They told us in the FPL that we never should have taken the elections as a measurement of strength, when they themselves had been in agreement with that assessment. There were no recriminations, no assigning of guilt; they only said that errors were committed.

Rojas: How did the FMLN define their actions after 1982?

Castellanos: After 1982, whether they wanted to or not, the FMLN abandoned tactical waves (offensives) designed to provoke insurrections, military coups, and instability in the regime. It was the Cubans themselves who advanced this correction, but separately with each organization. Speaking in the old terms, they tried to plan a continual offensive that would permit organic development, to go from the simple to the complex in a process that could be prolonged or short-term, but they already foresaw a longer period. Since 1982, these people have not planned waves or offensives at the national level again.

Then they [the Vietnamese] took up the theory—a little bit of Mao—of beginning clearing the land from the countryside to the cities, and at the same time taking actions all over the country. From zones under control they could gradually harass the cities. This was the plan that they suggested to Marcial.

Rojas: Who pointed out this prolonged war plan to Marcial?

Castellanos: The Vietnamese—that was their war plan. The military work began in each organization, on each battlefront. Each one tried to clear its zone by attacking small posts, trying to force the Armed Forces to remain in their garrisons. These attacks on fixed objectives, within the FPL, for example, permitted the development of what would be the FES (Select Special Forces)—the most dynamic and assault-capable instrument, with their captains and leaders trained and equipped in Cuba.

By this activity they succeeded in clearing wide zones, especially in the rear guard, such as Chalatenango, Morazán, and Northern San

Miguel, and they succeeded in making the Armed Forces retreat into their garrisons. In the cleared areas they created what was called Popular Powers, a new administrative and political form of managing the cantons that they controlled in an independent way outside the ruling system of the country.

In 1981 we formed some Popular Powers in San Vicente. We elected a president and secretaries for organization, education, propaganda, and production; we even had one for judicial affairs. That was the new, rising, government that the FMLN imposed in the zones under their control; it was a new political power.

Rojas: Did the people follow the leadership the guerrillas organized in their towns and villages?

Castellanos: Yes, in the towns under the control of one of the organizations of the FMLN. They were involved in everything; for example, the production plans were based on collective production, individual or mixed. The collectivity was for the armed units; thus they demanded that the peasant working there produce for those who fought, and in return they would offer him security, remove him, save him, in case the army arrived. All this meant a micro-attempt at communal administration in the (remote) possibility of obtaining power. This was creating a new political power, a new organization, new customs. For example, if someone committed a murder in the town, he went to public justice. Drink was not permitted in those places. If someone beat his wife, she could go to the Popular Power to register a complaint.

Rojas: Did these Popular Powers have some similarity with the CDS, the Sandinista Defense Committees?

Castellanos: No, they were very different. The CDS in Nicaragua were more on the defense level, for neighborhood security; robbers; a possible invasion.

Rojas: The Popular Power that you were developing in San Vicente—who controlled it?

Castellanos: In La Paz Opico there was a Central Council of Elections that was set up and organized so that the people went there to see what it was all about. They became informed, grouped, designated this one or the other; they made proposals—generally they were leaders of the community—and they were elected by direct

vote, in an open assembly. The new authorities worked up plans for the next five or six months. The Secretary of Education, for example, had to present a literacy plan for the children, the majority of whom did not know how to read, and also for the adults. For the latter, the courses were more political, including basic notions of Marxism.

The Party was in charge and controlled everything.[8] The guerrillas didn't get involved. The Party and its structures were what was behind it. In corn production, for example, the Popular Power designates how many fields (*manzanas*) will be cultivated and if it will be done in a collective or individual form. In collective form 80 percent of the production will be for the armed units and 20 percent will be left for those who cultivated it. There we come upon the principal problem: the people are for the individualistic plan as it exists now in the system, and he who cultivates believes that he is going to receive individual profits. This is a great problem and people resist a lot. Of course, when they are given some economic help and the offer of protection from the army, they feel an obligation.

Rojas: What is the general level of reception of this trial among the people?

Castellanos: They assimilate it, but not all of its content. They know that the guerrilla is around there. Even though the guerrillas don't seem to be linked to the Popular Powers, they know the new authority is the guerrillas.

Rojas: Was all of this done inside of the war context, guaranteeing the rear guard so that the units could advance?

Castellanos: In effect, this succeeded principally in Chalatenango and Morazán; and in this the FPL agreed with the ERP. During 1982-1983 the Popular Powers were amassing in the same measure that the Army had been putting itself in its garrisons. However, upon beginning the New Strategic Plan of the Armed Forces in 1983, the Army began to acquire greater mobility, and as we soon saw, the Army began to throw the guerrillas out of their establishments and the zones they controlled. There were confrontations, the people left, and there were no more masses—thus the Popular Powers began to disappear. We were trying to resist as the Vietnamese had done—by reinforcing the rear guard, and teaching the people who remained how to subsist. (The Vietnamese, in order to evaluate the progress of the revolutionary process, would ask us, "How many Powers have you formed now?") However, resisting, with the new operational capability that the

Army was acquiring, was more difficult every day. Each time they detected the Powers more rapidly, and what they did was to take the people away to the refugee camps.

Rojas: With respect to the masses in the city, in the countryside, and even in the controlled zones, things were not going well. What was happening in the military aspect?

Castellanos: Here we have to recognize, of course, the presence of the United States, who supported and implemented the Army's greater operational capability, which came about by the end of 1983. 1983 was the year that the FMLN achieved its highest development on the military level and its poorest work with the masses.

Operations like El Paraíso gave everybody enthusiasm for entering into decisive battles, by means of which the struggle would be consolidated and developed. Joaquín Villalobos proposed as the ERP's objective winning territory in the Oriente up to the Panamerican Highway and the coast, and thus cutting the country in two. He wanted to dominate the heights and fortify them, but where the plan failed (and that would justify the subsequent strategic change) was that the work with the masses was not equal to the military work. The Vietnamese advanced militarily in decisive battles, and at the same time, caused uprisings among the people and organized them. Here a garrison, for example in Chalatenango, was attacked, and that was exclusively a military action; in the cities the people were afraid, as mere spectators. In Morazán the same thing happened—the BRAZ (Rafael Arce Zablah Brigade) of the ERP attacked Gotera on various occasions, but there was no work with the masses, and the people looked on like spectators. At the end, during the evaluations that we made about military things, we always arrived at the same point: the masses did not respond to the provocations and the incursions that the military units made. There was no insurrection . . . but in Managua there was violence.

Managua, January 1983

Rojas: The January 1983 meeting of the Central Committee of the FPL: Central Committee in the residential neighborhood Las Colinas in Managua was one of the many that the FMLN organizations held in Nicaragua. Managua was also the site of the General Command of the Salvadoran guerrillas.

The young comandantes and leaders of the FPL were about to conclude a long, tense week of debate about the war in El Salvador.

Comandante Marcial the highest leader of the organization, pulled his little beard with disquiet.

Comandante Ana María: Ana Melida Amaya Montes, second-in-command, with smooth gestures indicated her acceptance of the positions of the rebel commanders. She, as a professor, was able to understand, but Marcial, an old labor leader, was waiting for the outcome.

The criticism and self-criticism—a kind of Marxist public collective reprimand—had been implacable toward the two leaders, accusing them of having created a division in the FPL because of their selfish attitudes and because of the quantity of rumors that they had spread to the Sandinista and Cuban leaders.

Castellanos: Marcial, the man, was senile in his ideas and the moment had arrived in which the substantive theme of unity at the ideological level was put forth. This was a very sticky point, in which Marcial suffered major defeat. More than 70 or 80 percent voted for other proposals, which hadn't even been made by Ana María. We had all grown, evolved, and our analyses differed substantially from Marcial's position. Those of us who presented the theme of National Reality and the Politics of Alliance pointed out that it wasn't necessary to confront all of the bourgeoisie, only the oligarchy. We even said that there were members of the oligarchy who could be pulled along and that we should make a tactical alliance with the rest of the bourgeoisie. Marcial couldn't swallow this plan, but we put it forth and it was approved. Other positions vis-à-vis dialogue or how to handle the revolutionary government that needed readjustment weren't accepted either by Marcial. During the whole meeting, there was a feigned smile on his face—something that I hadn't seen before on him and that couldn't be forgotten.

Afterwards came the criticism and autocriticism, where those two, as well as the rest of us there, would be judged. Marcial was accused of having encouraged a series of rumors and gossip that the Sandinistas and Cubans already knew about—that in the FPL there was a divorce between him and Ana María, two lines, a division in the movement—and that, besides, he didn't want to adjust to the new unitary lines of the popular movement. Ana María was criticized for her attitude of complacency, she no longer wrote, and she wasn't as analytical as before. They also accused her of giving documents to and making agreements on her own with the Cubans. All this presented a very pessimistic image of the movement.

Rojas: Did they live in Managua?

Castellanos: Yes. Their administrative office, their secretary, and their security were there. The General Command of the FMLN was also there.

Rojas: What did you young comandantes think about going to Nicaragua, meeting the "Chiefs," and finding this series of disputes?

Castellanos: Above all it was a product of their distance from the process, that not being here involved them in disputes and problems far from the clash of the liberating struggle. Of course, one of the agreements that was made was that the two of them would come here, to El Salvador. Marcial would come in August and Ana María later. They had always wanted to come, but the arrangement had been that they stayed there: first, because at their ages, they couldn't put up with life in the mountains, and second, because the risk of losing in combat people of their rank would be a very telling loss for the whole revolutionary movement. They were very valuable in strategic matters, and in giving a more integrated concept of the process internationally. Even so, we came to the conclusion that the most damaging thing was to be separated from the process and under the noxious influence of the surroundings in Managua.

Rojas: What was Marcial's attitude?

Castellanos: With the decision that both of them should return to El Salvador, the last point of the criticism and self-criticism ended. But then Marcial surprised us and took out of his attaché case a three-page document with a series of charges against Ana María, as though he were both the prosecutor and the victim. There he accused her of being perfidious and giving herself up to the other organizations, and thus being a traitor to the principles of the organization. If this had been true and provable, Ana María would have been immediately deposed. None of those of us who were there endorsed Marcial's affirmation; on the contrary, it was repudiated, and it was concluded that that document didn't even merit discussion.

Then came other accusations and charges, of which only a part was discussed and the rest eliminated. What was discussed was Ana María's having arrived at agreements with the Cubans in Havana to create joint commands in the military and having done so on her own and at her own risk. There had been no consultations about this, and attention was called to this—we were practically saying to her that she shouldn't abuse her position, and actually the Central Committee made this observation to her.

Rojas: What did Ana María say while Marcial made his statements?

Castellanos: Nothing. She was surprised. What she had been seeing was that at the plenum there was no sympathy for Marcial's statements, and that he was more despised than ever. She made the analysis that in the criticism and autocriticism the two of them had been accused, and it was a pity that the two highest leaders received the two worst evaluations. The old timers were perplexed and surprised to find themselves confronted in this discussion by the comandantes who were in the country while they were immersed in their internal personal problems. That was Ana María's evaluation of the situation, as though she realized Marcial had come out the worst.

The meeting ended with agreements that weren't to Marcial's liking, either, but there, one can see his hypocrisy. He even proposed that from then on the first and second leader ought to work collectively, that they ought to correct the methods of the ideological struggle, and that a plan ought to be made to avoid a whole series of problems and to change the existing image of division in the organization.

More than twelve hours had passed since Marcial made his accusations. Ana María was happy with the result of the meeting. Marcial, with his sick mentality, believed that Ana María had prepared the whole plenum in order to oppose him. He felt completely defeated.

At the end, Comrade Rebeca from the Paracentral Front asked to speak and said, "Marcial is going to boycott these agreements," and began to cry. We all looked at her, finding it strange; we said that the comrade should measure her words and be less emotional, but she kept staring at Marcial as he was leaving, and she repeated, "Marcial is going to sabotage these agreements." He not only sabotaged them; he also eliminated Ana María.

The need for unity of effort and agreed-upon strategic objectives is a basic tenet for success in an insurgency or counterinsurgency Even the unity forced upon the FMLN by the Cubans gave impetus to the FMLN's cause and allowed it to gain military successes during the period of ascendancy. However, the refusal of the senior leadership of the different armed factions fully to integrate forces and their decisions to ignore the council of their own "politicos" regarding the absolute need to supplement military action with a rigorous appreciation of the moral and political dimensions led to continuing internal ideological strife. Castellanos provides a good insight into the internecine battles that led to the deaths of two of the FPL's most senior leaders.

Rojas: . . . let's go to the beginnings of Marcial and Ana María. Who were they, what did they do, and what were their disagreements?

Castellanos: There are biographies about them; I can only add what I know, what I lived through. Marcial came from the planning group; I began to hear about him in the seventies. He was the principal strike promoter, and already in 1968, 1969, he was engaged in an ideological struggle with the Communist Party until he came to found the FPL with José Dimas Alas and other leaders in April of 1970.

What I know about Ana María is that at the beginning her principal activities were in ANDES, and her principal contribution was to consolidate that movement as a union and then take it away from PCS and RN influence and bring it into the FPL's area of influence. I think Ana María's major contribution to the FPL was to form the BPR (Popular Revolutionary Bloc) in 1975. *El Bloque*, as it was known, was the organization that imprinted upon the movement of the masses a style of struggle that was fundamentally combative. She was the builder of the front of the masses—a charismatic, well-loved leader. Because of her intellectual capabilities and her party discipline, in five or six years she came to be the second-in-command of the FPL. She made a good team with Marcial, and since both were charismatic leaders and one came from the labor sector and the other from the middle class, they gave a very effective strategy to the FPL, at the level of the masses as well as in military matters. The two fought alongside each other during the whole stage of the ideological struggle with the PCS; they agreed and supported each other fully. It wasn't until 1981 that certain factors arose that changed the relative situation between them and their relations with the organization. For them the Marxist-Leninist concept was basic. Being among the New Left was also a fact, but what specifically unified them was the line the FPL followed, very different from that of the ERP or the National Resistance.

Rojas: What specifically began creating differences between them?

Castellanos: During the whole decade of the seventies both worked on the fronts of the masses and in the military field. In 1980 a fundamental change began, which was a fuller entry in the stage of unity with the other organizations. But upon entering into unity, as he was obliged by the circumstance, Marcial did not change, and that was the problem, because Ana María did change. It appeared that Marcial gave a leap and became a unitarist, but he only went after his personal interests and thus succeeded in being named General Coordinator of the

FMLN, almost the equivalent of a Comandante General. Then he was a happy man; he had the recognition of the Cubans and Soviets that he so desired. However, the unity imposed by the Cubans had not convinced the leaders of the other organizations of the FMLN, and what came next was a fight for power, an excessive desire to achieve hegemony inside the Front. There came a moment in 1981 in which the ERP, the PRTC,[9] the PCS, and the RN formed a bloc against Marcial and forced him to resign before he was formally deposed, although he was allowed to remain as one more member of the General Command of FMLN.

Marcial came from Managua and met with us in La Montanita in Chalatenango and suggested to us that the people seeking unity, the other members of the FMLN, were intending to take away all possibility of growth from the FPL and to minimize it. Ana María didn't agree with this assessment, and Marcial accused her at that time (1981) of taking certain attitudes that didn't contribute to the cohesion and unification of the organization. He brought up examples of various issues that Ana María had discussed with the Sandinistas and the Cubans. They both entangled themselves in long discussions about who was taking charge; in the end everyone formed a bloc against Marcial's position. In one of the meetings, Marcial accused Ana María of making agreements in Havana, along with other organizations, to form joint military commands, joint units, agreements that the FPL knew nothing about.

The way I see it, the problem was that Marcial had to enter into a stage of forced unity, not through conviction. There was a time, when they removed him from the Coordinating Committee, that he even began to suggest that the FPL ought to pull out of the FMLN. Ana María, on the contrary, believed in unity.

Rojas: What role did the Cubans play in this dispute, since they were the creators, or the enforcers, of unity?

Castellanos: Here a very diplomatic tactic was developed by the Cubans to prop up Ana María very discreetly without completely disavowing Marcial. The Cubans stimulated an affection for Ana María on the part of the leaders of the other organizations, and they also impelled her forward and supported her. There was a whole rapprochement and an envelopment of Ana María that bothered Marcial, and he was resentful of his comrades in the FMLN and even of the Sandinistas and Cubans. Then he approached, and he pointed it out repeatedly, the Vietnamese, where he felt he fitted in and received more understanding. The one that the Vietnamese saw of most

consequence in the FMLN was Marcial. For example, they had the Party Congress, and they invited Marcial, who began to seclude himself within his position.

Rojas: What was the intention of the Cubans?

Castellanos: They waited discreetly. At no time did they speak badly of Marcial; they were very careful not to create divisions among us. However, they did speak about the problem with the other organizations.

Rojas: And the Sandinistas?

Castellanos: They were more open . . . once in front of us. Bayardo asked Marcial how the politics of the handsaw (*serrucho*) was going.[10] Marcial didn't like these jokes of the fool Bayardo, as he called him. He understood and admired Tomas Borge [Nicaraguan Minister of the Interior]. He had his own coterie of friends and followers on all levels. And it was on those levels that Marcial and his followers began a campaign against Ana María, calling her a petit bourgeois, undisciplined, accommodationist. And at the Political Commission meeting in 1982 he accused her of wanting to make the organization deviate from the objectives that corresponded to interests of the proletariat, and of wanting to take it to the defense of the interests of the petite bourgeoisie. Once he suggested to me in private that Ana María no longer inspired confidence in him. To some of his more fanatical followers he even suggested that it was time to bring her to justice, but just as a way of talking, not as though it was something that was going to be done.

Managua, February 1983

Rojas: The first news out of Managua in February 1983 stated that Comandante Ana María had been assassinated in her home while she slept, and that the deed was attributed to a commando of the CIA, according to the version of Tomas Borge. Other versions said that the assassinated one was Comandante Ana Guadalupe Martínez, and then speculations arose concerning a supposed love triangle with Ana María and Marcial. A few days later, the information sources from Managua were silenced and the rumor of Marcial's participation in Ana Maria's assassination began to acquire substance until the facts became clear.

The first questioning had begun, and the Sandinista high command, headed by Daniel Ortega, was indignant. Even more importantly, the

Cubans suspected that the Sandinistas themselves had been involved in the matter. In Marcial's house, it seemed to be just another tranquil night. Comandante Marcial had retired to his room. He was singing, and his wife Tula and his secretary were in their rooms. The men of the Comandante's personal security squad were at their places. Discreetly outside of the house, near them, were hidden elements of Sandinista security, forming rings of supposed defense.

That night, once in his room, Marcial wrote a letter and then shots were heard. He had killed himself with a pistol that fired four shots simultaneously, given to him by the Panamanians. He died on the way to the hospital.

Castellanos: We who had just returned a month ago from the meeting of the Central Committee quickly decided to send Leonel Gonzalez to Managua to investigate.[11] He would be followed by Salvador Guerra and myself. We were going to investigate the death of Ana María. We knew nothing of the Marcial suicide, and it seemed strange to us that Leonel sent us messages from Managua, telling us to hurry up our trip.

We succeeded in leaving El Salvador with a false passport [and went] overland into Guatemala, and from there we flew on COPA to Managua. At Sandino Airport, Leonel and the political advisor of the Cuban Embassy were waiting for us. Once inside the car they told us of Marcial's suicide. The Sandinistas were worried and anxious, not only because the deaths had occurred, but also because the contras had defined their operations as a long-term war of attrition. Even though in private meetings the only thing that preoccupied us was the case of Ana María and Marcial, and the version that would be published about those events, the Sandinistas only spoke of the contras, of the economic crisis, of the blockade and the imperialist aggression. The ambience was very different from the triumphal euphoria that had reigned three years ago, when I had been in Managua eight months after the triumph of the revolution.

I don't know if it was our state of mind, because of what had happened, but everything seemed sadder, lonelier, more depressing to me: the lines in the supermarkets, the faces of the people, the watchfulness, and the security measures in the streets and residences. They recommended that we not go out into streets unless necessary, and when doing so to do it with much care. "Facundo Guardado was put in jail twice," the comrades told me as consolation after a patrol had detained us for incomplete documentation.[12]

Everywhere it seemed as though they wanted to give us explanations and recommendations on how to act and what to say.

Leonel, who was already quite knowledgeable about the situation

in Managua, brought us up to date. When we were alone, he told us without beating around the bush that the assassination of Ana María had been executed by Marcelo.[13] Marcial had lain low, and the only thing he said was that it was the organization who had to receive an account of all this.

He did not accept any responsibility, but he didn't deny it either. According to what Leonel told us, in a meeting Ortega, indignant, openly reproached Marcial for caring little about the Sandinista revolution, pointing out that the crime had never been approved, and that the crime was a greater one because it had been committed on foreign soil, historically damaging the Sandinista revolution. The accused replied that he would only answer to the organization.

In his office in the headquarters of the Defense Ministry, Comandante Lenin Cerna received us together with Bayardo Arce, Comandante Piñeiro, and a Cuban advisor named Luis. They gave us a detailed explanation of what had happened; they showed us photos, plans, diagrams, and statements declaring Marcelo guilty.

The next day in the bunker we had a meeting with Marcelo. He told us that he respected us, and we tried to give him confidence, and we asked him, for the good of the organization, to tell us the true facts. He testified there that Marcial was the one who gave the order and supervised the plan, but if we wanted him to, he would testify that Marcial didn't do anything and he would take responsibility for everything. During the trial in 1984, he exonerated Marcial and took full responsibility for the assassination. We asked him to make a video to present to the Revolutionary Council explaining the whole truth. He thought for a while, and told us perhaps another day. He wouldn't do it because he loved Marcial; he didn't know that Marcial had committed suicide. If they had told him, perhaps he would have committed suicide also. Marcial was a god to him. If the video recording had been made, all the doubts that remain in the revolutionaries here would have been laid to rest.

