

# Time bomb for Washington

*Cynthia Rush on the externally choreographed crisis building up in Central America, and the U.S. policy choices.*

"A small Cambodia is building up in El Salvador," wrote the French daily *Le Matin* on Jan. 9. "The tribalization of Central America is under way."

What has transpired since *Le Matin* wrote that accurate description, is the internationalization of the Salvadorean conflict—precisely the process warned against by Mexican President López Portillo over a week ago. The situation is developing such that by the time Ronald Reagan is inaugurated on Jan. 20, he will be confronted with a "red-hot situation," as described by a leading Jesuit operative recently. The objective is to draw the Reagan administration into a political and military commitment from which it will be increasingly difficult to extricate itself: a "tar baby" scenario.

According to the Jan. 14 editions of several Mexican dailies, troops from the right-wing governments of Honduras and Guatemala have entered El Salvador to aid the Christian Democratic junta against the left. In early January, the leftist forces grouped in the Social Democracy's Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) announced the launching of a "final offensive" to topple junta leader José Napoleon Duarte. Now, according to the report of a Honduran general quoted in the Mexican press, there are 3,000 Honduran and 2,000 Guatemalan soldiers who have entered El Salvador to "kill the communists." The cities of Santa Ana and Chalatenango are said to be targeted for attack by these troops.

On Jan. 14, the Carter administration also announced that it is resuming previously suspended military aid to El Salvador in light of the left's offensive and the alleged discovery of Cuban and Soviet weapons in the region. The \$5 million aid package includes two helicopters and six military advisers, who are already in El Salvador to train troops in the use of equipment. The significance of the decision to resume military aid, particularly its implications for the new Reagan administration, cannot be underestimated. According to one diplomat quoted in the Jan. 13 *Washington Post*, the granting of military aid "could shift the whole emphasis of the thing. [The Salvadorean military] have been doing their own jobs up till now. But this could make them more and more dependent on U.S. technical advisers. That's what happened in Southeast Asia."

Further evidence of the expansion of the conflict is seen in the Jan. 15 report that five 30-foot boats, manned by Nicaraguans, had landed on one of El Salvador's western beaches. Although the left is denying that these forces are from Nicaragua, U.S. ambassador Robert White has said that evidence to the contrary "is circumstantial . . . but compelling and convincing." The U.S. "can't stand idly by and watch the guerrilla movement receive outside assistance," White added.

## Friendly foes

As *EIR* has previously documented, both sides of the El Salvadorean conflagration are being very carefully coordinated by the Society of Jesus and its "left" and "right" assets in the Socialist International and Christian Democracy.

The chummy relationship between the leader of the social-democratic FDR, Guillermo Ungo, and his "enemy" heading up the Christian Democratic junta, José Napoleon Duarte, makes the point very clearly.

Duarte and Ungo in fact are old friends. They were running-mates on the Christian Democratic ticket in 1972 for president and vice-president. It is only recently that Ungo abandoned the Christian Democracy and "converted" to the Social Democracy to head up the FDR's forces.

Duarte told a *Baltimore Sun* reporter on Jan. 13 that he has begun "an offensive for peace," and has issued an appeal to the international social-democratic movement to name a mediator between the warring parties in the civil war. Duarte has offered to go "anywhere in the world to open a dialogue, even with the guerrillas."

Information made available to *EIR* by reliable sources in Mexico City further proves the orchestrated nature of the El Salvadorean "war." These sources report that "Israeli mafia" elements linked to the international drug trade are assisting the Socialist International in arming both the "right" and "left" sides in El Salvador. Coordinated out of the Israeli embassy in Mexico City, the arms shipments are run through Costa Rica, known as the "Switzerland of Central America."

At the moment, conflicting press reports make it difficult to discern what the actual situation is on the

ground in El Salvador. The first phase of the left's "final offensive" announced in early January was a miserable failure, despite encouragement by U.S. ambassador Robert White who exclaimed at the time that "the genie is out of the bottle and no one can put it back again."

Over this past week, it appears that the FDR has made some real gains. There are reports of guerrilla attacks in as many as 50 cities and some successful recruitment of government troops who have deserted the military. By and large, however, the left's "final offensive" has merely provided the junta with the pretext for accelerating the "tribalization" process described by *Le Matin*.

After the FDR announced its offensive, the military launched a psychological terror campaign under the guise of showing the population how to defend itself

from expected attacks. In El Salvador's second largest city, Santa Ana, police forces reportedly distributed leaflets instructing people how to avoid getting killed in the crossfire. Parents were advised to take only one child out on the streets with them at a time.

What is clear is that there is a real diplomatic offensive on to build up support for the left, and expand the conflict even further.

This past week the FDR's top leader Guillermo Ungo traveled to Mexico as the first phase of his announced "international diplomatic offensive." Ungo is provocatively seeking Mexican recognition of territory "liberated" by the FDR in El Salvador. In an effort to pit López Portillo against the new Reagan administration, Ungo's colleague José Rodriquez Ortiz told the Mexican press that "no one has yet dared to say that the United States could consider an intervention with

## U.S. radicals prepare for a 'new Vietnam'

The El Salvador civil war has become the major focus for U.S. radicals to organize support for left terrorists throughout Central America. On Jan. 11, the Committee for Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (Cispes) held a conference at the United Methodist Building in Washington, D.C., attended by more than 1,000 people from 300 groups. The rallying cry of the meeting was "Never Again Vietnam" while the theme of the speeches was that U.S. intervention in El Salvador will become an issue that will drive Reagan from office as Vietnam forced Lyndon Johnson to step down.