Rojas: And that letter that Marcial wrote at the time of his suicide?

Castellanos: In one of the letters that he wrote, he said that he was the victim of a plot against him by his brother allies. He sent greetings to his friends. He said that the organization would be reborn later; but this letter damaged everything, because he did not put that he was committing suicide because he had ordered the death of Ana María. He did not recognize his guilt, but instead made it appear that he committed suicide because of the plot against him, because he felt up against the wall. I think that a revolutionary never should commit

suicide; he should face up to the facts if he wants to be consistent with his ideas. Suicide should not be thought of, unless the man is crazy (and which means psychiatrically he could have been).

Initially the explanation we believed was that Marcial, when he saw that his role had been discovered, knew that it was the end for him, and he wasn't capable of facing reality. That was our conclusion, but afterwards I thought that there must have been pressure, insinuations from the Cubans and Sandinistas, for him to arrive at that point. He didn't have to do it; if the organization broke up and he was alive, a lot of people would have followed him. Who was going to doubt his word? It would have been enough for him to deny everything, and his followers would have gone with him.

Rojas: Therefore, were there groups interested in his living and others interested in finishing him?

Castellanos: I believe that in this matter Marcial took the initiative in a sick situation. Daniel Ortega's indignation was most evident.

An insurgency must have strong support from the people or exceptionally strong and consistent external support to succeed. This was well understood by the FPL leadership. Following a summons to Cuba by Castro Castellanos and other leaders from the FPL visited Moscow and Vietnam in order to reveal the circumstances of the deaths and to ensure that those supporters understood that the insurgent organization was still committed.

Castellanos: Fidel called us to Havana to report what happened. While I was there I met with [Defense Minister] Humberto Ortega. The meeting was all talk about the imperialists and the contras. "Look," he said, "if the imperialists intervene, we are all corpses. They are going to have to kill us all." He continued talking about the war that was wearing them down, that all the economic resources had to be used to defend themselves from imperialism. Here is a matter that I wish to emphasize. He explained the methods of Sandinista fighting: they were fighting the counterrevolutionaries, using the intelligence services and the masses in the cities to prevent the opposition from creating a social base. (Afterwards this was going to remind us of the divine mobs of which Tomas Borge spoke, referring to mobilization of the masses used to disrupt the organized meetings of the opposition.)

Another visit that wasn't on the agenda was made in our lodgings by Colonel Denis and his subordinates. Col. Denis was the Commander

of the Department of Strategic Operations. After listening to my narration of the facts and of the current state of the war, he told me that conditions for the advancement of the war were better now and that the most important thing within the unity that was being achieved was the strategic and tactical guidance of the General Command of the FMLN that was already functioning in the country. I brought him up to date on what Dr. Ungo, of the FDR,[14] had told me in Managua about his disagreement with the transfers of the [FMLN] Command to El Salvador, because the meeting of the seven (five from FMLN and two from FDR) would no longer work. But Colonel Denis told me emphatically that the FDR had no importance in the leadership and that another solution would have to be found for that problem.

We met the Soviet and Vietnamese ambassadors in their respective embassies. The former was pleased with the report I gave him; he told me that he was following the war in El Salvador very closely, and the advances on behalf of a unified position were very meaningful. He promised me that upon arriving in Moscow I would be received by a high Party leader so I could give him my report. With the Vietnamese, it was more or less the same, except that upon expressing his condolences, he put more emphasis on Marcial than on Ana María; then we spoke of El Salvador. He stated that in recent years the FMLN had made a historical advance and that for his part, as a representative of Vietnam, he was ready to offer his total political solidarity. He agreed to act upon my application for a special meeting to expound upon my report on Marcial and Ana María with more details.

The meeting with the political attachés of the embassies accredited in Cuba was very similar. Representatives of the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Hungary were there. The fear of all of them when they analyzed our national situation was that as the war advanced more favorably toward the FMLN, there was more probability of intervention on the part of the United States with its combat troops. They asked me what provision we had made for this situation, and I pointed out that, as in Vietnam, we first had to stop the intervention and then defeat the aggressive attitude of imperialism.

Rojas: How was the meeting with Fidel?

Castellanos: After we had waited three days, Fidel received us at about eleven at night in the Party headquarters, along with his key men in the American Department. Piñeiro, Efrain, and Martin were there. They asked us how we saw the problems and what we had decided.

We gave him our conclusions and told him that we believed that the matter inside the organization was going to be overcome. Fidel lamented what had happened, saying that the loss of Marcial and Ana María was irreparable. We explained what we knew about Marcial, and Fidel defined Marcial's actions as total craziness and told us that he had been going to ask Marcial to retire from the Party, and from politics, and to stay in Cuba to live, practically as a prisoner on the island.

Rojas: Yet, some months before, Castro had been encouraging Marcial?

Castellanos: Afterwards Castro was going to make him see that because of this situation with Ana María he ought to retire. At the end Castro exhorted us to continue developing the FPL; he said that if the FPL weakened, given its role in the FMLN, the latter would lose all perspective and that the FPL ought to come out of this situation more cohesive and strengthened.

Fidel was very worried throughout the meeting. There were many things he did not approve of in Marcial, but he had a great appreciation for the old fighter, who was a Marxist, and a 100 percent admirer of the Cuban process. We felt very sad.

Rojas: What did Fidel say to raise your spirits?

Castellanos: He made us see that the organization was going forward, that militarily it was going to excel in that year of 1983, that it was in a period of ascendancy, and that we ought to continue forward. We made him see the problems connected with the reaction of the bases, and we made a suggestion that he recommend to the FMLN and the other organizations that nobody should attempt to bring to light anything contradictory to what we were saying and doing, and that they should not take advantage of the situation to contradict us.

By "coincidence" in April, [Castellanos emphasizes the quotes] the Cubans recommended that the General Command of the FMLN ought to go into the interior of the country. In October they proposed the suggestion very forcibly. In November, the first meeting of the General Command took place inside El Salvador.

Rojas: What was the reason for this order or suggestion of the Sandinistas and Cubans?

Castellanos: They made it look as if the Command would have a more direct and concrete vision of the war, but in substance the reason was purely political, because with the case of Marcial and Ana María it

was even more evident that Nicaragua was the underlying seat of the FMLN. It was urgent, said the Cubans, to erase the intrigues of the Sandinistas with the FMLN. One must remember here the errors and stupidities committed in the Ana María matter: when Tomas Borge said that it had been the CIA; then he said that it didn't have anything to do with the Second Revolutionary Junta, that it was an internal problem of the FPL. The Nicaraguan Government looked very ridiculous, and besides their interference in the Salvadoran war was made very evident. Internationally speaking, this was serious for the Sandinistas as well as for the Cubans.

In September 1983, in a combined trip to explain the Marcial/Ana María affair and to begin a three-month training program, five of the FPL leaders went to Moscow en route to Vietnam.

Rojas: In Moscow, the Soviet leader for executive matters of the FMLN received them at the airport, took them to lodgings in the Party building, and put at their disposal a guide, translator, and controller, who accompanied them on a cultural tour (the ballet, circuses, and Lenin's house).

Castellanos: I myself had an interview with the second-in-command for Latin America on the level of Central Committee, Nicolas Fedor. He reiterated to me almost the exact thing that the ambassador in Havana had said, only I noticed that he put emphasis on the fact that they (in the USSR) had never given special attention to Marcial, but instead treated him as any other leader. I was surprised by the interest Fedor showed in knowing if the FPL, after the disappearance of Marcial, had readjusted its lines with respect to type of government, dialogue, unity, etc.

The dominance of the armed or violent revolutionary mentality had several obvious impacts on the FMLN in total and the FPL in particular. Focusing on armed conflict provided the ERP with increased support from the Cubans and Nicaraguans. At the same time, the apparent successes of this strategy created internal strife within the FPL which was losing prestige and power within the overall structure. The FPL's internal struggle, ending with the deaths of Marcial and Ana María, began to have international repercussions as the Soviets, Cubans, and Vietnamese began to question how the FMLN was going to overcome the problems that surrounded the deaths.

The fragile unity forced upon the Salvadoran insurgents by Castro was being tested. The failure of the FMLN to truly unite and the

equally obvious failure of the FMLN to maintain popular legitimacy through cultivation of mass support were precursors to the demise of the immediate armed struggle concept. Despite excellent training, the dominant military powers within the FMLN continued to ignore the importance of moral power in the strategy of the conflict, and the growing disunity that ensued created significant problems for the insurgents.

Notes

1. Apaneca Pact: Political project that led to the National Unity Government in 1982, in order to develop the constitutionalization of the Government. The basic content of the project was to form the Peace, Political, and Human Rights Commissions; to work on a constitution through the Legislative Assembly; and to formulate the electoral laws for president (1984) and representatives (1985). The Pact was approved by the parties that made up the Unity Government: the Christian Democratic, the ARENA, the National Conciliation, the Democratic Action and the Salvadoran People's Party.

2. French-Mexican Article: An agreement signed by France and Mexico on August 28, 1981, in which the FMLN was recognized as a political force, giving it the role of "belligerent force" in international opinion. The countries signing the pact had previously broken relations with the Government of El Salvador. The putting into force of the pact was an important diplomatic triumph for the FMLN that opened the doors for relations with other democratic countries. In 1985, however, France and Mexico renewed diplomatic relations with El Salvador.

3. Romero Talavera: Costa Rican Pilot Julio Santiago Romero Talavera, an FPL mercenary, captured by the Armed Forces on the coast of San Vicente on 25 January 1981, when he was transporting contraband arms for the guerrillas. In 1985 he was freed in an exchange of prisoners between the Government and the FMLN.

4. Brigades: The military development achieved in 1983 by the FMLN led the two most important organizations, the ERP and the FPL, to form the Brigades, formed by three battalions (700 to 900 men). The Rafael Arce Zablah Brigade (BRAZ) of the ERP and the Felipe Pena Mendoza Battalion Group of the FPL were the only ones that had been developed in the FMLN. The other organizations only had battalions of 150 to 200 men each.

5. The Army's Fourth Brigade Headquaters is located at El Parasio in the Chalatenango Department. In 1983, the garrison was attacked by the FPL, who destroyed all its installations and caused a great number of casualties to the Armed Forces. (See map of brigade locations.)

6. Salvador Guerra: See Atilio Cordero, p 17.

7. Comandante Joaquín Villalobos: Joaquín Villalobos Huezo. One of the founders of the Salvadoran Revolutionary Party (PRS) and of the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP) in 1972. Fundamentally, he is a military conceptualist and, together with Comandante Ana Guadalupe Martínez, responsible for the greatest number of "executions" of those who deserted or betrayed their organization. He has been the commander-in-chief of the ERP since 1974-1975. According to Castellanos, because of Villalobos's ill-defined political ideas, he has never had the confidence of Fidel Castro, and for this reason the Cubans have kept him "tied" to logistics. He has vied with Shafik for the position of Commander-in-Chief of the FMLN.

8. "The Party," according to Lenin, is "the vanguard detachment of the workers." For the FPL it is "the unit of select military cadres, who make possible the conduct of the military organisms and those of the masses." In reality there is no "Party" in the FMLN, but there are five organizations that are called the "Party" and coordinated by the General Command. The FPL states that, "The military is a result of the Partisan," pointing out the necessity of a political and ideological unity that permits the General Command to exercise a centralized, unified command.

9. PRTC: Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers, formed in 1975, a splinter of the RN, an organization that forms part of the FMLN. The PRTC formed the Popular Liberation Movement (MLP) and created the Popular Revolutionary Armed Forces of Liberation (FARPL), perpetrators of the Massacre of the Zona Rosa.

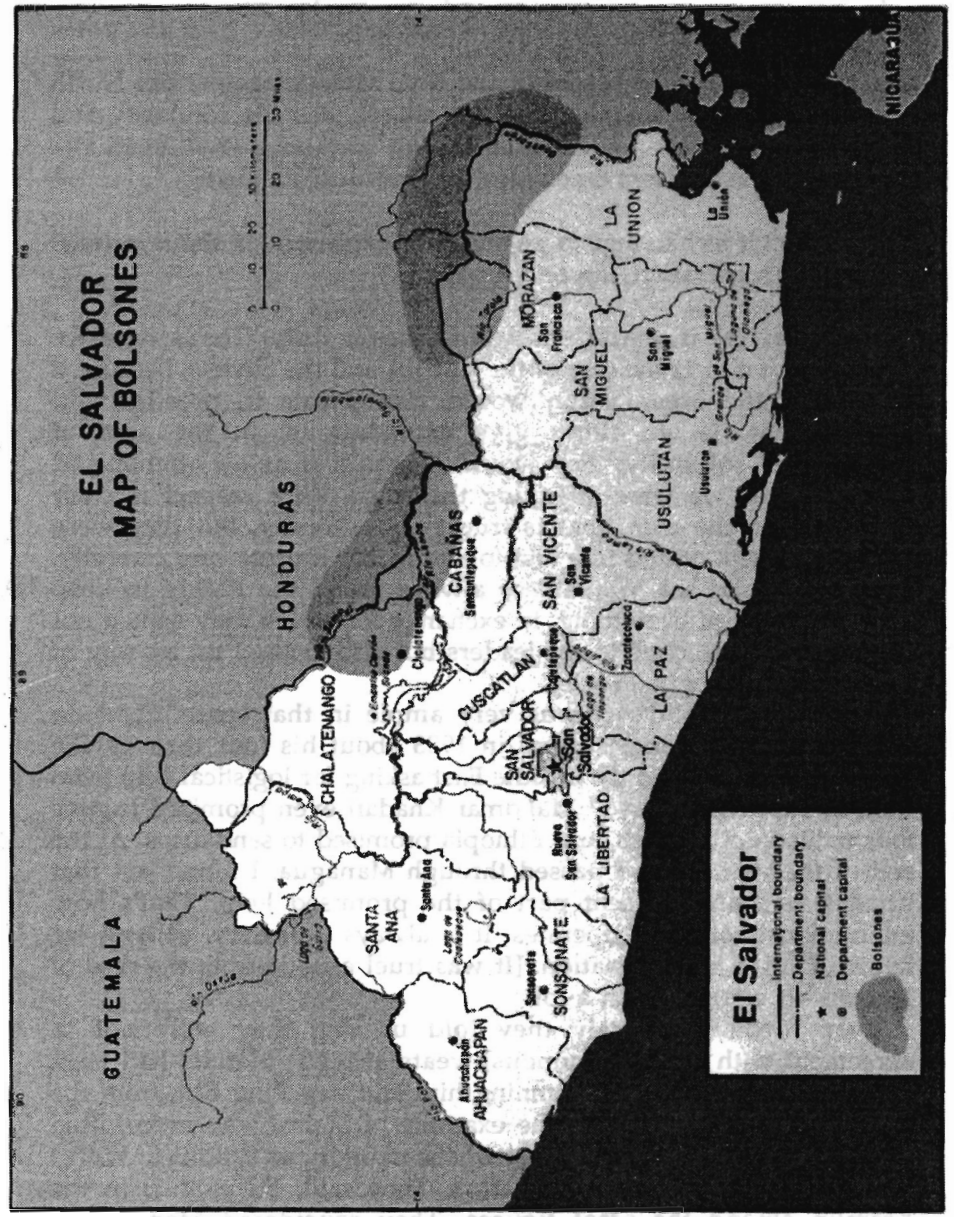
10. Bayardo Arce: Member of the group of nine commanders of the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN) in Nicaragua. He was responsible for continuing the war in El Salvador; he was supposed to watch and take care of the logistical and political necessities of each organization of the FMLN, at the same time developing an understanding with the Cubans.

11. Comandante Leonel Gonzalez: Pseudonym of Salvador Sanchez Ceren, professor, who was a member of the Executive Council of ANDES and disciple of Comandante Ana María, for whom he substituted for many years in the leadership of the masses of the FPL. He was appreciated more for his political than his military capabilities. Currently he is First Secretary of the Central Committee and Commander-in-Chief of the Popular Armed Forces of Liberation (FAPL), a military organism of the FPL, and member of the General Command of the FMLN.

12. Facundo Guardado.

13. Marcelo: Pseudonym of Rogelio Antonio Bazzaglia, member of the Central Committee of the FPL responsible for intelligence and information. A follower of Marcial, he did not vacillate in fulfilling the order to assassinate Ana María. Currently he is in prison in Nicaragua, serving the sentence given him by the Sandinista courts.

14. FDR: Democratic Revolutionary Front, founded in April 1980 and composed of the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the Popular Social-Christian Movement, (MPSC) and Independent Movement of Salvadoran Professionals and Technicians (MIPTES). It maintains a tactical alliance with the FMLN, fulfilling the role of giving democratic cover to the Marxist-Leninist positions of the FMLN.



4

Insurgent Ascendant—Disunity 1983–1984

Castellanos's numerous insights concerning the events of 1983 provide a more in-depth understanding of the type of enemy faced in an insurgency, as well as the nature of the insurgency itself. The first insight deals with the political and military training the insurgent leadership received. Castellanos, noting that he and the other FMLN leadership considered the Cubans' experience somewhat limited, concentrates on the political tone of the Vietnamese courses. Those courses emphasized the War of Information and concluded with the subjects of fighting imperialism (by taking the fight to the U.S. Congress) and negotiations—from which you take everything, give nothing, and use the time to consolidate gains.

Rojas: The group consisting of 16 Salvadoran guerrillas arrived in Hanoi [in September 1983] to take part in a course for leaders. Ka, responsible for America on the Central Committee, greeted Castellanos with special protocol at the airport, inviting him to get in Ka's car, while the rest of the delegation boarded a bus. (It was only because I am a member of the leadership, Castellano explained afterwards to the delegation.) The day following the welcome he was conducted to the Central Government House for a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Relations of Vietnam, members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, Ka, and a translator.

Castellanos: I gave my report on Marcial to them, but they were not satisfied. People there were so infatuated with Marcial that they didn't believe all of my version. One of them, no one less than the Minister of Foreign Relations, after I had been talking for three hours, said to me, "Well, the situation today is a little clearer." I felt that they had their doubts, but couldn't say anything against the Cubans

because that would create friction in the FMLN. Of course, one understands . . . they had lost their key person in the General Command of the FMLN, Marcial, and with him their political presence in the revolutionary movement in El Salvador.

Rojas: How did the Vietnamese react to losing "their strong man" and their area of influence among the Salvadoran guerrillas?

Castellanos: They assured us that they would continue giving courses. It was clear now that, as with the orientation and political influence that they exercised before with Marcial, they were going to try to continue the courses in the same direction at different levels of hierarchy.

Rojas: The differences between the Sandinistas and Cubans, and the Vietnamese were very evident. . . . Was this reflected also in the courses that they gave to the Salvadorans?

Castellanos: The Vietnamese competed with the Cubans. I observed great differences between the training that the Cubans gave and that done by the Vietnamese. They were different things.

Almost all the scholarship holders said that the courses that the Cubans taught were inadequate to the war conditions in our country for two reasons. One: the Cuban Revolution, in the 1950s, did not confront a counter-insurgent strategy so complete and refined as that confronting the FMLN. Two: [the Cubans] created and directed a *foquista* guerrilla army; they developed the Party structures after the revolution; and they did not attempt to create a movement of the masses, and the flow and reflux that repression unleashes. The government of Batista wasn't able to count on help from any other country! That's why it is so easy for Fidel to tell us that a guerrilla column of approximately 100 men defeated a battalion of the Armed Forces of the Government.

With the Vietnamese it was a very different matter. They had confronted the Chinese, the Japanese, the French, and the North Americans; this struggle, against different imperialists, had given them very valuable experience. Most recently, which should not be forgotten, they soundly defeated the counterinsurgency war and aggressive will of the United States. They knew how to combine three revolutionary factors assertively: the Party, the masses, and the military. Also, they knew how to combine them effectively with diplomacy. This was very interesting to observe, and very different from what the Cubans taught us as strategy for the triumph of the revolution.

Rojas: In Vietnam were the solidarity and help of the Soviets also present?

Castellanos: A decisive aspect of the final victory against the North Americans, as they themselves emphasized, was the solidarity and help of the Soviets...without curtailing anything—not even the presence of the advisors that operated via North Vietnam.

Rojas: Didn't it feel strange to go and give explanations about internal problems to some Asians lost on a map?

Castellanos: No, it wasn't strange! It was a duty. That's how we considered it also in the case of the Cubans and the Soviets, because if we didn't, the organization would lose points in prestige and development. If we didn't give explanations, in the area of international solidarity, they would interpret it as an offense and speculate that we were falsifying the truth. With respect to their being lost on the map, that is true geographically, but they were certainly present on this side and following the process very carefully. The Soviets and the Vietnamese always asked the FMLN to keep them informed of everything, in exchange for which they agreed not only to give instruction to the leaders but also to send us, by way of Cuba, thousands of M-16 rifles.

International solidarity was very ample in that sense. Facundo Guardado told me in Managua in 1983 about his tour through the countries of Africa and the Middle East asking for logistical help from Iran, Ethiopia, and Libya.[1] Mahomar Khadafi even promised to give four million dollars cash, and Ethiopia promised to send arms. At the end of the year, when I passed through Managua, I found out that Khadafi had already sent part of the promised help. That's how international solidarity operates. It is always necessary, at least we felt so, to give an explanation. [It was true] especially in the case of Marcial—it worried them a lot.

Even further, privately they told us that they were not in agreement with the [posthumous] treatment that Marcial had been given by the FPL—by condemning him and expelling him from the organization. They gave us the example of Stalin, who even killed Central Committee members, but whose meritorious actions in World War II were greater than his errors. They said, there he is in the Kremlin among the great figures. They considered Marcial the precursor of the line of the New Left; and even if his crime was reprehensible, his contribution ought to be recognized. They asked us to reconsider the measure of expelling him from the organization.

Manwaring: During earlier interviews, you referred to the fact that the training you received in Vietnam had a significant impact on you. Would you elaborate?

Castellanos: In Vietnam we felt the difference. We went there as a joint delegation, five represented the FPL, two represented the ERP, four or five went for the RN, and four or five went for the PSC, approximately twenty in total.

In Vietnam, the course we were given was in a hotel located in a province close to Hanoi. It was not at a camp site. In La Habana, it was also in a private residence. Since it dealt with more political and theoretical matters, we didn't need to be out in the field. In Vietnam it was the same. Some of the professors were generals, colonels, and majors. The majority of them were experienced in combat. There were experienced generals who had participated in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

The first topic for discussion dealt with the history of Vietnam since 1932: when Ho Chi Minh united the three political currents, how General Giap thought about forming the units and militias and how it turned into a great army, and what tactics were employed in order to defeat the French. They explained that in great detail and very well; they even had a mock-up showing the attack in Dien Bien Phu in 1954. For them that is history; it is their glory. They explained in great detail how they defeated the famous French general (I can't remember his name).

After the history involving the French, the subject of U. S. involvement was discussed. You could begin to see how they manipulate international politics. In the beginning it was the Chinese who helped them. Later came the issue of World War II against the Japanese, and how they allied with each other. In addition, the United States helped them at one time, but after that was over they returned to the attack. The agreements of 1954-1955 that divided North Vietnam from South Vietnam stipulated that the Government of South Vietnam was to hold elections, and it never did. They decided to create guerrilla forces to fight in Vietnam. Then the French withdrew, and in came the United States to help. There began a struggle against what they referred to as a puppet regime, and against the United States. You gradually began to see how the United States became involved and increased its force, and they themselves began to increase and develop.

You could see very well how they developed their tactics. For example, at the operative level, which they referred to as the Leopard Skin, one tactic consists of not giving a dividing line between

the enemy and themselves. In all regular wars there is a dividing line. In a guerrilla war there is none. Thus, Leopard Skin consisted of spotting the entire territory with conflicts of the type in which the enemy is not able to go in one principal direction. The FMLN has done it here the same way.

The other operational tactic is being able to utilize the [different] types of forces—the zonal guerrilla lines that are located in one zone, the regular lines, which are the mobile strategic forces, and the popular militias. They also give a large role to getting support from the people with their insurrections. For them victory consists of knowing how to combine decisive blows with popular insurrections, consolidating territory. That is what we referred to as a variant of a prolonged people's war, even though they don't accept it as a variant. That is what the FMLN forces are applying now.

They also stated they had another advantage. They created the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which maintained a constant logistical flow during the entire war, and it never ended. They said that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was an umbilical cord for them. Without it, the war would have been lost and the support of the people along with it. With the trail and the creation of regular units, they continued to advance until 1975, the year in which Saigon, or Ho Chi Minh City, was taken.

At the end of the course, the Vice Minister of Defense came to lecture us on the subject of the struggle against imperialism. Because we were going through the same situation back then, they considered it very important for us. The subject was how to attack imperialism.

Manwaring: Attack politically?

Castellanos: Yes, by means of the psychological war. They said, ". . . well, imperialism can be attacked by those who employ psychological warfare. A superpower is a great power... but we demoralized the Marines completely." Then they told us, "...to win, we have to bleed the North American Army as much as possible and do a lot of propaganda." They told us to "take the struggle to the United States, not only take it to the country, but at the political level, take it to the Congress."

They explained that in all of the mobilization that took place in the United States, they were involved in a large way. Of course, they had the support of the socialist bloc, because they do have one thing; when the socialist bloc supports a movement on all sides, it is constant, especially at the political level. That's what happened in the United States. In other words, it was a total war, total in the integral sense, a war at the political-military and diplomatic levels.

There was also a subject called the Negotiations Dialogue, which is provided by the *leductor*, or the second one, who gave us the lecture. They concluded that dialogue serves to seal a victory or to consolidate the advances achieved but never to make basic concessions. Concessions may be made, but they must not affect what has been won. They should be used to gain time. They teach very well how dialogue is used in the political sense. They explained how they used it when Henry Kissinger was there.

Another aspect they discussed in great detail was the work of the masses in Saigon and all of the cities of the interior, Pleiku and others. They also discussed how to work the movement of the masses internally; and they did it very well. They even organized the Buddhists in Saigon. They talked about the one who soaked himself with gasoline in order to take away the credit of the regime, or create contradictions within the puppet regime, as they referred to it. They also organized the students, professionals, and others. The movement of the masses is a very fundamental part. It is an entire subject, and an inclusive one, because from Hanoi you are taken to Saigon to see how the operations were effected and to talk with the masses, students, and workers organizations about how each functioned. They also took us to Haiphong, and in Haiphong we talked to the leaders of the workers about how they resisted the bombardments and about how to combine work with the resistance.

Another subject was how they counteracted the air force, in other words, how to develop anti-aircraft weapons, from the simplest to a rifle, or a C-3, or a Garand, which is very effective, or a mauser, which also helps to shoot down helicopters. [They talked about] how to ambush helicopters. For example, they explained that unlike World War II, in Vietnam, the United States lost something like eleven or twelve generals. Then they said, "The majority of the generals who were killed were shot down." That is how they talked about the development of the anti-aircraft attack.

Another subject was the Urban Commandos, the special forces, which were explained in relation to what operations they were fulfilling, for example, the attack on the North American Embassy in Saigon. They explained that in detail. Another subject involved a restaurant along the river which they attacked and, as a result, many officers died in the attack against the hotel. Almost all of the officers were there and those who attacked were dressed up as officers. When one goes to Saigon one is taken there. "We entered through here, into the Embassy as well, we fought here, we managed to go up to the second floor," all that in great detail. That is the school.

Manwaring: For three months?

Castellanos: Three months, but if one wishes, one can extend it for four or five months. Because the courses can last five or six months, half a year, we said, "...we are leaders, we have to be in the country. What is the shortest one possible? . . ."

We concluded that the course is adaptable to the situation in El Salvador, more so than the Cuban courses, because the Vietnamese know how to integrate the three elements—the political, military, and diplomatic aspects. They do it very well. That helped the FMLN a lot, because it made them understand the war more and encouraged them to continue. In my opinion, I would say that the Vietnamese are more dangerous than the Cubans. The United States was defeated. The teachings were very well synthesized.

When I returned from Moscow to Cuba, we spoke with the Cuban officers. They'd ask us, ". . . and how was the course?" "Well, magnificent. Better than those you give." They didn't like that, but the Vietnamese have more experience. The Cubans send people to Vietnam to receive training of special forces because the Vietnamese have the best special forces in the world.

We were given an offer to send people over there, and they were going to prepare special commandos for us. I don't know if that was ever done because that was back in 1983. In 1984 another delegation went for the three-month training course. In 1985, I don't know if they sent people to prepare themselves. It's possible—in Cuba there definitely were people who went to specialize in special forces.

While Castellanos was in Vietnam, the Central Command of the FMLN moved to El Salvador. While this move seemed correct from the military viewpoint, the loss of a close relationship with the FDR, which remained in Nicaragua, and with foreign governments and press tended to lessen further the perceived legitimacy of the FMLN—already weakened by the overly military and subversive nature of the FMLN's actions. With the death of Marcial, Leonel Gonzalez became Secretary General and Commander-in-Chief of the FPL. In this role he joined Shafik Handal of the PSC, Joaquín Villalobos of the ERP, and Roberto Roca of the PRTC at the first meeting of the Command the FMLN held in the interior of the country. Because of internal restructuring of the RN, Fermán Cienfuegos[2] was not present.

Rojas: The FMLN became isolated without the political cover given to it by the FDR . . .

Castellanos: When the Command came to El Salvador, the FDR lost a great measure of its influence, because they weren't present at all the discussions. We can see how the alliance began to crack in 1984 and 1985.

Rojas: And with respect to the meddling of the Cubans and Sandinistas?

Castellanos: Well, the comandantes were no longer so close at hand, so they [the Cubans and Sandinistas] couldn't listen to what was going on and then foment gossip and rumors. However, they managed to continue guiding the leaders and giving the correct orientation by means of the representatives of the high leadership who were there and those who traveled every one or two months. What functioned best was a very effective net of radio communications with Managua. From Morazán or Chalatenango communication and dialogue were very fast with the Sandinistas, and at any moment one could have recourse to them by the radio so that they could give an order or recommendation.

Rojas: At the level of your organization, the FPL, how did they see this process?

Castellanos: The members had taken sides in the matter of Ana María and Marcial. They argued over the political line, about deviation, but at bottom there was a degeneration of cadres, and of the leaders at a higher level, because of a lack of constant vigilance. The leaders had projected their personal rancors, and the example they gave wasn't good.

I am going to summarize the lines of the dissident faction, those who formed the FCR (Clara Elizabeth Ramirez Front),[3] which affirmed:

"The FPL had deviated from the correct line that Marcial had implanted.

"The current leadership of the FPL, principally the members of the Political Commission and the Central Committee, were not proletarian, but on the contrary, were petit bourgeois.

"In the management of Marcial's case there had been maneuvers to devalue his worth as a leader.

"The FPL, in proposing a broad Provisional Government, was proceeding towards a conciliation with the bourgeoisie.

"All the military action of the FPL was for the purpose of achieving dialogue and negotiation, which, according to their judgment, was incorrect.

"The current leadership of the FPL had militarized the organization, neglecting the work with the masses.

"The FPL, being carried away by unity and the FMLN, was sacrificing the principles and lines of the organization.

"Those in the FMLN were defeatist and had fallen in a revisionism of the new kind, the same as those of the FPL.

"The policy of alliances with the nonoligarchical bourgeoisie that the FPL proposed was a deviation from the true policy of alliances."

It was interesting that before we had called the PCS the revisionists of the new type, and now we were ourselves being called the revisionists of the new type. However, other matters of discipline were involved here. Those who left were people who had been compromised or had degenerated. When they left, they took the arms (the machine guns of the Urban Commandos) and some forty or sixty thousand dollars.

I detected a gentle hand in the FPL's leadership toward these people, especially their leaders. They should have been at least brought to trial, yet the most the FPL did was expel them and fight them ideologically, not militarily. Those of the FCR went around saying and believing that the order to bring them to trial had been given, but that never happened. The new Central Committee had a different mentality...very different from the Stalinist mentality of Marcial.

Already, we had had sufficient problems, with what had happened in Managua, without us continuing in this spiral of internal violence. In the first place, that would distract us from our principal problem, which was to fight the Government and the Armed Forces; and in the second place, this matter would contribute to a greater weakening of the organization. It was also thought that the basis for this split had been deceiving and that some of them could be recovered; those whom it was necessary to isolate were the leadership, about seven people: Filomeno, Chepe, Ramiro, Jovel, and others who headed the dissidents. Some, like Ramiro and Betty, deserted the FCR and those who remained divided again—the FCR keeping the armed units and the MPR (Popular Movement Roberto Sibrain) retaining the political management of some unions.

The Central Committee of the FPL fixed the official position in early February 1985 regarding the breakup, finally dissipating the speculations that had been flying for some time. They agreed

- to characterize the FCR as infantilists of the left, with Trotskyite features, and manipulated by the Fourth International;
- to fight them aggressively ideologically and politically, not militarily, because they weren't the main enemy;

- to rescue the political bases that had been confused and deceived;
- not to give them, at any time, any official coordination;
- to review those cadres who, in the FPL, had some political links with them.
- to follow closely the steps and the growth of the faction;
- to analyze the faction constantly because, even if it was true that they had weakened, they were still capable of action;
- to submit to a revolutionary trial of the FPL those implicated in the case of Ana María who were in custody in Managua, and reach verdicts that would sanction them.

Rojas: Practically speaking, you were outside of the country at the time the break happened. . . . What was the task they gave you when you returned?

Castellanos: When I returned in January of 1984, the matter of the FCR faction was almost resolved, and they gave me the task of remaking the Suburban and Urban Commandos. The people had a little bit of experience, and in three or four months we were able to get people here in La Metro[4] for the guerrillas and the Urban Commandos. Of course, it's not the same thing when you arrive at a negotiation table with forty guys behind you as when you arrive with four or five. The matter would have been very important if, in the national contest, there had been breakups on the fronts, but it wasn't like that. The battalions were maintained intact, and there were no desertions. In the city, one could see that the FPL wasn't mounting actions of great breadth and even that other organizations had exceeded them: the ERP, the PRTC, the BRAZ, and even the FCR had more actions than the FPL; but as they took the blows of the Armed Forces they began to weaken. This was a product of the internal divisions that had repercussions on the operations and party discipline of the guerrillas.

The democratic processes within El Salvador during 1983 and 1984 were proving to be stronger than the insurgents expected. The political project developed in Apaneca to institute elections reforms, as well as agrarian and banking reforms, was proving successful. The unexpected unity of the military and the center-left Government Junta provided impetus to general popular support of the junta. The successful election of the Constituent Assembly in 1982, the strong support of the military for the interim government and the National Assembly elections of 1984, and the dedication of Duarte to establishing and carrying out the reforms severely cut into the rationale supporting the insurgent movement.

Rojas: To what extent did the democratic process initiated by electoral means determine or condition the actions of the FPL and of the FMLN in general?

Castellanos: We could see that as the political Apaneca Pact took shape, things were happening; the new Constitution, which was going to be the judicial basis of the new order, was coming along. At that level things were happening, because the FMLN could see that this project was coming along at the margins of the masses. It is true that there were elections in 1982 and the people went to vote, but they did it out of fear of repression—at least that's how the FMLN explained it. However, the FMLN also recognized that a middle sector of the population went to vote because they saw it as a way out. Look at the determination of the political parties not to play tricks on the Christian Democrats, as had been done by Romero, Molina, and all those. The petit and middle bourgeois saw a way out of the conflict there. The FMLN also exaggerated the fact that in the municipalities and in the zones that they controlled, elections did not take place, or that the people didn't go.

I would say that, at that time, the democratic process didn't have any great influence on the FMLN. The Government gained on the institutional level, not on the popular level. The FMLN saw that the Government didn't have influence on the combatants. With respect to the military, the matter stagnated, and the FMLN saw that the army was declining. What remained were political things; even the reforms received an impetus with the transfer of land titles on a massive basis.

Rojas: What was the FMLN's analysis of the deterioration of the military situation?

Castellanos: In summary, the FMLN thought:

(1) The Armed Forces could not assimilate all the counterinsurgency advice of imperialism, since the Armed Forces were unable to overcome their garrison or barracks mentality; they had no mobility.

(2) The Armed Forces could not grow sufficiently in their organic development.

(3) The Armed Forces retreated into their zones of control; this was the most delicate part—they were forced to consolidate the forces, which in turn caused the FMLN to fortify its camps and rearguard zones.

(4) There was demoralization among the troops. This was evident in the numerous prisoners that the FMLN took; in 1983 there was an enormous number of prisoners.

(5) There were fairly strong divisions and contradictions in the Armed Forces, especially in the situation created in Cabañas by Lt. Colonel Ochoa, who succeeded in overthrowing General Garcia.[5]

(6) They did not succeed in making effective the CONARA plans in San Vicente.[6]

(7) They did not succeed, in consequence, in making effective the strategic plans of the Pentagon and the United States. The intention was to clean up the Central Zone of the country and fall upon the guerrillas in the north, to corner them, but they did not succeed.

For the FMLN in the cities, what was really grave was the functioning of the intelligence services, especially when the Government succeeded in dismantling all logistics and communications in the PCS, and when they fell upon the communications center of the FPL. In the cities there was another problem with the masses due to the presence of the Death Squads, which damaged seriously the image of the Armed Forces.[7]

They captured some leaders of the FUSS, and took the luxury of sending a video to television before and after assassinating them.[8] These situations affected and terrorized the masses. With the Death Squads running around out there, it made working with the masses difficult.

As the Government military slowly began to control the activities and abuses of its forces, the Government concentrated on building legitimacy. In this situation in which the military was "holding its own"—if barely—and the Government was moving ahead with planned reforms and elections, the FMLN seemed to begin to refocus on the nature of the principal battle—moral legitimacy.

Rojas: But the democratic project was continuing; there were going to be presidential elections. . . .

Castellanos: We knew that the institutional political project was continuing and that they were finishing the electoral law for the presidential elections of 1984; in that sense the FMLN could see that the regime was taking the country toward, let us say, constitutionality. Also one could see an effort to reduce international isolation and the unpopularity of the Armed Forces. Summarizing, and this is my way of seeing it, one can see the curve of the development of the Armed Forces was in a fairly critical and alarming descent, but the curve that represented the political order, the return to constitutionality, was advancing in an ascending line.

Here it is very important to point out that the general framework in

which all of this was happening was that of a continually deepening economic crisis. There was more dependency on the United States; inflation was galloping ahead; the international prices of coffee, cotton, and sugar were all falling; and the internal war itself was seriously spoiling the country's economy.

This economic crisis should always be kept in the forefront because it became a serious encumbrance for the opening that the democratic process provided. This crisis was a fundamental limitation in being able to win over the masses. The FMLN analyzed this situation and intensified economic sabotage.

The FMLN pointed out that the national economy works to maintain the war and the system; therefore, it must be attacked—the crisis must be sharpened. Economic sabotage is fundamentally the destruction of the economic infrastructure—sabotage of the electric plants, telephone lines, and transport, and destruction of the most important crops, such as cotton and coffee. The purpose is to intensify the crisis and make the regime collapse economically. This will have repercussions because of the discontent of the masses, and if possible, in the short or long term, because of a popular uprising supported by the organizations that control the FMLN.

With this perspective, the FMLN faced 1984 very optimistically, with a very positive evaluation for themselves in military matters and with the idea of starting an aggressive plan of reactivation of the masses on the political level.

Rojas: What did this plan mean, exactly?

Castellanos: It meant that on the political level, the fundamental thing for the FMLN would be the reactivation of the masses: to work with the people through their fight for their rights; that is, to support their economic interests, but in a combative form through mobilizations and, if possible, the peaceful takeover of some buildings. The fight had to be generalized, and therefore if the regime was repressive, so much the worse for it. The FMLN proposed organizing the masses by sectors, neighborhoods, and quarters, and besides organizing, strengthening the trade unions that they already had under their control, like ANDES.

For 1984 the task was to create a new face for the trade union and union organizations, to try to come out with something new, to leave behind *El Bloque* and the *CRM*. They wanted to create a new union movement that to the regime and on the international level would seem a movement fighting solely for its rights, without any link to the FMLN, and the union would deny links to the FMLN, as it is doing

now. The intention of these movements within the framework of the economic crisis was to destabilize the Government; that is to say, in the framework of war, a movement for rights didn't need ties with the FMLN. It was enough to initiate a movement that would demand more than the Government could give, and if in the beginning the Government acquiesced, then ask for double, always go asking for more. What is favorable to and helps maintain these types of struggles is that really the salaries do not suffice to cover the basic necessities of the people, and prices rise. For example, a wage freeze, according to the FMLN, is favorable terrain for the mobilization and the agitation of the masses, taking advantage of the extreme weakness of the Government.

What they intended was to put the Government in a situation difficult to resolve. It was good to attack the guerrillas militarily, but to attack a movement of the masses that was fighting for its rights is more complex. The Government could be trapped like that: on the one hand, it was not capable of granting the demands because they were disproportionate and it didn't have the funds to do so, and on the other hand, if it faced the situation militarily, the intention of democratic openness that it was trying to implement would fail.

El Salvador, July 1984

Rojas: Before José Napoleón Duarte completed the first month of his constitutional mandate[9] the guerrillas of the FMLN had launched their first great and perhaps last military attack of the year. A group of about four hundred combatants, with heavy fire and submachine guns, managed to put one of the largest hydroelectric dams in the country, Cerrón Grande, in danger. From the top of a mountain, a few kilometers from the place the battle was taking place, Comandante Joaquín Villalobos, who was coming from Morazán to a meeting of the Command that would take place in Chalatenango the following month, was observing the action. First he felt triumphant, upon seeing the harassment of the platoons and the discharge of the mortar that seriously menaced the installations and machinery of the dam; later, with dismay, he saw the arrival of helicopter-transported battalions who were going to decide the fray in favor of the Armed Forces. In the afternoon Salvador Guerra told Comandante Villalobos that the central object of destroying the machinery had failed because of the surprise given by the helicopter-transported battalions, who dropped fifteen meters from the guerrillas' rear guard. That same night, Duarte spoke by television from Cerrón Grande, announcing that the Armed Forces had total control of the situation.

What the majority of the Salvadorans didn't know was that the Armed Forces had developed and begun to put into force a New Strategic Plan to combat the guerrillas. Its effects were going to be seen with the passing of time.

For Miguel Castellanos, that military action was only a part of the strategy that the FMLN would follow. They had entrusted to him from inside La Metro the task of organizing and fomenting the development of the movements of the masses, whose behavior in the recent presidential elections gave evidence of a very serious fault in their organization.

Rojas: What were your objectives in relation to the presidential elections of 1984?

Castellanos: Well, we had already had some experience in 1982, and the first thing we said was that the FMLN was not capable of boycotting the elections. When we talk about boycott, we mean preventing the elections from taking place in 80 or 90 percent of the municipalities. We achieved an agreement to put obstacles in the way of the election process to the maximum extent, but not to try to convert the elections into a measurement of strength with the Government and the Armed Forces. That is to say, we weren't going to fall into the error of 1982, considering the elections as an objective of the FMLN, but rather as one more circumstance, one more problem that the regime put into force in order to consolidate its line of constitutionality. What we had to do was develop our plan of reactivation of the masses and deepen our involvement in military matters.

Rojas: Specifically, what did you mean by going deeper into military matters?

Castellanos: Entering into what we called decisive battles, taking advantage of the fact that in 1983 the army had been on the strategic and tactical defensive, so that we could launch actions like El Paraíso and Cerrón Grande. For us in the FPL, these were decisive battles because we thought that, putting them in sequence, in the middle or long term, we would arrive at a definitive battle—that is, taking San Salvador and taking power.

But even in this military appraisal, which is also a game of semantics, there were discrepancies with the immediatist and short-term mentality of the PRTC and the ERP. They called them synthesizing battles, by which they meant that in these battles were synthesized all the accumulated experiences, such as passing subjects

or examinations. They still thought that because of "some strange thing" these synthesizing battles (as they called the taking of Perquín or the Battle of Mozote) were going to permit the taking of power in the short term.

The leadership of the FMLN had forgotten a basic tenet of insurgent warfare. Buoyed by arms and advice from the Sandinistas and Cubans, coupled with their demonstrated ability to wage armed confrontation successfully, the senior leadership had lost sight of the War for Legitimacy—to gain in the peoples' eyes the moral right to govern. While some within the FPL and PCS attempted to regain the support of the people, the strategy was still to concentrate on violent revolution, winning "through the barrel of the gun." As the military successes became hard to come by, thoughts of attacking the growing legitimacy of the new Duarte Government through means of subversion—destruction of the country's economic infrastructure—gave evidence of the changing insurgent strategy. Castellanos provides a good insight into the efforts to regain the momentum in the fronts and organizations. His comments on the reorganization and the renewed focus on sabotage suggest the nature of conflict was about to change dramatically, as the Salvadoran Armed Forces became capable of handling the military threat and the War of Subversion became the FMLN's first priority.

Rojas: On the political plane, on the level of the masses, what did they propose to do?

Castellanos: On the level of the masses, in the FPL, the first thing we intended to do was to seek coordination with the rest of the organizations of the FMLN and the union instruments that they managed. Once they were coordinated, we wanted to give them a new face, rejuvenate them for the new stage of the struggle. On the level of political speeches, we all agreed that the fundamental thing was to combat and denounce the repression and demagoguery of the regime, and that another fundamental thing was to combat the intervention of Yankee imperialism.

In practical matters, together with the RN and the Communist Party, with whom we had begun to work in the DRU (Unified Revolutionary Directorate), we decided to work with the movement of the masses. We decided to change the name of certain union and trade union structures that were burnt out and politicized. In 1983 we had already tried to restructure the movement of the masses and to do away with the names of the organizations that made up the

Coordinadora or CRM (Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses). In 1984 we made a more profound attempt.

Specifically, we agreed to throw out the MUSYGES[10] and form the CST (Coordinators of the Workers' Solidarity), at the same time throwing out the FSR (Revolutionary Union Federation) that was controlled by the dissidents of the FPL that had formed the FCR (Clara Elizabeth Ramirez Front).

On the part of the FPL, at the specific level of the organization, we openly formed the ASIES (Independent Association of El Salvador).

Always in conjunction with the RN and the PCS, we resolved to renew and fortify the already recognized union entities that had a certain colorfulness, such as ANDES 21 de julio, the Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero and Marianela Garcia Villa Mothers' Committees, CDHES (the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador), the Committee for the Freedom of Prisoners, CODEFAM (the Assassinated and Political Disappeared), and others. The objective was to create mechanisms of unity and coordination (*Coordinadoras* or Committees), in which the known ones could participate with other neutral ones, thus giving a more trade union aspect and at the same time attracting them toward our line. One of these instruments of unity and coordination was the project of forming the First of May Committee.

Where we put the most emphasis was in the trade unions of the cooperatives that arose with roots in the agrarian reform, and in the credit institutions that were formed for helping the refugees and improving production among them. Thus arose COACES, the Federation of Cooperative Associations of El Salvador, which was the organism that followed the line of the FMLN in the countryside, in conjunction with the ANC (National Peasant Association).[11]

The objectives in the countryside were to convert these trade unions into coalescing groups of the peasantry in this new period, and with these groups to push the fight for justice by means of agitation and gradual mobilization, and begin developing their radicalization through protests, strikes, and takeovers, at the proper time.

At the University we proposed two objectives: to reconstruct the University, denouncing the destruction done by the Armed Forces, and to accentuate the already traditional battle for the budget. This would be done by strengthening the AGEUS (General Association of Salvadoran University Students) and the student societies, who were to put pressure on the authorities so that they would be forced to adopt a rigid line. In the past the experience of first mobilizing the university students internally and then projecting them nationally had given positive results. . . . Now the conditions were favorable again.

Rojas: What was going to happen to the UPD [Popular Democratic Unity], with its social base that supported the Government?[12]

Castellanos: With the UPD (Popular Democratic Unity), for example, we all were in agreement about working harder to break the Social Pact that they had with the Government of Duarte. We made the analysis that the framework of the economic crisis in which the country was living was going to permit us to influence and attract toward our side certain leaders and organizations of the UPD. With them we could enter in alliances, units, committees, cooperatives, and any other trade union organisms that we would structure in order to achieve the social isolation of the Government.

The other aspect that was to be fundamental was to try to mobilize the masses by neighborhoods and communities, using the most vital necessities of these sectors, such as water, street repair, transport, and electric rates. In all the communities we began with these necessities, directed by people who had done this before. The objective was to try to make the whole population make demands and, taking advantage of the economic crisis, put the regime in check.

Rojas: You combined this agitation with sabotage, but how did you explain to the people about the sabotage, since, in some way, it had repercussions on them?

Castellanos: When one explained sabotage to them, it was necessary to make the population see that the sabotage was against the economy of the bourgeoisie and against the Government; you said to them, of course, this was war, and war was going to affect them in some way, but that these weren't actions against them, but against the bourgeoisie, against private enterprise, against the Government. If we damaged the infrastructure, let us say they were going to be obliged to allot a large part of the budget that they have for the military to be spent in repairs. The thing about the roads was not only that they were for the people, but also that they were also military routes, and the damage that we tried to do was not to the population, but to the economy of the big businessmen. We gave this explanation as logical, and we passed it to the sympathizers. It was explained by Radio Venceremos.[13]

Rojas: Did the FPL encounter receptiveness to this type of argument? Did the people accept these propositions?

Castellanos: No. Those who understood the best were those in the

struggle, the sympathizers. What happened most frequently were complaints, discontent, for example, of the common and ordinary people in their homes, people who were not businessmen. They had their refrigerator, their television, and well, another blackout was simply too much. Here in San Salvador, there weren't so many complaints, because when the power went, they rapidly reinstalled it; but in the interior towns days and days went by, and the people complained to us that their food in the refrigerator had spoiled, and that they couldn't see their favorite soap opera or listen to the radio. The people complained a lot and the FMLN tried to explain that it wasn't against them, that it was against the capitalists, and that the whole structure of the Government was becoming weaker in having to divert resources to repair the damage that the FMLN was causing to the Government.

Chalatenango, August 1984

Rojas: The meeting of the General Command of the FMLN in Chalatenango had lasted almost a month in August 1984. It had begun with triumph after the assault attempt on the Cerrón Grande dam. The fraternal and unifying spirit with which the meeting began fell apart and was forgotten as they put forth theories about strategy and the destiny of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement.

Certainly the principal problem of the guerrillas was the presence of Duarte in the presidency of the Republic; even though they called the elections fraudulent, they could not blindly deny the popular and democratic roots of the elections.

Castellanos: They analyzed three elements. One: with Duarte the reformist project of imperialism would enter a very determined channel, and the PDC (Christian Democrats) would be the prime instrument for implementing the political and demagogic line. Two: this Christian Democratic regime, with a sole party, would be more easily managed as a figurehead by the Government of the United States. And three: the regime, taking advantage of the figure of Duarte, was going to reduce even more the isolation and international lack of prestige of El Salvador.

To the FPL, and they made it known at the Command meeting, the greatest problem was the dispute the masses were going to have with the Duarte Government. Upon his arrival in the presidency, it was thought that the PDC and its allies would try to create a strong social base, more concretely than winning over the UPD by winning over the base, the workers, the peasants. Besides, we made known our fear that

the regime was going to find a more propitious environment in the intellectual sectors, in the small business sector, the UCA,[14] the Church, etc., and that these middle sectors were going to begin the work on the social base. Having all the economic and political means at its disposal, nobody doubted that the PDC had the frying pan by the handle in terms of amplifying and consolidating its social base. Besides, it already had the reforms moving, especially agrarian reform.

Even the ERP, which did not have any instruments of the masses, seemed to become conscious of the threat that Duarte and the PDC had become. The FMLN defined and characterized as its principal enemy the Yankee imperialism that controlled Duarte, the Armed Forces, and the PDC. They called it a figurehead reformist dictatorship, whose principal ally was the PDC, a party that they defined as rightist, and an expression of the bourgeoisie and a certain part of the oligarchy.

Rojas: What was the Duarte danger specifically?

Castellanos: Demagoguery. The FMLN considered that the most dangerous thing about the Government would be its demagoguery. In its demagoguery, it would try to go as far as it could to maintain a consensus between imperialism and the oligarchy. It was going to try to make political progress, to try to continue to prompt reforms, but without breaking the consensus.

Now, with respect to the masses, it was thought that the demagoguery that he could use was seriously limited, because he would not be able to fulfill all the promises to the people to satisfy their basic necessities. The FMLN was clear about the Duarte project, both its proposals and the contradiction on which it was based. The FMLN saw it favorably, even though on the other hand, it feared the unification that had been achieved in the Armed Forces in order to support the current process—a unification that had been up until then according to the guidance from the High Command, not because the Army wanted it. And the ultimate danger for the FMLN was the confirmation that the Duarte Government had achieved what no one else had been able to—that was, the bipartisan consensus in the United States Congress for aid to the country. The objective they planned then was to break this bipartisanship by ruining Duarte's reputation, unmasking him in all his demagoguery.

Rojas: And that would be done by accentuating the conflict with the masses, in the political and the military terrain?

Castellanos: We have already talked about the new faces that the movements of the masses were to present. There also was a beginning of an agreement on a new military line. But Villalobos announced that there were intense operations by the Armed Forces in Morazán. He calculated that there were nine or ten battalions that were constantly moving in the east, which created for his brigade, the BRAZ, a new operational situation. Then the ERP suggested that what was needed was a dispersal of these units, not having BRAZ in one location, but instead to send columns to Usulután, Guazapa, even to Santa Ana. Because of the destabilization of its traditionally controlled terrain, the ERP decided to disperse its forces. This was serious, because, from that moment on, there would be no capacity to carry out concentrated actions like Cerrón Grande. That is to say, militarily we were returning to guerrilla action, with a platoon or at most a detachment. Thus they began to carry out attrition and sabotage actions.

Faced with this attitude of the ERP and Villalobos, the Communist Party, which wasn't too thrilled with military things (*no come mucho con lo militar*), misunderstood the matter and suggested the breakup of the units; they did not understand that in the east, Villalobos was facing a strong incursion of the Armed Forces. One must understand that at that time Chalatenango and the Central Zone weren't yet receiving the intensity of action from the Armed Forces that would come later.

What the FPL proposed was to disperse the units, since they were only responding to the troops in a regular sense. The combatants did not want to act only in platoons. They didn't feel like guerrillas any more. They had even achieved specializations like attack upon fixed positions, and they only wanted to act in that operational modality. The FPL suggested the displacement but without renouncing concentrated actions, because then it would look as if we were retreating in the war, that we were taking a step backward. Villalobos and the ERP did not participate in any joint extensive actions, while Milton, Dimas, and Salvador Guerra with their units were salivating for military attacks. They attacked Suchitoto, prepared ambushes for the helicopter-transported troops, and attacked the Nonualco Battalion. But all of this is conjecture. What we were specifically seeing was that, in its context, the FMLN was declining militarily; they no longer spoke about decisive battles, and all the organizations that made up the FMLN accused them of moving backwards in operations.

At the end of 1984 the battalions were incomplete, the guerrilla columns were weakened, and what was the most worrisome, the fighters began to desert. The phenomenon was alarming because the war situation was changing, and the reasons given were tiredness and

the political-ideological weakness of the fighters. The FPL experienced massive desertions. The PCS went for almost an entire year without being able to fill its battalion. The same thing happened to the PRTC with its Luis Alberto Diaz Battalion, and the RN, the same. The only ones who said they were all right were those from the BRAZ, but we all knew that the desertion at the fighter level was such that the ERP was using forced recruitment. Later they were to recognize that this desperate maneuver to fill its ranks wasn't useful. Only about 10 or 20 percent stayed; the rest left and took their arms with them. This forced recruitment is in itself a sign of weakness.

Rojas: Then there was no one to take up arms? Did you have arms?

Castellanos: In 1980, arms were lacking, and the people fought with arms of wood. But in 1984 the people had begun to save guns, to bury arms. For those arms, ammunition was lacking (7.52, 7.56, grenades for the 81 mortar, ammunition for the .50 machine gun, RPG-2).

The FMLN had the vision that Nicaragua was going to cut decisively the flow of arms and ammunition, as it had done in 1983 after the U.S. taking of Grenada. This situation alarmed the FMLN, and there was a lot of discontent with the Sandinistas. The Cubans were more pragmatic—they thought that helping the FMLN was to be employed as a negotiation card with imperialism. They didn't say it openly, but in practice, when they saw a threat that the Yankees were going to intervene in Nicaragua, they tried to take out all the leadership structures, hospitals, political commissions, advisors. It was a way of gaining time and saying, "We are behaving ourselves," but when they thought that an invasion was not imminent, they renewed the normal flow in the agreed manner. The situation was repeated periodically. At the end of 1984 with the re-election of Reagan, they *felt* the invasion and again they temporarily cut off the flow.

The clear and defined objective of the Cubans was to consolidate Nicaragua. Fidel was only interested in El Salvador as a negotiation card with the Yankees for the defense of the Sandinistas. The situation was even more serious because the Cubans and the Sandinistas intended to cut off the military training of the FMLN's people.

Rojas: The Cubans, promoters of the FMLN unity, seemed to have abandoned them. What happened in the General Command of the FMLN?

Castellanos: The Cubans always seemed to support the struggle and the unity, even though everyone knew, and it was commented upon at all levels, that their support couldn't be counted on. They praised, for example, when there had been an advance in unity, and it is true that the joint command staff of the FMLN was no more than a group that met to discuss the situation and present some ideas about how to proceed. The General Command was even less; there was no unity; there was a sectarian dispute for power, for uniformity. Those people wanted to take actions of great transcendency if that would permit them to gain power. From now there was going to be more influence on the political level, among the masses, than in military matters.

Notes

1. Facundo Guardado: Comandante Esteban, only peasant leader of the Political Commission of the FPL, ex-Secretary General of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) and member of the Central Committee. He has been jailed in San Salvador and in Honduras. He has traveled abroad frequently in order to get money and arms for the guerrillas. Of scant military preparation, he was one of the most tenacious opponents of Marcial. He participated in the dialogue that took place in Ayagualo in November 1984. Currently he is considered in fifth place in the command structure of the FPL.

2. Fermán Cienfuegos: Eduardo Sancho Castefieda, known as Comandante Cienfuegos, ex-student of medicine and sociology at the National University. He fought first in the ERP and then left to form the National Resistance (RN). He participated in the La Palma dialogue of October 1984 and is currently Commander-in-Chief of the FARN (Armed Forces of National Resistance).

3. FCR: Clara Elizabeth Ramirez Front, the name that the FPL internally called the Metropolitan Front. The followers of Marcial, upon the breakup of the organization, adopted that name with which they signed their communiqués and military commands. The assassination of Colonel Ricardo A. Cienfuegos, Chief of the Press Committee of the Armed Forces (COPREFA), in March 1985 was attributed to this group.

4. La Metro: Abbreviation for the Metropolitan Front of the FPL that includes the city of San Salvador, towns, and suburban zones. It is the southern part of the Modesto Ramirez Central Front.

5. Colonel Ochoa: Army Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa Perez, considered by the FMLN as a sympathizer with the political views of the ultra-right. He was one of the commanders who had overcome the "garrison mentality" in the counterinsurgency tactics. In 1983, because of differences with the Minister of Defense, General Guillermo García, he declared himself in rebellion as Commander of the Department of Cabañas. He traveled to the United States for a military course and upon his return he was named Commander of the Fourth Infantry Brigade in El Paraíso. He was again conspicuous because of

his military actions in Chalatenango, achieving important advances against the strategic rear guard of the FMLN. At the beginning of 1986 he was relieved of his command and sent as an attaché to the Salvadoran Embassy in the United States.

6. CONARA: National Commission for the Restoration of Areas, created by the National Unity Government for the purpose of rehabilitating economically the zones affected by the conflict in the military and social aspects. The first pilot plan was developed in 1983 in San Vicente and Usulután with a great display of resources.

7. Death Squads: Armed clandestine militia of the ultra-right. They have carried out a great number of selective and mass assassinations. The Guerrera Blanca Union (UGB) and the Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Command were the groups in the ascendancy between 1980 and 1982. Even though they still exist, their activities have considerably diminished as the democratic process has advanced.

8. FUSS: United Federation of Salvadoran Unions, one of the oldest federations controlled by the Salvadoran Communist Party. It resisted repression and did not permit other organizations to exercise influence over it. Currently it does not have any capacity to mobilize its members.

9. Constitutional Mandate: The first electoral round was held on 21 March 1984, with five candidates. The second round was on May 6 of the same year between the PDC candidate Napoleón Duarte and the ARENA candidate, Roberto D'Aubuisson. The triumph of Duarte was widely recognized with his assuming the presidency of the Republic on June 1, 1984, for a constitutional period of five years.

10. MUSYGES: United Union and Trade Union Movement of El Salvador. At its founding, in 1983, it was composed of the United Federation of Salvadoran Unions (FUSS), the Salvadoran National Union Federation (FENASTRAS), the Federation of Union Workers of Food, Garment, Textile, Similar and Related Industries (FESTIAVTSCES), the Revolutionary Union Federation (FSR), and others. The Movement was born with the intention of giving a more trade union and less political image to the organizations of the masses of the FMLN, but it had to be dissolved to make way for the Coordinators of the Workers' Solidarity (CST).

11. COACES: The Federation of Cooperative Associations of El Salvador, formed by the Federation of Cooperative Associations of Agriculture and Cattle Production of El Salvador, the National Federation of Cooperative Associations of the Transport Industries of El Salvador, and the Federation of Agriculture and Cattle Cooperatives of El Salvador.

12. UPD: Popular Democratic Unity, initially composed of the Salvadoran Workers' Central (CTS), the Association of Agriculture and Cattle Cooperatives (ACOPAI), the National Association of Salvadoran Natives (ANIS), the Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS), and the Union Federation of Salvadoran Construction Workers (FESINCONTRANS). The UPD initially constituted the basis of the Social Pact of the Christian Democratic Government, but then there were internal trade union and political

disagreements, and it left the CTS and formed the Democratic Workers' Central (CTD).

13. Radio Venceremos: Radio transmitter of the ERP that transmits on FM and short wave. Almost all the news about the FMLN that the news agencies reproduce has its origins in Radio Venceremos.

14. UCA: José Simeón Cañas University of Central America, directed by the Jesuits, one of the most important centers of sociopolitical studies in Latin America. It was founded as an "institutional critic" of national reality, not aligned with any political tendency, but permanently supporting the opposition with clear social democratic tendencies to a regime. Currently there is a clear "critical support" of the FMLN-FDR.

5

New Strategies as the War Changed Direction 1984–1987

By the end of 1984 the FMLN leadership had made a fundamental change in strategy. The Government had succeeded in turning back the armed confrontations, while at the same time it was beginning to succeed in the War of Legitimacy. The upcoming presidential elections and the reforms that the Government was enacting, coupled with the "humanization" of the military's approach to the people, were having a significant impact on the philosophical, moral, and combative rationale of the insurgent soldiers.

To counteract the lessening of their military capabilities and the ever-decreasing support from the people, the insurgents began to adopt a strategy of taking a relatively low profile militarily, offering to negotiate, and working toward United States disengagement from Central America and the Salvadoran conflict. In the classical style taught to them by the Vietnamese, they looked to negotiations to provide them with time to regroup and with propaganda benefits.

Rojas: On 8 October 1984, President Duarte; presented before the General Assembly of the United Nations a peace offer to the guerrillas, based on the premise that the El Salvador they had abandoned in 1978-1979 was not the El Salvador of 1984 and that now the most diverse ideologies could coexist. Duarte's offer guaranteed those who had taken up arms a political space to permit them to incorporate themselves into life and work in society and to participate in the democratic political process.

The La Palma meeting culminated in great expectations, and the live and direct presence of the guerrillas encouraged many. Inside the FMLN things were viewed through many different prisms. The first to

position themselves after the announcement of the dialogue was the FDR, especially its leaders Ungo and Zamora. They had been relegated to a very low second level since the Sandinistas threw the FMLN command out of Managua, and they now saw the opportunity of their lives to recover their standing. However, the differences inside the FMLN were very serious. . . .

Castellanos: Inside the Command they said one thing, and outside another. There were divergent opinions even in regard to the dialogue concept itself. Some saw it as a direct road, as a means that could take them to a real solution to the conflict, in which the armed struggle was only a pressure factor to obligate the regime to negotiate. Others saw it as a means of propaganda, of mobilizing the masses, as a purely tactical matter in the framework of the war.

Seemingly the former, the FDR made concessions to the ERP and the rest of the FMLN, and by the second round of the dialogue, which took place in Ayagualo (November 1984), they arrived with a unified political proposal. The military actions had tactical coincidences in the political matters, as in the case of Zona Rosa and the kidnapping of President Duarte's daughter. But here, unity wasn't the important thing, it wasn't useful to appear unified.

Rojas: After the stagnation of political matters in Ayagualo, how did the FMLN come to see the military aspect?

Castellanos: The FMLN confirmed that there was impressive organic growth in the Army, which now consisted of 50,000 well equipped men and was progressively and rapidly acquiring great mobility and operability. The consolidation of the elite battalions and the intense operations in the East, and later in Chalatenango, were a good sign of it. Now they didn't drive only in one direction, as before in Morazán; now they were everywhere. Just as the FMLN had created different fronts, the Army also was entering them with their mobile units, as well as the zonal units, and the detachments themselves that they had in each region.

Organically this development led to the creation and operation of the PRAL and the Helicopter-Transported Battalion, which caused a very significant turn in the war, since they now acted deep inside enemy lines.[1] They entered deep into what they called controlled zones, attacking the rear guard. Thus, they appeared in ambushes in the corridors, abruptly cutting the flow of arms, untiringly, day and night. They had overcome a great obstacle; they were capable of night

operations, something they had not done before, leaving the night free for the guerrillas.

Rojas: Apart from the changes in military operations, were there other counterinsurgency strategies that affected the FMLN?

Castellanos: In their counterinsurgency strategic plans there were modifications—the CONARA plans, zoned in bases of the territory, did not function, but instead these methods were carried right up to the zones of conflict, up to Chalatenango for example. All over the country it could be seen that there was an increase in logistic means and a general assimilation of counterinsurgency tactics. In the latter, those who presented the most evidence were Monterrosa and Azmitia, who were later eliminated.[2] Currently Colonel Ochoa, Colonel Mendez, and others are achieving more success in the counterinsurgency operations.[3]

Also, one must remember that in the cities, the Security Corps created its battalions with the specific purpose of protecting the city and giving service to the people.[4] They put into function the CETIPOL: (Center of Police Instruction) in Santa Tecla; they improved the intelligence organizations with Argentine, Venezuelan, and even Taiwanese advisors. If until 1983 we recognized a descent in the Armed Forces' actions, now we saw an ascent—they were taking the initiative.

Rojas: President Duarte and the Christian Democrats had triumphed in the elections for representatives to the National Assembly,[5] and the coalition of the right attempted to impugn the elections.

The situation worried everybody and put the partners of the FMLN in cautious watchfulness: finally they might be able to produce an Army coup d'etat; on behalf of the right, which is what they had been waiting for all this time. But that's not how things were, according to Castellanos. . . .

Castellanos: When the High Command, in the person of General Eugenio Vides Casanova, Minister of Defense, ended the pretensions of the reactionaries by saying "This is not a game, and those who die will be ours," the FMLN was surprised to see the unification of the High Command giving support to the democratic process and the present Government of Duarte.

In this unification of the Armed Forces, one did not observe profound differences in the High Command. There were variations with respect to the dialogue; Blandón (General Adolfo Blandón, Chief of the Joint

Staff) supported it a little more than Lopez Nuila (Colonel, Vice Minister of Public Security), and at the end General Casanova put in his two cents. This was very different from the concept held by Bustillo (General Juan Rafael Bustillo, Chief of the Armed Forces), Ochoa himself, and other military men about the dialogue; the differences were not as serious as before, and they did not succeed in getting the influence or power sufficient to provoke a coup d'etat. The support given by the North Americans was decisive in applying the brakes to the coup attempts from the right, even though there were rumors that some senators in the United States had told D'Aubuisson that he could proceed with the coup because, as in the case of Pinochet in Chile, they were disposed to recognize whoever defeated Marxism.

Rojas: On the level of human rights, torture, abuse of authority, did the FMLN see any change?

Castellanos: What was seen was an attempt to change some political attitudes. Support of the PDC was a substantial change. One mustn't forget that nobody liked Duarte and the PDC in the sixties. There was a change without a doubt, for the most part under pressure, in the matter of human rights. Something that left all of us perplexed occurred when they captured Mayo Sibrian, Comandante of the FPL in charge of the Urban Comandos. The next day, agents of the National Police went to his house to give notice that he was detained. Since when had anyone seen them advise the relatives of those taken? After this there was the case of Comrade Beto and dozens of detainees that the Armed Forces or the Security Corps admitted to having captured. Perhaps the most interesting fact was that more than 90 percent of the detainees were sent to a prison and put to trial.

This variation with respect to human rights, this policy of humanization, also permitted the exchange of prisoners, and the evacuation of a great number of wounded by the Red Cross.

A more humanitarian attitude, not totally warlike, was noted—let us say, was evident in the Armed Forces.

Rojas: And the air bombardments...what effect did they have in the zones of conflict?

Castellanos: When, in the 1970s, they were discussing if the guerrillas could subsist in El Salvador, the Communist Party said it would be impossible—that in the country there were no topographical conditions like the Sierra Maestra in Cuba or the mountains of Nicaragua. Marcial answered that to take care of the units here the

mountains had to be the masses—among them the guerrillas ought to live; without them we would not be able to develop armed units. In the development of the guerrillas, we were engaging almost literally in what Marcial had said. When I was in La Paz Opico, in San Vicente, the guerrilla units were established among the population We remembered that the population is to the guerrilla as the water is to the fish. Years later, the houses, towns, and cantons where the guerrillas were camouflaged came to be the theaters of operation, and the population was seriously affected by the violent actions, by the war that had arrived where they were.

It was true that the population supplied us with food and helped us in the transport of logistic materials and other things, but they became a burden when the sweep operations of the Armed Forces arrived. We had to retreat with five or six thousand people. The Armed Forces didn't distinguish between the population and the guerrillas, they took them as the same: they took everybody, or they massacred everybody. Of course, we took advantage of the situation in propaganda by denouncing the repression of the Government and the Armed Forces.

With the passing of time we began to realize that it was an error to burn the population, and as the continuous operations of the Armed Forces went on, the people, of their own will, went to refugee camps. Those who stayed were the ones with greater revolutionary awareness, those who were ready to die there, in the anti-aircraft trenches that we had made them construct.

In the following years, 1984 and 1985, the Armed Forces changed its tactics with regard to the population: 90 percent of the time they did not carry out indiscriminate bombings and to those people whom they came across they offered refuge in other places. Later, they were even handed over to the Red Cross. This new tactic affected enormously the bases of the population in the zones of control. A great number of the people turned themselves in to the sweep operations. Entire cantons were depopulated in the constant operations carried out by the Armed Forces. Only the most radicalized remained.

As the FMLN broke down into smaller units in consonance with their general defensive strategy, they increased their actions in what might be called the War of Subversion. The smaller units increased assassinations, kidnappings, and general terrorism on a measured scale designed constantly to harass and intimidate the population and the Government. These tactics were aimed at lessening regime credibility in terms of ability to govern and protect the citizenry. In this connection, the insurgents attacked transportation and communications

nets and the general economic infrastructure in order to (1) sabotage New Strategies as the War Changed Direction Government attempts to do anything which might improve the internal economy and the economic component of legitimacy; (2) impress further on the United States Congress the futility of its economic and military aid to El Salvador; and (3) maintain a freedom of movement and maneuver outside those areas in order to achieve maximum security and ability to proselytize the masses.[6]

Two reactions by the Government and the United States were to have significant impact. The War of Subversion with its assassinations and terrorism tended to assist in molding U.S. sentiment against the guerrillas and further lessened their legitimacy in the eyes of international supporters of the Duarte Government. The reaction of part of the military in supporting Duarte's prisoner exchange after his daughter's kidnapping seemed to unify the Junta and further lessen the insurgents' efforts to divide the Government.

Rojas: The two actions of depth that the Salvadoran guerrillas carried out in the course of the year were very far from being characterized as decisive battles in the military terrain: the massacre of the Zona Rosa[7] and the massive kidnappings of the mayors and of President Duarte's daughter Ines Guadalupe Duarte Duran. The great movements of columns and battalions were succeeded by sporadic examples of sabotage, bold kidnappings of defenseless people, and from time to time a skirmish when the guerrillas were intercepted by the Army. To celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the FMLN on November 10, they carried out an important military action that, according to Castellanos, used up all their reserves—they attacked the CEMFA (Center for Military Training of the Armed Forces), killing two officers and forty soldiers.

Did the Armed Forces' change of attitude have an effect on the revolutionaries, and was the increased operational capability of the Army a determining factor?

Castellanos: Repercussions were at the fighter level, but not in a transcendent form. The people deserted because of the prolonging of the war, because of the lack of perspective, and because the situation in which the guerrilla found himself didn't even satisfy his most minimal needs. In this situation it was logical that the renewed activity of the Army would influence them. And the respect that the Armed Forces many times showed toward the population also influenced them. There were no more indiscriminate massacres. This attitude of the Army toward the civilian population produced extreme

weakness in the FMLN; they could no longer hide among the masses. This lowered the morale of the fighter.

Rojas: What had happened to the Popular Powers? Were they in force?

Castellanos: In very minimal force, because the people had gone or were in the refugee camps. This was a very difficult problem for the FMLN to face because we had said that the population is to the guerrilla as the water is to the fish. And if you take the water away from the fish, he will slowly die, as Ho Chi Minh said.

Rojas: Now that the people that left their homes, did the guerrillas find them again?

Castellanos: The guerrillas knew that so and so had gone to the refugee camp, but this information wasn't useful to them, didn't serve their tactical interests; these people weren't useful as the masses, as cover. There was a fight or effort, principally with the refugee organizations, to return the people to their homes, or at least to have them repopulate zones, where they could come in contact with the guerrillas.

Rojas: Did the people assume that the violence they were experiencing now was unleashed by the guerrillas and not only by the Army as before?

Castellanos: The guerrillas, in their desperation, tried to obligate these people to collaborate economically with them, to force people to give them money or food, and when people didn't have it or couldn't give it, to make people work for them. If they didn't do it, they were given some sanction and were accused of being reactionaries. This situation was very demoralizing because the people left. It happened to me more than once that when one was marching with a column, and one arrived at a little house, they gave one water and a tortilla with salt, and that was sufficient help, or they gave one a place to heat one's meal. Yet, when we returned to the same house, it was abandoned, alone, and there weren't even any people to serve as informants. We used to be able to ask what had happened or if the enemy had passed by there. Yet those people had gone also, and it was very demoralizing to pass by those abandoned houses. That lowered morale, made one angry, made one think of many things.

Rojas: Like robbing, kidnapping, killing?

Castellanos: Banditry appeared, and there were those who used their arms to become bandits. Then the people were confused, because before the FMLN didn't do that. Those things were only done by the Army of the oligarchy. Each group seemed to be looking for its subsistence.

In 1979, when I was in San Vicente, one of our missions was to clear the zone of the elements of the Paramilitary Organization ORDEN, which as one of the supposed defenders of the population committed all kinds of banditry.[8] ORDEN frequently acted with groups of ex-collaborators of the organization who had deserted because of indiscipline or anarchy.

Likewise in the FMLN, some gave themselves up to banditry, resulting in libertinage, indiscipline, and loss of revolutionary principles. What we see now as banditry was principally due to the loss of victory. An indubitable incentive was the absolute necessities that had to be satisfied. When the FMLN fell into operations of terrorist actions, there came a moment when that coincided with banditry.

The fact of the matter is that in the beginning, when there was ideological clarity, banditry didn't have any similarity with the terrorist actions of the FMLN. Well, they could be similar, but they were not the same. They were two distinct phenomena—one purely delinquent that the FMLN condemned and sanctioned by trials or by taking away the weapons of those who committed banditry, while the other was done by plan in the total context of the war. What happened was that that line was applied indiscriminately. There were terrorist actions that the FMLN could not approve solely for the purpose of terrorizing the bourgeoisie.

Rojas: Like the case of the Zona Rosa massacre?

Castellanos: If we think objectively about what was done in the Zona Rosa, if the object was to terrorize the bourgeoisie, I believe it was incomprehensible. That has to be characterized as a massacre—where civilians who had nothing to do with the war died; all the people were being terrorized. Now, I am not even thinking about the arbitrary manner of the FMLN in determining, according to its own criteria, which are and which are not military objectives; they even violated the very principles of the popular war of liberation. That is outside of the boundaries of terrorism. That was banditry, a symptom of the decomposition of the organization. In this we are only speaking of armed acts; we are not touching the subject of what they intended to do

with the masses. These facts reflect the level of extreme weakness to which the FMLN was descending, because it had stopped acting like an army and had returned to acting like guerrillas. This is the clearest symptom of the FMLN decomposition, which could carry it to its own destruction.

The United Nations, in its report on the human rights situation in El Salvador, called the massacre in the Zona Rosa massive assassination.

Rojas: Another symptom was the kidnapping of the mayors and that of President Duarte's daughter?

Castellanos: The kidnappings of the mayors were totally in error; what the people of the FMLN were looking for was prisoners to use in an exchange. It succeeded in this with the kidnapping of the daughter of the president, but what happened to the mayors?

Propaganda took it up. One has to remember the interview of Joaquín Villalobos with a journalist of the *Washington Post*, when the latter asked him, "Why haven't you continued kidnapping mayors?"

"Because there aren't any more," Villalobos answered.

"Well, there's Mayor Morales [José Antonio] Ehrlich, of San Salvador."

"It's that we are referring to the zones of control, where we have military power." The kidnappings of the mayors, defenseless civilians who lived in lonely towns, are not military objectives; it was more evidence of the weakness of the FMLN. It wasn't the same in the case of President Duarte's daughter where they got what they had proposed, an exchange.[9]

The FMLN tried to justify these kidnappings by affirming that the mayors were part of the counterinsurgency plan and that they filled a political, administrative plan for the control of the population. Since a military force of the Salvadoran Armed Forces did not exist in those places, the mayors didn't have a reason to exist.

Evidently these arguments had no basis in fact. Why didn't they follow that line in 1983 and 1984, when they took great quantities of prisoners, both soldiers and officers? Simply because there was no necessity. This line had its basis at that time in their inability to take prisoners, as in the unsuccessful attack on the CEMFA, in which one of their principal objectives was to obtain prisoners.

By the end of 1985, the FMLN no longer spoke of "the taking of power" through violent revolution. They now were settling in for a prolonged war using a "strategy for resisting." They were preparing for

"a battle much longer than they (the Government) can endure." The increasing capability of the Government military successfully to engage the armed guerrillas was everywhere evident through both 1985 and 1986. Whether the change in insurgent strategy was a reflection of successive defeats on the battlefield is open to question. Besides those defeats, the insurgents had lost much international support, had for all intents and purposes lost the focus on the War of Legitimacy, had succeeded in solidifying U.S. support for the democratic efforts of the Duarte Government through indiscriminate acts of terrorism. Castellanos gives a good summary of how he perceived the problems of the insurgent leadership.

Rojas: The quantitative summary of the year's activities showed 216 arms requisitioned, 220 ambushes, 700 posts destroyed. Miguel Castellanos looked at the figures, tried to smile. . . .

Castellanos: These weapons that they say were requisitioned from the Armed Forces aren't even one-fifth of those we got in 1983!

Rojas: The exguerrilla comandante had read dozens of reports and reviews like the one in his hands. He often had to dictate them or supervise their writing when he was in the FPL. He knew about them and how to read between the lines. He reviewed the document, noted down figures, and pointed out:

Castellanos: They don't mention here how many prisoners were taken by the enemy. That was always noted before. They also don't refer to the strategic operations with concentrated units. Without a doubt, the attack they made on the CEMFA, on 10 November in La Union, was a failure. They don't even mention it. They also don't mention the kidnappings of women and the mayors or the massacre of the Zona Rosa. They know that they are not favorable actions and should not be put in a review.

They point to the success of 220 ambushes as the principal mode of military operations in the period. That is returning to the years of 1980, 1981—those are eminently guerrilla actions.

There is another number that should be analyzed: they talk in their review of having caused the enemy more than six thousand casualties. How did they obtain these numbers? I remember that when I was fighting on the fronts, we used to ask the chief of the unit that had done the ambushing—How many casualties were there? He always responded with an imprecise calculation. In 80 percent of the operations, because of the very operational mode of the guerrillas, of

hitting and then retiring as quickly as possible, it was difficult to stop to see if there were casualties among the enemy and how many they were. Only in the annihilation operations, on specific subjects, was it possible to make a count.

Rojas: How were sabotage and the transport strikes seen?

Castellanos: Economic sabotage played an important part in the strategic military plan of the FMLN, and the economic crisis was the Achilles' heel of the Government. They did it and put it in their report. Yet one must remember that sabotage does not require great effort, nor imply manpower losses as in other, more transcendental operations. On the other hand, as we have said, the objective was to heighten the crisis in order to destabilize the Government. The report that they present is positive in this sense: they say that two coffee plantations and one of hemp, three railroad engines, more than fifty electrical towers and seven hundred electric poles, and more than eighty thousand quintals of coffee were destroyed. The transport strike was also placed by the FMLN as part of the economic sabotage (during the year, they say, "We brought about eight transport strikes that totaled forty-eight days of paralysis.") Here one should note that the objective of the strikes was not purely economic, but also military. They tried to fix or group the Armed Forces in the center of the country and on the principal highways, forcing them to weaken or reduce the clean-up operations in the so-called zones of control.

Rojas: The movements of the masses, sponsored by the organisms of the FMLN, were active in 1985. What did the FMLN say? How do you see it?

Castellanos: The assessment shows us how the FMLN had to prioritize in the political realm, giving a fundamental importance to the masses. They say, "Today our struggle has joined with the combative and sustained mobilization of the forces of the people. Never, in five years of revolutionary struggle, has the popular struggle joined with such force in our military advance. This year (1985) hundreds of peasants and city workers participated in one or another form in actions of struggle, elevating their class consciousness and their levels of organization."

One mustn't forget that at the meeting of the General Command of the FMLN, which took place in June of that year (1984) in Morazán, the masses were the most active factor of revolutionary maturity.

Rojas: What does that statement mean? Was there a change in the line of the FMLN?

Castellanos: It wasn't a change in the line; it was a shift in the actions of the FMLN. They had practically abandoned the masses to dedicate themselves to the military; today they have to work again with the masses in order to fortify, in the first place, their military units, which were severely reduced. Thus, they also had to incorporate new members into the partisan political areas. They defined as a project of 1985 the financing of work with the masses as a means of defeating the reform project of the Christian Democrats and imperialism and of recruiting people for their military units.

Rojas: Let us leave the national situation for a moment and look at how the international aid was coming, how solidarity was going. What was the impact of international aid on the war in El Salvador?

Castellanos: International solidarity had diminished considerably with regard to economic aid from the committees of solidarity of each country and from humanitarian institutions. That was discussed in the meeting of the Central Committee in February 1985. It was said that in 1984 the income of the FMLN hadn't even reached one million dollars. Hopes were centered on economic aid from the oil people of the Middle East, like Iran, or Libya, who had already given something.

We have seen what was happening in the countries of traditional solidarity such as Nicaragua, Cuba, the Soviet Union, Vietnam. I believe that it is important also to point out that there had been a decrease in the diplomatic support of some countries and international organizations. In Central America, for example, Costa Rica was no longer a place for political activity of the guerrilla groups, because of the pro-imperialist line of its Government. Guatemala and Honduras . . . couldn't even be thought of. The United States continued to be the place of greatest political activity, after Nicaragua, although there they had some internal problems because of the strong control exercised by the police.

The diplomatic plane, considered by the FMLN as vital for the triumph of the revolution, had weakened enormously. The strongest thing they had was the French-Mexican support, which had weakened because both countries had resumed relations with the Government of El Salvador. The categorical conclusion of the Central Committee was that the Government had come out of the international isolation in which it had found itself. In Europe there were countries

like Spain, France, Sweden, and Holland that gave their solidarity and recognition to the FMLN; the Contadora group was considered a good instigator of a negotiated political solution. Besides, the Contadora was very positive for the FMLN, since it already understood that it was able to rein in in some measure the North American military intervention in Nicaragua and in El Salvador.

Rojas: What was happening with the Internationals? How did the FMLN analyze the impact of international political currents?

Castellanos: Well, the Socialist International, the most left-wing of those organizations, had given and maintained its support—principally through the MNR of Dr. Ungo, even though lately it had weakened principally in indirect economic aid. Besides giving political support to the governments that it had in its power, it had to give a lot of explanations on the world level, on the governmental level, about the latest terrorist actions of the FMLN organizations. That made things difficult.

Rojas: The Christian Democrats are also international. . . .

Castellanos: The FMLN considered the Latin American wing of the Christian Democracy International as the most reactionary and sold out to the United States. Not so the European Christian Democratic Party, which according to them was for a more political way out of the conflict in Central America.

From my point of view, I think that in Central America, where the countries suffer the greatest polarization of the social classes, a great part of the population opts for an intermediate solution like the Christian Democrats as a first step toward full, pluralistic, participatory democracy, in which the principle of self-determination prevails and social injustice is eradicated. As specific examples of this I now see El Salvador and Guatemala.

The FMLN fought the PDC with energy, because the PDC did not present itself, as they wanted, as a conservative or fascist party. They considered the PDC more dangerous than a fascist dictatorship, and they drew up as a fundamental objective at that moment the frustration of social reforms and the closing of the democratic opening that the PDC could implement.

Rojas: Let us talk now about the "biggest enemy" of the FMLN—the United States.

Castellanos: The Government of the United States, whether Democratic or Republican, to the FMLN is its fundamental enemy because of the military, economic, and political aid it gives the Government of El Salvador. That is one thing. There is another factor: the anti-imperialist line followed by the FMLN's Cuban and Soviet allies. The FMLN affirmed that the North American intervention had changed the country's situation into a prolonged war, and therefore, the victory of the revolution was farther away.

To summarize, the policy of the United States in Central America clearly appeared to be that it was fighting to maintain its area of influence (which it also called area of security) on the continent. And the Cubans and the Soviets, on their side, were fighting for space for themselves. And here was where countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador found themselves in that world confrontation.

In Nicaragua, the Government and the Sandinista Front had selected the influence and aid of the Cubans and the Soviets. Daniel Ortega, in the Third Congress of the PCC categorically affirmed, "The ties with the country of Cuba are not negotiable." For this reason the FMLN will never question the influence and military dependency of the Sandinistas—they also are dependent.

In El Salvador, U.S. aid has varied qualitatively and quantitatively, according to whether the United States judges its influence in danger or not, and according to the party (Democrat or Republican) that is in the Administration. In 1979, during the administration of Jimmy Carter, with great flexibility and political astuteness, a de facto government was permitted in El Salvador, composed of a spectrum of political forces that went from the PCS to the most conservative tendencies. It was this government that established the conditions for applying social-economic reforms, a basis for the current democratic process. From 1980 to 1985 this process has been consolidating itself through the Christian Democrats, the Armed Forces, and a progressive sector of the bourgeoisie. One must point out here that this democratic project came out ahead of the project suggested by the Cubans and the Soviets that the FMLN had in progress.

With the arrival of President Reagan, North American aid acquired a more military slant. Now there was not so much emphasis on political or economic solutions. In my judgment, I must say this was an error: they fell into the same spiral of violence and did not attack the basic causes.

I want to say that if today the aid does not extend toward the economic, toward political solutions, the current project of democratic openness and economic-social reforms could suffer a retreat and become

a conservative, fascist project. If a situation like that came about, unequivocally there would be resultant strengthening of the line and strategic and tactical objectives of the FMLN and the FDR.

During the period when the war changed directions Miguel Castellanos left the insurgent movement. The murder of Ana María and the subsequent suicide of Marcial, both of whom had assumed the role of surrogate parents in the eyes of the young leaders within the FMLN, had a significant personal impact on Napoleón Romero Garcia. Reflecting on the internal bickering and posturing within the Central Command, and upon the lack of individual freedoms he found in his travels to Vietnam, Moscow, and Cuba, Castellanos reached the conclusion that a "dictatorship of the proletariat doesn't solve anything." Discouraged by the disunity within the FMLN, and the repression of the people he had witnessed in Cuba and Nicaragua, and perhaps equally encouraged by the democratic reforms taking place under Duarte, he renounced the insurgency and defected.

Manwaring: Could you tell me the reasons that caused you to leave the FMLN?

Castellanos: My greatest disappointment came as a result of what happened to Ana María and Marcial. When I went to Managua to investigate, it affected me a lot to see how Ana María had been murdered. They were older and one doesn't see them as just leaders, but rather as parents. When one becomes a guerrilla, when one is part of an organization he/she doesn't have a family, or anyone. The only thing is the organization. One sees oneself as a sibling...totally.

It really disillusioned me when the murder was committed and Marcial committed suicide. That was where my disappointment began...because violence was applied not only to the enemy—against the Armed Forces, against the Government, against the United States—but also applied within the organization, which destroys it.

There had been accounts of other such actions which occurred within the ERP, when they killed Roque Dalton [García], the poet, by order of Villalobos and Ana Guadalupe. They condemned fourteen more to death, they killed Roque Dalton and one more, then sanctions were lifted against the others. In other words, the history of the FMLN is an internal fratricidal struggle. For me, that was disappointing.

I began to change in 1985 as there began to be an opening for democracy in the country. We took up arms in 1975 because there was no freedom of expression, no democratic process in this country. In that situation one fights against social injustices. The methods for the

struggle are imposed by a political structure, because that is where the political injustice exists. We fought against them, because we could not accept the oppression.

In this country, the members of the oligarchy are voracious exploiters. They back themselves into a corner because by being that way the people suffer. Then there are more hungry people, but the oligarchs don't want to yield, not even a little bit. With the reforms, some of their possessions have been taken away, but they fight reform and they've made many more angry. That kind of social injustice is what encourages one to fight, but not necessarily to fight with arms. The method of fighting is imposed by a political structure. If there is a dictatorship, if there is no room to fight democratically with elections, another course of action must be taken.

In Nicaragua, since there is a Sandinista dictatorship, there is no alternative but to take up arms, and the contras have taken up arms. Now, what is lacking there is a coming together of the people. However, all dictatorships engender violence.

. . . Then, I thought to myself, there is an opening here. It is no longer necessary to struggle with arms. We must take advantage of the opportunity of the opening. That's one reason why I left the guerrilla forces. Another factor that caused me to leave the guerrillas was that, in the strategic sense, the form of government that we thought we would need to resolve social, economic, and political problems in the country was the dictatorship of the proletariat, in other words, a party organized by the workers, by *campesinos* who take power and establish dictatorships.

The truth is that in Cuba, where I spent much time, and in Moscow and Vietnam the dictatorship of the proletariat doesn't really solve anything. There is no freedom of expression.

Well, in Cuba there are only two newspapers, *Granma* and *Rebelde*. There is no criticism against the Government. Nothing! The communications media are completely state controlled; there is no freedom of expression. It doesn't exist.

Cuba is a dictatorship that denies the rights of the people. In Nicaragua it's worse. It's not until now that they've opened *La Prensa* in Nicaragua, as I've wanted all along, but it's only due to the pressures imposed by Esquipulas II and all that. The nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat does not grant the people their political rights; it denies them. To me that was disappointing to learn.

I now believe and claim that it is not the dictatorship of the proletariat that will solve the problem; it has to be a democratic government. It cannot be either a dictatorship of the Right or a

dictatorship of the Left. It has to be a democracy, a democratic government where there is social justice, where there is freedom of expression, of organization, of mobilization, of ideological pluralism. It has to be a participative government. That is what is needed. Because of this I reasoned and said, ". . . a participative government is not the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . ." That is what has made me change. And today I say, ". . . the dictatorship of the proletariat is not reasonable."

Rojas: From where we are now we can see the mountains that surround the city. The volcano of San Salvador, Cerro Guazapa, and a little bit of the volcano Cinchontepec, in San Vicente, among the clouds and mist. I get the impression that you are homesick for these mountains. . .

Castellanos: I thought my destiny was to die in the mountains. . . . As things stand there, either you are captured with the hope of obtaining a pardon one day, or *te mueres*. [For a Salvadoran to say *te mueres* (you die) is a way to say *te matan* (they kill you)].

I spent ten years there. I'm not surprised that the memories are coming, but I believe that people who have true revolutionary convictions ought to be consistent. After what happened with Marcial and Ana María, after seeing how violence also erupted inside the organizations, among the revolutionaries themselves, one begins to look more closely at things—the reasons that motivated you to fight, to give your life to the organization.

Rojas: If there were things about which you had doubt or with which you were not in agreement...didn't you clarify them among yourselves? What happened to the criticism and self-criticism?

Castellanos: There were things with which one wasn't in agreement, but I had to be silent. I was afraid of dissenting at that moment. The criticism and self-criticism within certain limits fixed by the organization are one thing; to question the limits is another. There they nullify you; they simply don't accept you, or they accuse you of being an agent of the CIA.

Rojas: Now, outside the organization, let us question the limits, the frame. Why did you retire from the FMLN and the FPL?

Castellanos: In this I want to be clear, because often things aren't understood as they really are: the causes of my retirement were political, ideological, and of a directional character.

In the political realm, one must, before anything else, point out a situation: the decades of 1960 and 1970 were a succession of military dictatorships that didn't give any political space for a democratic opening; there weren't any conditions in which a process through which the people could freely elect their leaders could develop. The electoral process was invalidated by fraud and corruption. I remember that the most intense debates that we had with the PCS, during the ideological struggle when I was at the University, were on this point. The PCS maintained that one must always participate in the elections even though it was only as a platform for denunciation. Only reality and pressure from the Cubans made them abandon this line in order to form the military coordination (the FMLN).

With the coup d'etat in 1979, a space opened that gave conditions to begin the democratic process in the following years. The first concrete steps were the elections for the Constitutional Assembly (March 1982) and the presidential elections (May 1984). The democratic opening went forward in spite of the FMLN trying again and again to close the way—first by purely military actions, and afterwards, by combining the military with actions of the masses. I lived in both those times: when the military actions were combined with the movements of the masses and when everything revolved around the military.

It is important to point out here that the opening was not only manifested in the exercise of suffrage, but also in the extension of other liberties, like the freedom of the press and the right to organize, in the progress in human rights, and in the professionalization of the Armed Forces.

Observing this panorama I began to think that the method of using armed struggle for the taking of power began to lose its importance until arriving at the moment in which today it has lost its perspective. It was false that we were going to win, to take power.

Rojas: And what happened then with Marxism-Leninism, with the power of the proletariat?

Castellanos: I want to point out here the second cause of my reason for retirement from the FMLN, which I define as ideological. At the beginning I pointed out that my decision to enter the FPL was that the Marxist analysis was attractive, something new to me, a basic line that showed me a concrete way. With the experiences I had with guerrillas and with what I saw as a model in the countries in which I traveled, I began to be in disagreement with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that was the basis of the FMLN. This doctrine consecrated violence as the midwife of history and maintained that in order to

resolve social injustice what was necessary in the long term was the dictatorship of the proletariat; a dictatorship, a form of government that I have seen in my travels, in which the Marxist party wields absolute power, not permitting opposition, denying all the collective rights of a person. It takes their religious beliefs from the people. This is what I have seen and learned in my travels. Visiting the Soviet Union or Vietnam while having a translator explain to you is not the same as being in Managua or Cuba where you can talk to the people (with difficulty, to be sure) who share a history, a culture, a language with you. It is very different to talk with the Marxist-Leninists in Spanish.

Rojas: The other cause that you pointed out, as a reason for your retirement from the FMLN, you called of directional character. What does that mean exactly?

Castellanos: They are the problems of direction that exist on different levels of the FMLN. I would say that basically the levels are three: One, in the very FMLN, where the organizations that make it up are in a permanent struggle for power, he who achieves hegemony and has the greatest influence makes his political and military plans prevail. This fight is permanent. Two, between the FMLN and FDR exists an alliance that has no prospect of consolidation, because the first is Marxist-Leninist and the other of a democratic nature. The FDR, in practice has consciously played the role of political cover for the FMLN, to take the red taint away. However, the FDR at the same time wanted to use the FMLN to take advantage of the restoration and consolidation of a transitional government where they would have greater hegemony. Three, between the FMLN-FDR and the Sandinistas and Cubans—the political-military organizations that make up the fronts have lost, as we have seen, their autonomy from the Sandinistas and Cubans. The FMLN-FDR depends on the foreign arms and foreign political solidarity. They are dependent organizations, and since they play a role internationally, their struggle is conditioned upon those international objectives. This prevents them from applying a strategic political-military line adjusted to the country's reality and from achieving basic changes.

Rojas: The reasons for your retirement from the FMLN seem clear, but how was your evolution in a personal sense?

Castellanos: Ten years ago it was clear to me that entering the organization meant leaving everything, my studies, my family, all

normal life; I would only be able to work from the organization and for the organization. Every time there were doubts, [there were] then more work, more speeches, more marches, more reports, more meetings . . . everything clandestine, always taking security measures, mobilizing constantly—from San Vicente to Santa Ana, Chalatenango, crossing by ferry the Gulf of Fonseca, traveling to Cuba, Vietnam. . . .

When I returned from Vietnam, in January of 1984, after going to give explanations to the socialist countries about Marcial and Ana María, and after verifying the manipulation to which we were subjected by the Cubans, everything was different. It was like returning to reality which I had left. I became conscious that I was participating in something incorrect, aberrant, contrary to the interests of the people.

Rojas: The people who are there in the mountains...what happens to them?

Castellanos: The people who are there—the only thing they have is the guerrillas . . . violence, because the great majority are peasants who have lost their families, their work; they have no place to go. They are not from the city, nor can they go live abroad, in a strange environment. They are people who have accumulated resentments against the system itself, but not because of Marxist analysis, nor because of ideology.

Notes

1. PRAL: Long-Distance Reconnaissance Patrols, special units of the Armed Forces developed through the application of counterinsurgency tactics. Basically they have as their object exploration and, if possible, attack deep in the enemy zones. They are also known as RECONDO units.

2. Monterrosa, Azmitia: Colonel Domingo Monterrosa and Mayor José Armando Azmitia, two of the military men outstanding in counterinsurgency operations. They died on 23 October 1984 from a bomb explosion in the helicopter in which they were riding. Monterrosa was the First Commandant of the Atlacatl Immediate Reaction Battalion, and Azmitia Commandant of the Atlacatl Battalion.

3. Mendez: Colonel Miguel Antonio Mendez, successor to General Monterrosa in the Third Brigade, a command he still held in 1986.

4. Security Corps: The Vice Ministry of Public Security, a division of the Ministry of Defense and Security, is the organism that directs the Security Corps and the Treasury police. During the dictatorships of Molina and Romero, they played an important role in repression. Since 1979 they have become more professional; the Catholic Church has recognized that advance.

5. Assembly Elections: Elections for representatives to the National Assembly took place in March 1985, in which the PDC received 33 of the 60 representatives who make up the assembly, displacing the parties of the ultra-right. With this election, the process of constitutionalization was finished.

6. "Concerning Our Military Plans: The Military Strategy of the FMLN," *The Comandantes Speak: The Military Strategy of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front*, translated and edited by Gabriel and Judith F. Marcella, Department of National Security, U.S. Army War College, March 1987, pp. 2-7; 19-22.

7. Massacre of the Zona Rosa: Multiple assassinations committed by the PRTC in a residential neighborhood of San Salvador. Thirteen people were assassinated when they left an open-air cafe (June 1985).

8. ORDEN: Nationalist Democratic Organization, founded in the seventies by the then Director of the National Guard. ,Its principal mission upon its creation was the defense of the communities, similar to the task now filled by the Civil Defense. Later ORDEN was legally abolished, but its groups continued functioning clandestinely, some of them becoming part of the Death Squads.

9. Ines Guadalupe Duarte Duran: Oldest daughter of President Duarte, kidnapped on 10 September 1985, freed 44 days later in an exchange of prisoners. The FMLN freed 38 mayors, Ana Cecilia Villeda, and Mrs. Ines Duarte Duran. The Government and the Salvadoran Armed Forces freed 22 political prisoners, and 96 FMLN wounded were evacuated from the zone of control.

6

Stalemate 1987–1989

With United States' support the Salvadoran Armed Forces have probably become Central America's most formidable military force. Beginning in 1981, as a matter of survival, they had to think and act in terms of what was absolutely necessary at the moment. As a result, over the course of the years they began to assume more and more that the military component was the major insurgent strength, and that if it were destroyed, the FDR/FMLN would lose its vitality and ability to act as a meaningful force in El Salvador.

Indeed, since 1985, the Government's efforts against the FMLN military force have been impressive. Logistically and tactically, the Armed Forces "have succeeded in everything (they) have set out to do."[1] They have developed the capability to move more than 50,000 troops around the country, feed them, clothe them, house them, train them, supply them with arms and ammunition, and generally sustain them better than ever before. It is argued with much pride that if Nicaragua ever started a war, the Salvadorans could finish it. It is also stated—somewhat less comfortably—that if Honduras should again show belligerent intent the Salvadoran military would defeat them in short order.

Those arguments may be valid, but they are also irrelevant. The arguments point out a major reason why the Salvadoran Armed Forces cannot defeat the insurgent enemy it faces. The FMLN is not a conventional military force and since 1985 has abandoned the strategy of direct, large-scale armed confrontation.

While the FMLN units have avoided major confrontations with stronger Government forces, the Government failed to adapt. The Salvadoran Armed Forces with their battalions continue to expend energy on "sweep" and "search and destroy" missions supported by sophisticated weapons, but to no immediate consequence. Facing an

enemy that is targeting the legitimacy of the government through subversion and guerrilla tactics, the Armed Forces appear to have arrived at a juncture where they can win the battles but not win the war.

For their part, the FMLN likewise appears to be stagnating. Two of the cardinal requirements for success in an insurgency are unity of effort and consistency of support. This is equally as true for the insurgent as for the embattled Government. In El Salvador, the support given the FMLN from Cuba and Nicaragua has been the key factor in sustaining the insurgents. Yet, as Castellanos reflects, this support has not been consistent. The Cuban goal is to consolidate the Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua even at the expense of other socialist insurgencies. Likewise, the Nicaraguan preoccupation with the contras and the Ortega regime's desire to influence the U.S. Congress psychologically have lessened the support to the FMLN.

Coupling the lessening of support from Nicaragua with the lack of unity within the FMLN, Castellanos flatly states that the FMLN cannot win. He goes on to say that the fragmentation of leadership means that the FMLN will not gain power, but that they will try to turn back the democratic process—which is their goal. They cannot win now either through military power or through popular support. However, time is against the status quo, and thus favors the insurgent. As Castellanos prophetically muses, maybe in five to ten years, the FMLN will unify and regain strength, and Nicaragua will again supply the weapons and ammunition.

Manwaring: Please comment on the current situation with the FMLN. Have they continued with the guerrilla war strategy?

Castellanos: Well, perhaps we should begin with a brief description and diagnosis of the current situation. On one hand, on the military side, the FMLN has lost military strength. It has gone back to an insurrectionalist strategy after coming to a war of opposition with very decisive battles in part of 1983 and part of 1984. Beginning in 1985, there was a strategic political and military regrouping and change of strategy due to the fact that military conditions no longer enabled the FMLN to strengthen the popular army. On one hand, there were organic problems—from 10,000 men they dropped to 5,000, for example. Today they are at a strength of about 4,000. Their whole operational tactics are changed—they no longer scatter. These are no longer concentrated units in guerrilla battalions or the brigades like the Rafael Arce Zablah Brigade or the Felipe Pena Mendoza group of battalions. Instead, they have dispersed and returned to the classic

guerrilla struggle, which is , after all, action-oriented with small units and uses the ambush methods.

They no longer attack the Army, let us say, in order to defeat it, to try to demoralize it; instead, the principal objective in this period is precisely the attack on the economy—that is, sabotage. They try to deepen the economic crisis by means of sabotage attacks on the economy. They try to justify it by saying it is a war economy, something which is open to a lot of discussion. The purpose of the FMLN is to bring the economy to its death-throes—which in turn brings everything down on the workers, then on the working class, and thus upon all sectors of the populace. This translates into social discontent; that discontent, after all, translates into breakouts of violence, and carries it to insurrection. In other words, in the military line, the FMLN's central objective is to sabotage the economy and deepen the crisis. At this time there are various factors that are provoking the crisis—like inflation, flight of capital, no economic reactivation, etc. In addition to sabotage, these factors come together to make the situation more critical. Then economic sabotage has become the central overall objective.

There are other, somewhat military actions, but they are mostly skirmishes of a very propagandistic character. It is not really an objective of the actions to annihilate a particular position or capture arms and prisoners, but instead to make propaganda about attacking. We can look at a number of battles that way: for example, the attack on El Paraíso in March 1987. This last year [1988] there were some also; but they were skirmishes, and in the end the military battles have fallen into a category that we would call typically terrorism. The FMLN hadn't done that before; . . . it does it now because of weakness. The car bombs, which have increased during the last months of the end of 1988, and the massacre or killing of mayors are signs of that weakness. That is, since they no longer can control territory and portray themselves as a force of double (military and political) power, they have no solution other than to use threats and terror to make mayors resign and thus give the image that they have double power.

To these terrorist actions, we need to add other types of action, like the transport strike, that directly affect the population and the deaths of some peasants whom they are responsible for judging, sentencing, and executing. The whole framework of these actions really shows us acts that fulfill the qualifications of terrorism as the Government defines it.

It is right for the Government to call it terrorism-that is a very appropriate concept. We see terrorism in the same line as liberation

movements, as more serious deviation—that is, that the FMLN has degenerated in its actions and has eminently fallen into terrorism. Their acts have brought the FMLN much repudiation on the national level, and discontent in the Oriente [eastern El Salvador] and here in urban areas.

Now what this military situation gives evidence of is that the FMLN has effected a dispersal of its units; it is no longer a war of position, but a *perestroika* (open)[sic] guerrilla war. Use of car bombs and economic sabotage are nothing more than the result of weakness and military decadence. On one hand, at the regional geopolitical level we are already seeing concretely the evidence of the rhetoric of a frantic and desperate organization—especially since Nicaragua no longer helps or its help is very minimal.

They have also even proven their weakness in the battles. They are not using manufactured weapons, but homemade ones—for example, the weapons that are called cannon-less artillery, which the Vietnamese used with a wooden ramp, earthen stocks, a propulsion charge, a so-called wrapped bundle, and a fuse. This is the tubeless artillery the FMLN, which learned it from the Vietnamese, is using. They put on the match and there it goes. That's what they attacked the National Guard with last year, the Estado Mayor [Headquarters] of the Treasury Police this year, and the Air Force ...but without causing a great number of casualties in the barracks—it was minimal, one or two. The majority of those affected in these operations are civilians. Dozens of people, who knows how many are killed and for what?

Manwaring: In the future, what if the FMLN wins the struggle?

Castellanos: Well, in the first place, the FMLN is in no condition to win this war. Presently, it is in a period of weakness, of resistance. It is no longer on the offensive. The sabotages, the mines, the transportation strikes are all part of an operative line in a defensive framework of resistance. In other words, they are trying to maintain their position.

The Sandinistas are no longer providing the same logistical flow as before. There is much less than before because Nicaragua is being harassed politically by the contras and the Congress, both of which are exerting a lot of pressure. The Sandinistas don't want to provide evidence that they are helping the FMLN. It is not convenient for them. They want to consolidate their revolution even more, even if it means sacrificing the FMLN.

The Cubans' Central American policy is to consolidate Nicaragua,

even if other organizations are weakened; that condemns the FMLN in their attempts to take power. They are in no condition to do so. When the Viet Cong took Saigon, they were successful because North Vietnam, with its regular divisions, provided thousands of tons of help on a daily basis. Not here! That is why the FMLN has been diminished in its operational capability. They ambush once in a while; they destroy a bridge here and there. In other words, militarily, the FMLN does not have the capability to achieve power. That is why now they have changed their strategy and have returned to the insurrection.

Therefore, I believe this is nothing more than military decay due partially to the fact that there isn't a sufficient flow of arms and men from the exterior. That is done by the Nicaraguans and the Cubans...as a matter of principle (come linea). That is to say, the Soviet-Cuban objective is to consolidate Nicaragua—consolidate it, even though they sacrifice other movements in the area—such as the FMLN of Salvador, the URNG of Guatemala, Chinchoneros, etc. The single objective is to consolidate the victory in Nicaragua. On the other hand, this measure more than any other has reinforced the Esquipulas II plan. Of course, Nicaragua was on the lookout and had to take some other measures so they wouldn't be found out [helping the FMLN], and to try to be recognized [diplomatically], and to prevent Congress from helping the contras. That is, they had to make a smoke screen in order to prevent aid from being given to the contras.

This geopolitical factor has caused a weakness in the FMLN. Now they don't have the same level of outside help, but, after all, it is an external variable uncontrollable by the FMLN.

They claim that by the end of 1989 they will have achieved power through popular insurrection. There is an economic crisis, there is unemployment, there are no jobs, there are no salary increases, there is a high cost of living—they want to take advantage of all that so that the people will rise again. Now the businessmen don't invest their capital here.

Since 1979–1980, two billion dollars have fled the country and gone to Miami. The result of the sabotage caused by the FMLN now totals over 1.5 billion dollars. They say that the economic crises generate insurrections. You see Mexico, for example. There is no insurrection or organization there. In other words, we have it here only because they want to provoke one. We must resolve this, or another fascist government will come along as in the past. That plays into FMLN hands, because they are able to justify violence. They won't achieve power, but they will try to turn back the democratic process. That's is what they want.

The motivations of the insurgent leadership are important to an understanding of the enemy. Castellanos believes that the Marxist-Leninist solution will not solve the problems of El Salvador. He looks at the current leadership of the FPL and the FMLN and sees some old members of the Communist Party as tired and worn out, believing that they have been compromised. He sees others, such as Villalobos, as solely seeking power with the gun. These, he states, see the gun as the whole process and not a part of the process.

Manwaring: What has the FMLN learned, the directors and you as an individual? What have been the major lessons of the conflict until now?

Castellanos: The lessons one learns the most are about Marxism-Leninism. I believe that Marxism-Leninism is not a science, and it is not exact. It's a theory, and in particular, a theory which has been surpassed. Now, I can say this with some degree of authority because I've had experience. That is a lesson I have learned; Marxism taught me a great deal about how to analyze society. It is a theory which has been passed by, and many of its philosophical, historical, and politicoeconomic aspects do not apply. Some things such as analytical methods do have certain validity, more than anything else the socioeconomic analysis. That, yes, but the solutions they provide, no! Who is going to deny that there are those who are rich and those who are poor, that there are those who are exploiting. That is inherent, but that is part of the analysis. Yet how are we going to solve that if it's something else? The Marxist solution is behind the times because it is dogmatic and fatalistic, inclusive historically.

I've learned how to analyze a society and the national reality based on a socioeconomic analysis as a method. Now, the others like Shafik, Villalobos, and Leonel continue believing that Marxism is an exact science. They still think that.

Another lesson I've learned, and I'm quite satisfied with, is that I now know what the best solution is for this country. Nobody is going to come to me and say, this is a dictatorship of the right, this is a dictatorship of the left, or a dictatorship of the proletariat, because I know what that is. They aren't going to fool me that easily, nor will a socialist. Now, I have my own criteria, I have my own concept, and I say that the solution is such and such.

That I have learned. Those who belong to the FMLN have learned the military line, and they follow a dogmatic military line exclusively—though not even Lenin dogmatized violence! During the state of revolution, Lenin claimed that violence is the midwife of

history. However, that was at the historical level, not at the specific and tactical levels, because at this level, the conditions determine the method. That is why Lenin participated in the elections in Russia. After 1905–1907, before the revolution, he was in Parliament. He did not reject elections. Well, he was a genteel man within Marxism itself.

The FMLN leaders are dogmatics and they are even Trotskyites. They don't realize it, and they think they are right. Now, the mistake is that nobody makes them realize the truth of the matter. There is no ideological struggle in this country.

Manwaring: There is no what?

Castellanos: An ideological struggle that makes them see that. In my opinion, it's good that they fight for social justice. It is right. Yet, to accomplish it through the wrong means is a mistake, because they are leading and using the people as experimental subjects with the use of their insurrectional theories.

Manwaring: That reminds me of a commentary of our mutual friend who once said that the FMLN are lousy Leninists. Is he correct?

Castellanos: Yes, because they have withdrawn from the Leninist thesis. That's why Lenin criticized the infantilism of the left, and while before they ignored some of the thesis, now they are withdrawing more from Lenin's thesis. It's a deviation like that of the Shining Path.[2]

Lately Villalobos has called the FMLN that—that they are another Shining Path. Well, the FMLN is Villalobos. In the different interviews that he has given—for example, the one they did on Channel 12, the magazine of the week recently, he talked about insurrection—that is, the FMLN is in an insurrectional phase, pre-insurrection, but these conditions really don't exist. The FMLN's true objective is not so much to launch an insurrectionist offensive, but to close the democratic opening, or to ruin the democratic process. Why? Because by destroying the democratic process, they believe that the Government will declare a state of emergency, a state of siege, and finally an autonomous regime. In this framework the guerrillas will be strengthened; their armed struggle will once again acquire a reason for being—because of repression of the authoritarian regime. They believe that if they can destroy the democratic process, the bipartisanship of the U.S. Congress will be destroyed, as well as that of the European Parliament. All this is their objective. It is not that they have

conditions appropriate for the insurrectionist offensive—those conditions really do not exist. Their objective is to push the democratic process back.

Manwaring: Going back to lessons learned, what have the politicians like Shafik or Ungo learned?

Castellanos: In my opinion, they, the politicians, have learned that their strategy is flawed, and it must be corrected. I think Ungo really believed that the FMLN was going to take power, and the reality has been something else. Now, since Ungo is under a lot of pressure, he is not Ungo in his identity. He is Ungo in his functions of the Socialist International, the FMLN, and the Sandinistas. Ungo even goes to Cuba to speak with Fidel, and Fidel orients him. Ungo is compromised. He is pressured. Now, since he is living very well, and they pay him in dollars, a good sum, he can't complain. Well, he is already old and has lost all aspirations. He has dedicated himself to live, to vegetate. However, I believe he does know there are mistakes that must be corrected. They are the ones who are exerting most of the pressure to change the FMLN, because the government they were proposing back in 1981 is not the same government today.

Now, Shafik Handal, who is no longer with the FDR, has also learned a lot. In 1985, when the elections for representatives were held, Shafik proposed during a meeting that they participate in elections. The FPL and the ERP came down on him rather hard. "How is that possible. . . ." "No, because it's necessary to combine politics with. . . ." "Yes, we will combine politics, but with the masses, not elections." Shafik is more flexible, and they have participated. The Communist Party has been forced to participate in elections. That is the situation of Shafik.

Now, Villalobos and all the others continue covering themselves with personal glory, even though they see the failures. They are obstinate. They are obstinate people who have established arms as a modus vivendi in the sense that they don't function unless they have a weapon by their side. In other words, it's the weapon that produces a whole process and it is not the weapon that is the process itself.

Villalobos and Ungo are two different people. One has made arms his lifestyle, and he thinks that without one he's worthless. The other one has lost hope because he hasn't seen any victory. He's frustrated, "...We must pursue the dialogue and try...." I would say that what they have learned has been with respect to their failures. In my opinion, neither the Government nor the Armed Forces take advantage of those failures.

While in most Latin American countries it can be argued that there is de facto separation of church and state, traditionally the Church has an accepted role in supporting or mediating politics. The rise of liberation theology has cast some doubt as to the neutrality and motives of the Church. This is especially true in El Salvador, where right-wing elements early in the conflict accused the Church of fomenting revolution. With the marginal successes of the Duarte regime from 1984–1987, the left began to accuse the Church of trying to stop the insurgents. With the stagnation in the armed revolutionary struggle, and the uncertainty of the future, Castellanos provides some excellent insights into the role of the Church.

Manwaring: It has been said that the Catholic priests, who represent liberation theology, have allied against the FMLN. Is that true? Whom will they support in the future?

Castellanos: In the Church, we must first differentiate between two structures. There is the institutional church. The institutional church is composed of the highest hierarchy of the Church, the Episcopal Conference, where the bishops and all other parish priests are. That structure, at this moment, is not with the FMLN. They might have some sympathies, but it's not like 1979-1980 when support existed because there was tremendous repression in the country. At that time, Monsignor [Oscar] Arnulfo Romero, for example, supported the FMLN. However, the church leaders weren't Marxists or revolutionaries or anything like that. They supported [us] because there were many repressions, many injustices. Then they allied with the FMLN.

The institutional church always has sympathy. It's logical, but it's not like the past. Now, their contribution is to mediate in the dialogue, in other words, to pursue the dialogue because they don't want a military solution, but rather a political solution through dialogue. That is what they are doing.

That is the institutional church. But there also exists the popular church. The CONIP, Comision Nacional de Iglesias Populares (National Commission of Popular Churches), was formed. They are allied with the FMLN, but now it is rather reduced. They maintain their own independence, their own identity. They give a lot of support, and they work with the FMLN in the controlled zones. For example, there are Rutilio Sanchez, Father David, and all those other priests. That is, these are some priests of the CONIP specifically.

Now, the Jesuits, for example, those of José Simeón Cañas University of Central America (UCA), are neither revolutionaries nor

Marxist-Leninists. They are liberation theologists. They are Catholics, they have their religion, but they grab a little Marxism. In other words, for them the Church, which has been spiritual, tries to be more earthly, to make it what they refer to as "an option for the poor," as was said in Pueblo, Medellin, I believe in 1966, where liberation theology was born.

However, these people maintain their own identity. In other words, "We give support to the FMLN, but we maintain our own identity." We wanted to recruit some priests, but they refused because they follow orders from their religious sects, from the Jesuit Order of Ignatius Loyola, and all those others. In other words, they lean more towards the priesthood. They are more priests than politicians, but they will try to help in the politics of dialogue.

To the North American, predisposed to problem solving through discussion and negotiations, compromise is a time-honored concept. Perhaps this predisposition is one of the most dangerous blinders U.S. policy- and decision-makers can have. First, there is no word in the Spanish language with the same meaning as the English word "compromise." Second, dialogue and negotiations are by Marxist-Leninist doctrine to be used solely as a tactic for the purpose of gaining concessions or to gain time. Understanding this, the insights Castellanos gives us concerning the FMLN objectives and motivations for "dialogue" and negotiations are important lessons in our quest to understand both the insurgent enemy and the nature of the insurgent conflict. His discussion of the specific ways the FMLN attempts to sway congressional opinion is an important signal which cannot be ignored.

Manwaring: If the FMLN did win the struggle, if they take power, how would a government like that function?

Castellanos: What would happen if they took power? Well, they would establish a democratic revolutionary government similar to the one in Nicaragua. If they were successful militarily, they would have a popular army where they would incorporate honest military men, not criminals. That would be the first government. They would expropriate the oligarchy's lands and put all services under state control. They would preach a nonaligned policy at the international level, which would be false.

They are going to align themselves with Cuba and all the others to form a junta and try to rig the elections in their own favor. Now, the fact is that that kind of government is based on a military victory.

However, since they no longer have the capability for a military victory, they now insist on dialogue.

By means of dialogue, they hope to create a provisional government where they ask only for a share in the power. But, it is not really a share of power that they want because they start from the point that they have an army, and they are going to have more strength to fight. The purpose of that provisional government is to buy time slowly and to continue developing the capability in order to take over ultimately.

That is their objective: To go to a dialogue, present their government proposal—a convergence as they refer to it—to have a share in the power that allows them to remain in the rural zones with their armed units. That is what they would ask for. Now, with the dialogues that will take place, the Government doesn't see it that way. "We are going to follow the Esquipulas framework and we will have a dialogue so that you can incorporate into the process. That, yes. The Government will have a dialogue but not form a new government because it has already been elected. If you want to become part of the Government, you must participate in legal elections. If the people elect you, then so be it."

In other words, the FMLN has two alternatives for achieving power. One is through a military victory, for which at the present moment it does not have the conditions or popular support. Maybe within the next five to ten years they will be able to regain strength, and the Sandinistas will once again be able to provide them with ammunitions, weapons.

The other alternative is through dialogue in order to buy time through a provisional government, apparently democratic, broad, where all the other forces would be, and where they would have a share of the power. That would be transitory while they try to buy time and regain strength. Neither the Government nor most of the political parties are in agreement with that, because they know the FMLN only wants to buy time and regain strength. Besides, there already is a Government, and if the people want to participate, have them participate in elections.

Now, the FMLN is trying to do that through its movement of the masses. We believe we must have the dialogue, but we tell the FMLN it must incorporate into the process. Those are the two ways they can do it, through a military victory and through a dialogue, in which they would be in very difficult conditions. That is the situation.

Manwaring: What are the frame of reference and the principles and objectives of what you have labeled the "Politics of Dialogue?"

Castellanos: One of the fundamental principles through which a liberation movement can get its enemy to sit down at the table and make concessions is having a favorable correlation of forces. If it does not possess this condition, it is very difficult to make the adversary pay attention and listen to the proposal of dialogue; it is even difficult to make him come to the table.

The correlation of forces is a determining factor for achieving tactical objectives drawn up in a dialogue—negotiation, or in any formulated political proposal.

The Liberation Front of South Vietnam (FLN) and the Communist Party (PCV) correctly applied this principle and through it were successful in obtaining the outlined objectives in each negotiation that took place during the revolutionary process—against the French in North Vietnam (1954) and against the United States in South Vietnam (1973). They used the dialogue-negotiation as a tactical and auxiliary element of the armed struggle. They effectively obtained definitive triumph based on the decisive battles of the Popular Liberation Army.

In our country the FMLN has applied and is applying this principle. Shafik Handal expressed at one of the press conferences given during the third dialogue (1987): "Dialogue is linked to the struggle through the correlation of forces. It is the only thing that can give reality to the political solution." With this declaration Shafik recognized the military weakness and strategic retreat that have gotten worse lately. That is, the FMLN is conscious that one of the limiting principles in the achievement of tactical objectives in dialogue-negotiation is a very unfavorable correlation of forces. In military terms, this is the decline in military units, and a turning toward terrorism (car-bombs, killing of mayors, etc.); in political terms, it is a stagnation of the army of the masses and the ruin of the construction of the broad front.

In this framework was born and written the recent proposal of the FMLN before the elections. Looked at from the principle of correlation of forces, it has no possibility of prospering and of being listened to, in spite of the fact that its content is more flexible than earlier proposals.

The General Command, knowing that the correlation of forces is unfavorable to them, was not ignorant of the fact that their proposal was going to be rejected and therefore it was thought of from its beginning as a maneuver for continuing and deepening their insurrectionist plan.

The FMLN, upon conceiving the proposal as a maneuver, stepped up their demands by tramping on or violating the Constitution, based on

another of their principles—"We do not recognize the Constitution of the country because the process of its elaboration and its historical bases are corrupt. Therefore, we do not accept its validity as a framework for negotiating peace." [Proposal of the FMLN To Convert the Elections into a Contribution to Peace] Therefore, Salvador Samayoa, member of the Diplomatic Political Commission (CPD), upon making the proposal known in Mexico, affirmed that "the Constitution is not going to give them work." And he added, "It's only a piece of paper with writing on it."

In the context of the current elections based on a process of consolidated institutionalization, it was natural to expect a round rejection from the three powers of State, Government, and the majority of the political parties.

The maneuver of the "Proposal of the FMLN To Convert the Elections into a Contribution to Peace" was cleverly conceived in order to be rejected, because of the unfavorable correlation of forces in the future and because of its content as a challenge to the Constitution.

Now, the leadership has not varied the principles with which it interprets the democratic opening and the electoral process: "There can be no democracy without independence. In order to achieve peace through dialogue and negotiation, the North American intervention in our country has to end." And in 1987, among the six points proposed to reopen the dialogue and arrive at a political solution, they reaffirmed: "The solution ought fully to ransom sovereignty and national independence. Only thus could one assure the Salvadoran people of the possibility of exercising their right to self-determination and the employment of democracy to decide their own destiny."

This postulation is hardly consistent, and its error is that its basis is the dogmatism of the armed struggle and therefore they do not accept that the democratic opening even exists.

The existence of a democratic process or opening is determined by internal factors, and not external ones, even though the latter limit it in its growth.

The internal political factor that denies all democracy or an opening is military dictatorship or authoritarian civil regimes. Every political-military organization and the Communist Party in the seventies maintained that the denial of democracy was determined by the military fascist dictatorships, and not so much by the external factor, the dependence on the United States. The principal theme of the popular movement and of the organizations of the New Left was then the fight against fascism and for democracy. At the same time, it is what justified the use of the armed way (method) for the taking of political power.

Currently, after almost ten years, with the disappearance of the fascist dictatorships, a process of democratic opening already exists and reopens the possibilities of using the pacific method (elections). It is absurd to propose that a democratic opening cannot exist while independence does not exist. This factor could limit the full growth of democracy if it has increased, but the opening with its own dynamism has the virtue of neutralizing it.

The FDR, participating in the electoral process as the Democratic Convergence, is one of the principal witnesses and protagonists of the democratic opening, and at the same time, the negation of the dogma of the armed struggle.[3]

As far as the electoral process as a nonviolent method of arriving at political power is concerned, the FMLN has expressed emphatically: "We do not recognize as valid the elections taking place as long as there is no independence, and the elections have been controlled by the same genocidal and repressive armed forces."

Manwaring: How does the recent proposal by the FMLN to participate in the 1989 elections affect the "politics of dialogue" and can the FMLN gain support?

Castellanos: Unequivocally the proposal is based, in its essence, on the use of arms. The character and method of the revolution fundamentally continue to be, for the FMLN, the armed way. The proposal, whether it is accepted or not, functions to strengthen said method. When it is not accepted, which the FMLN had calculated in terms of probabilities, there will exist greater justification for the General Command of the front to go ahead and deepen their insurrectionist plan.

Joaquín Villalobos, in interviews, said that El Salvador "is again living in a pre-insurrectional situation."

At no time do they mention abandoning the method of the violent struggle, or more specifically, arms. They only speak of a narrow ceasefire. The participation of their supporters in electoral activity and support of the Convergence would be an exceptional measure in their military and political (strategic?) plans. Also, the legitimacy of the electoral results would not imply the acceptance of, and submission to, the newly elected Government. The firing and the blasting of weapons would then be used as a factor of force in order to oblige said Government, by means of dialogue-negotiation, to share the power with the FMLN. If in such a case the Convergence won in the elections, besides the force of arms, the FMLN would blackmail the Convergence with the fact that its

triumph was owed to the support of the bases of the political-military front.

"It is evident that in El Salvador there exists a wide consensus of opposition that is on its way towards a transition, towards a consensus of general rebellion." Jorge Meléndez [Comandante Jonas], second-in-command to Joaquín Villalobos, stated in the beginning of December: "What we want is for the people to understand the principal task of the first order: prepare for a general and violent struggle.

At the same time as these declarations were made, military actions of sabotage against the economic infrastructure (the electric wires), the destruction of factories, cotton cooperatives, coffee and other mills, the increase in the use of car-bombs, the killing of mayors and campesinos, etc. were all intensified.

With respect to the masses, the organizations aligned with the FMLN augmented the mobilization, agitation, and radicalization through rickety, weak demonstrations in essential activities.

In spite of the efforts of the General Command of the FMLN, its plan of insurrection was benumbed by the stagnation of the front of the masses and their fall into terrorist actions.

Unequivocally, in recent months there has been no change of attitude in the ideological-strategic dogmatism of the FMLN concerning the armed struggle as most fundamental, and not the political means, and even less the electoral means. If there had existed an intention of changing, the most opportune moment for the Command was the "diplomatic offensive" on the part of the comandantes Leonel Gonzalez and Joaquín Villalobos that took place at the end of October last year. That was the moment to have presented the proposal "To Convert the Elections into a Contribution to Peace." Nevertheless, the only thing they did was express their desires for a negotiated political solution to the conflict, and they always accompanied their words with the belief that the conditions were favorable for an insurrection.

At this moment the priority of an insurrection is evident in the FMLN plans and in their organizations of the masses. The National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), at the same time that they distributed their press bulletin of support and alignment with the FMLN in regard to the proposal before the elections, presented an analysis of the occasion and methods of promotion among them: (a) "TO DEEPEN OUR STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE (REINVINDICATIVA) BUT WITH METHODS OF MORE COMBATIVE STRUGGLE that prepares our bases and the people in the practice of popular uprising"; (b) The work sector will intensify the preparations for the rehearsals toward the achievement of a POPULAR STRIKE..."; (c) "We ought to

continue to consolidate our relations with the other instruments for amplifying and achieving consensus, since the task of conquering the Popular and Democratic Government demands a change in the correlation of forces...." And the most important line in this situation: "Exactly as reality indicates, the electoral process tries to occupy large spaces in national life and it is our obligation to conduct said event to its self-destruction and to the internal confrontation of the power forces of the regime and Yankee imperialism. We are especially interested in annihilating the Christian Democrats totally, since it is the appropriate force for moving forward the antipopular plans of Yankee imperialism. This means that we should not touch ARENA in its own area."

These thoughts from the masses of UNTS are no longer surprising; they were similar to those presented in the electoral period in March of last year. What is new and coincides with the policy line of the FMLN is that they are preparing the masses for insurrectionist uprisings and the general strike.

The other methods are clear—boycott the elections and the political institutions that participate, beginning with the Christian Democrats, and even though the boycott fails, achieve their loss in the polling places so that they can be annihilated politically. On the other hand, they should indirectly favor ARENA so that they win, and so that this party, once in power, will sharpen the political, economic, military, and social contradictions, which will favor, according to UNTS and the FMLN, the advance of the insurrectionist plan.

The FMLN, as well as its organization of aligned masses (UNTS), states clearly that the strategic priority is to boycott or destabilize the electoral process with the plan of insurrection, and not to pursue any other methods that could dilute the effect of the direction taken.

In this context one can deduce that the objectives of the FMLN really are not "to convert the elections into a contribution to peace," but to justify the boycott of the elections and to advance their plan of insurrection.

Manwaring: Is it correct to say that is the reason they have been willing to negotiate, to talk, in order to gain time or to . . . ?

Castellanos: Exactly, that is the frame of reference. Their primary objective is insurrection. But, since insurrection seems to be scarce, they behave like this now. It's also because their front of the masses has not developed. The ULTS—United League of Salvadoran Workers—that ought to have grown—has stagnated. It is one little group. We have

the UNTS—National Unity of Salvadoran Workers, and the UNOC—National Unity of Workers and Farmers—who don't agree with their line. Therefore the UNTS remain isolated in their plans. Now the reactivation of the masses has come about gradually, but it has suffered stagnation. And the other error of the FMLN is that it has encouraged the masses to become very radical—the burning of buses, the burning of gas stations, tearing down traffic lights, etc. These actions committed by the masses, instead of contributing to their growth, have isolated them from the population. These are errors on the part of the FMLN in their conduct with the masses, and reflect movement backward. Nevertheless, they are still talking about a social collapse that will lead to insurrection. Really no such conditions exist. What will happen is disturbances, but not an insurrection. They can only go so far, and if they try it, there will be an abortion (miscarriage) of the popular movement as a result.

Manwaring: Before continuing, please elaborate about the international power center in Europe, and the FMLN plan to influence the Congress in the United States.

Castellanos: Right now, the FMLN war is create a condition so that the U.S. Congress will cut the aid, weaken the Government by a cut in aid to repeat what happened in Nicaragua, Vietnam. In this light, the more the Government violates human rights, the better for the FMLN. If there are massacres, if the death squads continue to exist, . . . all of those have DISAPPEARED... If there continue to be deaths and abuses, that favors them [the FMLN]. And these are political weapons in the war they will take to the Congress, to the European Parliament, saying, "Look, there's no need to help El Salvador, one must cut their aid, ruin their reputation." That is the object that the FMLN is working hard for—since at the national level, they are on the decline, really weak.

Manwaring: Let's continue with the FMLN taking the war to the United States Congress.

Castellanos: There is international activity attempting to isolate the country politically on the international level. In addition, this same activity tries to break the bipartisan agreement in Congress so that aid will be cut, so that the Government and the Armed Force are weakened. They are trying to repeat what was done in Nicaragua, and in Vietnam. The purpose of all their intense propaganda activity is to that end. Now, one must consider that the European Parliament has

great influence in Central America. Now with the situation of Esquipulas II, and with the Central American parliament that they want to form, Europe is exerting more influence in the Central American area. That influence is very positive because it helps the democratic processes. Because to develop these ideas, it has demanded that even Nicaragua make a democratic opening. Esquipulas II in that sense has the aura, or the shadow, let us say, of the European Parliament. However, the Bush Administration and the U.S. Congress also help conditions. Many sectors and many groups here accept democracy and respect human rights because it is a condition of assistance and aid. The FMLN believes that for some sectors it is because it is a condition, not a democratic conviction, that creates acceptance for democracy and respect for human rights. Knowing this, they believe that by cutting aid, they are going to be able to force the new government to return to the past.

Abroad the strength that the FMLN has is great—that is, they continue to have influence and they are listened to. Let's look at some of the evidence. The Department of State and the U.S. Congress are already seeing the possibility that ARENA will win. Believing that this will break up the bipartisanship, the FMLN wants to take advantage of the situation to carry on negotiations, saying in effect, "Look, look at that, they can't win, they have to negotiate—like a provisional government." The FMLN will be taking advantage of the conditions that are present, but the war doesn't end. They want to surprise Bush, the new president, and force him into a reevaluation. They will say to him, "Look at the Central American problem with pragmatism, with realism, not with ideological fanaticism, as President Reagan saw it." The FMLN is trying to manipulate the situation so that the United States will want to negotiate. Then the great company of world opinion goes to the side of the FMLN, even though internally, since they lack strength, they are not listened to.

Manwaring: Therefore the FMLN believes it is possible to get through negotiations that which it was impossible to get through arms.

Castellanos: Exactly.

Manwaring: Does the FMLN have a special organization to pursue this type of war?

Castellanos: Yes, they have lobby organizations in Washington—they have SISPER, which helps them a lot, the Solidarity committees in Mexico, and in Europe they have a lot of markets, as

they call it. Yes, they have psychological and propaganda organizations better organized than the Government itself on the international level; they have a lot of support, though not as much support as before, after all, for a military victory. Today they receive more support for negotiations. The whole wave, let us say, the groundswell is for support of negotiations. Now, up to that point the FMLN could manipulate Congress if the situation changes here... they will do it. This is already the hypothesis of some analysts, that if ARENA wins, what will happen is that in some way the Government is going to have a problem with the United States. To encourage the situation the FMLN wants to rig up a problem, hoping the United States will allow a coup d'etat, as has happened in other countries. With a coup, there will be a return to a de facto, a provisional government while they get ready for new elections. Many believe that that can happen. Even the Armed Forces could do it under their own initiative. This is a possibility that many people support.

Another possibility is that of a coup inside the Armed Forces. The right will coup to guarantee ARENA its deviation, its leadership, its government. Many maintain that ARENA, in order to govern and not have problems, has to have a change in the Armed Forces itself. This is a possibility that is rumored inside the Armed Forces.

Another theory is that ARENA, upon coming to power, is going to divide into the side of the neo-liberals of Cristiani, and those of Ochoa, because some want to go back to the more pro-North American scenario, and others do not. Then there could be an internal division in ARENA; another possibility that is probable is that as soon as that party comes to power, it could blow apart internally.

Manwaring: In what way?

Castellanos: The FMLN, even now, is distancing itself from the Soviets, and Villalobos has said so. They are going to follow their own plan, independent of the Soviet line. Therefore, if the Congress, the Democrats, the Department of State would guarantee the Convergence its plans, to be able to develop its platform, we believe that if the Convergence could win, [ARENA would split], and a coup would occur.

Manwaring: Comment on the situation if the United States demands that the Government accept the conditions of the FMLN.

Castellanos: Once the FMLN are inside the government, the situation is over, because the people are tired. The people over there are tired, they no longer want to be over there. If there are conditions, let the

FMLN come. You have Ruben Zamora [leader of the FDR in Nicaragua] who wants to return to the country. He wants to come to regain his strength. Now, if he wants to return, it's because there is a chance for a democratic opening. His change of attitude confirms that.

Manwaring: Truly democratic?

Castellanos: Of course. If not, he wouldn't be saying, "...I'm going to El Salvador." That's it. In other words, there exists a weakness in the alliance. Now, better political conditions must be provided. But instead of being a [political] party, the FMLN leadership see it as a contest. "Ah, if that one comes he's going to compete with me, and take away my social bases." You can't see it that way. It has to be seen as a function of the development of the democratic process to strengthen democracy. From that point of view, one must see the incorporation of Zamora and other people.

Manwaring: In terms of the "politics of dialogue" can you comment further on the February FMLN proposal and its impact on the political struggle within El Salvador?

Castellanos: Now the FMLN is going to attempt to divide the country both internally and externally from the United States. Of course the FMLN believes that ARENA will try to take measures to counter the influence of the United States and in a little while the Armed Forces are going to be disputing who is the leader. I am not concerned about this. The Armed Forces have advanced, have become professional. It will be difficult to return to former scenarios because the majority of the officers no longer believe in the traditional concepts and they understand what a political war is. The ideal of political war has evolved, and it will be very difficult to persuade the great majority of officers otherwise.

However, even though that is true, we believe that there will be problems within. Everything is going to depend, after all, on how that progressive sector of officers responds. ARENA is going to try to accentuate the differences. At the national level, they are going to have complete control of the three branches, executive, legislative, judical. This will give them the opportunity to exert an authoritarian regime and strengthen the differences within the military. That is the perspective of the problem if ARENA wins.

The challenge is how to change ARENA. There are power centers that can modify ARENA; one is the North American Congress and the Bush Administration. Vice-President Quayle has been very clear with

ARENA: aid will be continued and be based on ARENA support for the democratic process and respect for human rights. The Armed Forces are another center of power that can influence. Even though ARENA might control the three branches—legislative, judical and executive—the Armed Forces have influence to suggest and modify the policies of ARENA. Of course, the military power has a great measure of influence on the political power. And then the other pressure groups are the popular movement and international opinion, which has great influence. Those power centers, those pressure groups can cause ARENA to move away from its ideas of derailing the democratic opening and returning to a very traditional plan. They can pressure it so it doesn't go back the scenario of the past.

The struggle within ARENA is against those sectors who clearly state, "Look, if the United States wants to put conditions, let them leave." The first thing that the traditional sectors, the right, are going to try to do is to get rid of the U.S. advisors to the Armed Forces. First they will try to reduce the total number and stay with a reduced number, and if that is possible, say, "Help us, but don't impose low intensity conflict [LIC], and don't make us carry out reforms, and don't oblige us to maintain a democracy that can be used by the FMLN, and forget about human rights, because that is an obstacle to the military in maintaining order. The challenge is if ARENA wins, even though at this time there is a certain equilibrium within the opposing factions, the right will move. They have already endured the Christian Democrats, who are socialists and are considered communists. The right wing of ARENA says that the LIC is communist, socialist, that the Department of State is overrun with socialists, and the Pentagon (ha, ha, ha) by the Trilateral Commission and all that. The Council on Foreign Relations and the Committee of Relations of the Department of State [sic], they say, are made up solely of socialists.

The nature of insurgency is complex. The political situation in El Salvador in late 1989 adds to the complexity. The situation is one in which neither side has won and neither side has lost, and neither has the capacity to win in the near term. The result is a stalemate within a protracted war. Those who might take some satisfaction from "not having lost" to the FMLN should take little consolation; history shows that trying to restore a status quo eventually leads to radical change or defeat. And yet, Castellanos saw hope for a democratic victory.

Manwaring: Is there anything else to add, your own opinion, or something like that? Is there a word to describe the final objective of the FMLN?

Castellanos: Yes. At this time, the FMLN objective is only insurrectional and the proposal to participate is only a tactic, a maneuver. Even though dialogue itself was proposed, it is a maneuver, a trick. We also believe that democracy, the process, the strength, should play it a counter or another trick—not to allow it to have all the initiatives—but that it is necessary to come out against them with another strategem. The right says, "Oh, dialogue, no!" However, if they [the FMLN] want dialogue, let them come forward—in order to demonstrate to the people that they don't really want dialogue but that this is really political war. That is, strategems to confront strategems [tricks to confront tricks].

Then there is another scenario, if we believe that their political alliance should be taken advantage of, now that it is here—that democracy should give it a place in its pluralism, and all that. That also would help isolate the FMLN internationally. If they should begin to attack the FDR, even worse for the FMLN. That will be their death: if they should attack the Democratic Convergence, either politically or militarily.

I believe that the democratic process has been advanced by opening the process to all parties. Economically the crisis continues. Some critical economic indicators have stopped; but not like Nicaragua's crisis, more like the severe example of Mexico. The democratic process has advanced and human rights have improved, but there has been stagnation in the political area. If ARENA wins, democracy will be on a tightrope and can easily fall. The FMLN is no longer a military threat, nor a political one. Its international presence is more dangerous than its national one. What one should do to the FMLN is to counterbalance it with the fundamental sector. Politically one must win the minds and hearts of the people, the Government as well as the Armed Forces—if they do this, they will carry the FMLN into total isolation. However, in order to win over the people, it is necessary to give them democracy. To win over the people, one must better the economic conditions. Something can be done, and it is being done: the professionalization of the Armed Forces in respect to human rights, to fight a clean war. In order to do this, they must be prepared and be even more professional to say no to the traditional concepts so that they don't fall into a dirty war. All these factors are going to help resolve the war.

Rojas: And what is going to happen to Comandante Miguel Castellanos?

Castellanos: I am going to return to being Napoleón Romero who, since

he entered the University, wanted to work for the people. I believe I have said it before; my retirement from the FMLN doesn't mean an abandonment of the struggle.

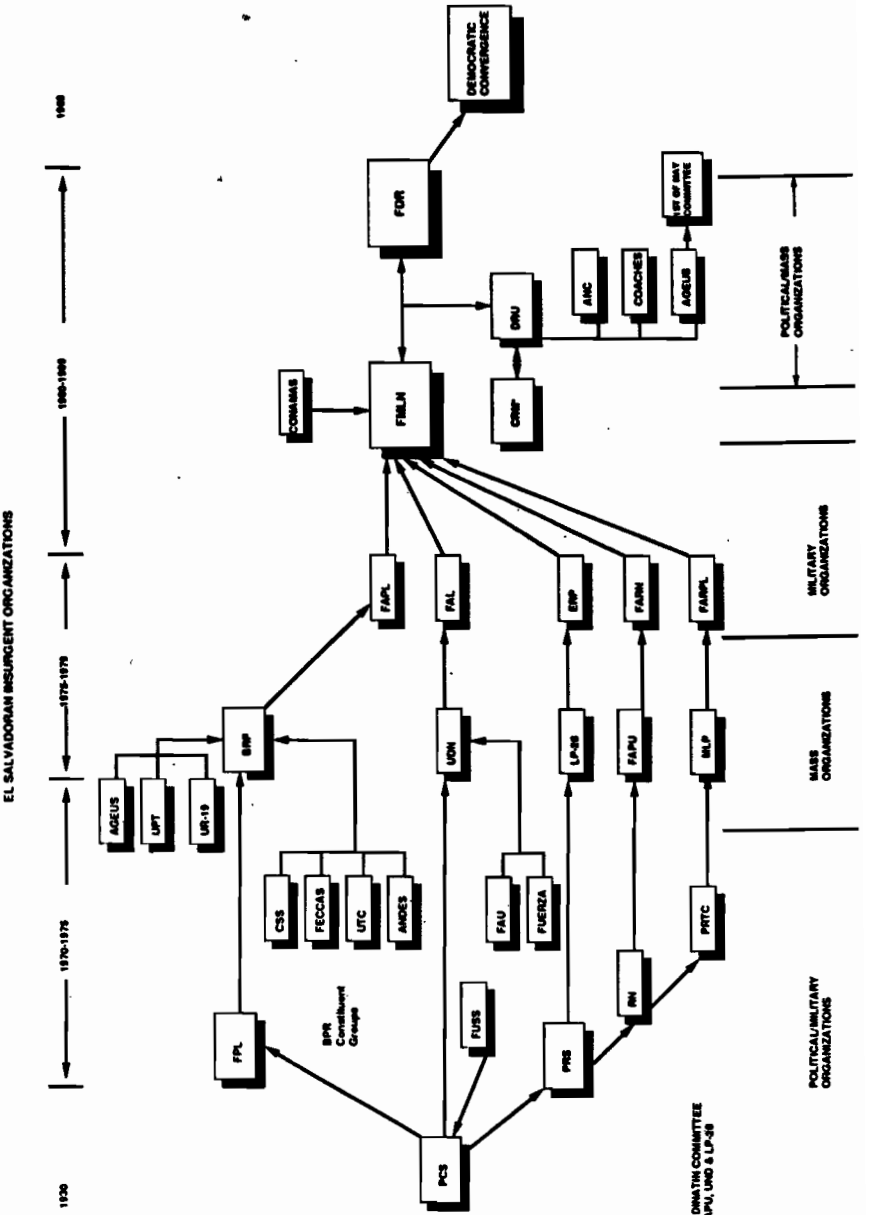
Notes

1. Interview with General Adolfo O. Blandón, former Chief of Staff of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, by Dr. Max G. Manwaring, September 1987, San Salvador.

2. *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) is a Maoist-oriented communist movement in Peru. Lead by Dr. Abimael Guzman (also known as Comrade or President Gonzalo), Sendero's view of the new state derives from the Peruvian Marxist Jose Carlos Mariategui, who was the the founder of the Peruvian Communist Party in the 1920s. According to Mariategui, the original basis for Peruvian socialism is in the pre-Colombian Indian (Quechua) community. That communal system was destroyed in the Spanish conquest of Peru and kept down by the subsequent colonial and neocolonial elites operating out of Lima. *Sendero* seeks a total collapse of the state and the replacement of the current structure with one based on the Quechua society.

3. Led by Felix Ungo and Ruben Zamora, the Democratic Convergence is a coalition of leftist and socialist political parties formed to participate in the March 1989 national elections. While the Convergence was supported by and drew primary support from the FDR, there was a notable hostility from the FMLN leadership towards the Convergence's participation in the campaigning and election process.

APPENDIX A: EVOLUTION OF INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS



Appendix B: Organization of the FMLN Fronts

The FMLN has divided the Salvadoran territory into four fronts which they consider as their basic military structure. Three of the fronts are named for leaders of the 1932 Insurrection and one named after Anastacio Aquino, leader of the peasant and Indian insurrection of 1832. They are:

1. The "Feliciano Ana" Western Front which includes the Departments of Santa Ana, Ahuachapan and Sonsante.

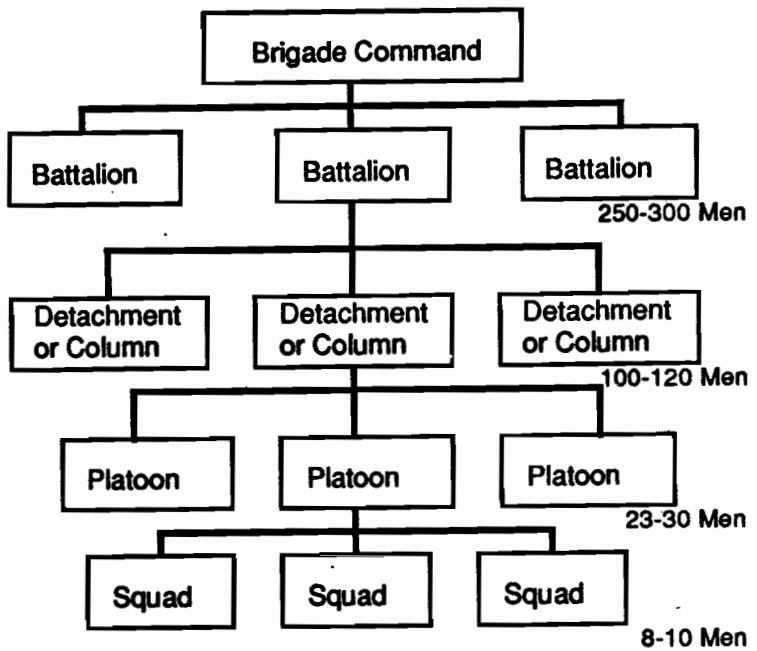
2. The "Modesto Ramirez" Central War Front which includes the Departments of Chalatenango, San Salvador, La Libertad and Cuscatlan.

3. The "Anastacio Aquino" Paracentral Front which includes the Departments of La Paz, San Vincente and Cabanas.

4. The "Francisco Sanchez" Western Front which consists of the Departments of Usulutan, San Miguel, Morazan, and La Union.

Appendix C: Insurgent Organizations

Military Structure of the FMLN



Every organization within the FMLN has a separate military structure, its own "guerrilla" army composed roughly as shown above.

FPL - "Felipe Pena Mendoza" Battalion Group
ERP - "Rafael Arce Zablah" BRAZ Brigade
PCS - "Rafael Aguinada Carranza" Battalion
PRTS - "Luis Adalberto Diaz" Battalion
RN - "Carlos Arias" Battalion

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