The informal sponsor of the meeting was the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), a well-financed outpost of the Socialist International in the United States. During the 1969 Weatherman-organized terrorism in Chicago, IPS provided a bail fund for arrested rioters.

Following the 1973 coup in Chile, IPS became the employer of Allende's ambassador to the United States, Orlando Letelier. Letelier and IPS organized against the Pinochet dictatorship, but ended up reinforcing the "free enterprise" economics of its austerity regime—compiled by Milton Friedman. When Letelier was assassinated in Washington several years ago,

IPS demanded U.S. intervention in Chile to arrest the suspected murderers, thus driving the dictatorship into an even more repressive role.

The Jan. 11 meeting is intended to kick off a series of followup events, including a possibly violent disruption of the Jan. 20 presidential inauguration. The inauguration rallies coincide with a "National Solidarity Week" of sympathy with the El Salvador rebels, announced for Jan. 18-26 by Cispes. Spokesmen for the Salvadorean umbrella insurgent group, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), will tour the United States.

The tour will include Chicago, New York, Washington, Baltimore, Memphis, Kansas City, New Orleans, Miami, and Chapel Hill, N.C. Guerrillas operating with the Democratic Revolutionary Front have carried out brutal acts of terrorism; under cover of war-like conditions, the guerrillas have implemented Pol Pot-style razing of the countryside.

Groups attending the Jan. 11 meeting included: the American Friends Service Committee, Workers World Party, Socialist Workers Party, antinuclear groups, National Council of Churches, National Lawyers Guild, National Organization of Women, Maryknoll nuns, a representative of the Major Superiors of Man, Network, and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.

Also attending were the Communist Workers Party (CWP), the Communist Party USA, the AFL-CIO, the AIFLD (a Socialist International-controlled labor organization), the Anti-Klan Network, the Anti-Klan Coalition, and Chutzpah, a radical Jewish group reported to be working with the CWP.

atomic consequences.” He explained that the FDR is asking Mexico “and other friends to help stop such grave actions.” Backed by Mexico’s Jesuit-controlled left, the FDR is demanding that Mexico halt all oil shipments to El Salvador and break relations with the junta.

High-level operatives in the Socialist International also hope that the Jan. 4 assassination attributed to rightists by these forces of American Citizens Michael Hammer and Mark Pearlman, employees of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) involved in El Salvador’s land reform program, will bolster the left’s position enough to make the threat of a “communist takeover” a credible one. This is a key requirement for escalating the conflict and drawing the United States into a Vietnam-style commitment in the region.

Particularly in the wake of the assassinations, experts like Roy Prosterman foresee a process whereby thousands of peasants, threatened by the right wing with the loss of the land granted them under the reform, will join forces with the leftists. At that point, the “irreversible process of full scale civil war” will have begun and El Salvador will become the “central preoccupation” of the Reagan administration.

## Roy Prosterman on El Salvador

*The following are excerpts from an interview, made available to EIR, with Roy Prosterman, an international law expert who designed El Salvador’s agrarian reform. It was given shortly after two Americans, Mark Pearlman and Michael Hammer, both involved in the reform, were gunned down in San Salvador, along with Rodolfo Viera, head of the Salvadorean Land Reform Institute, the country’s largest progovernment peasant union.*

*Pearlman and Hammer, protégés of Prosterman, had been advising the Salvadorean agrarian reform program in a joint project for the U.S. Agency for International Development and the American Institute for Free Labor Development, the overseas arm of the AFL-CIO.*

*The agrarian program Prosterman directed with Pearlman and Hammer is modeled on the strategic hamlets “pacification” policy U.S. forces applied in South Vietnam in the 1960s. Prosterman was a designer of Vietnam’s Civil*

*Operations and Rural Development Support program, key to the Operation Phoenix strategy.*

*In Vietnam, the policy was “counterinsurgency” to create insurgency. Peasants were herded into barbed wire compounds with military guards—“strategic hamlets.” Let out only to work their fields under armed guard, the peasants were given the choice of staying in the de facto concentration camps, or escaping to join the opposition.*

*The objective of the Salvadorean reform is identical.*

**Q:** Who do you think was behind the assassinations?

**A:** Both the extremes have a motive; both extremes want to end the land reform program. Both the right and the left are itching to have civil war and therefore want the government to fail. The method of assassination smacks of the extreme right, but it doesn’t make much difference.

**Q:** How will the killings effect the political situation in El Salvador?

**A:** The right hopes to stall the reform and in the confusion reverse it. A wave of re-seizures of the land can be expected, and if this spreads throughout the countryside, then we will see a rapid spread of disaffection with law and order and with nonrevolutionary means of change. There are some 150,000 families on the land that could be affected. These people will then see the revolutionary left as their only source of support.

The extreme left is perfectly capable of doing an abrupt about-face and step forward to define themselves as the guarantors of the peasant’s right to land. This could turn around one million people to shifting to the left.

Then you have all the ingredients of a full-scale civil war. If that happens, we are not talking about the tragic 10,000 which died last year, but 100,000 or more deaths. The conflict could draw in countries of the region on both sides of the conflict.

This is the last moment in which that can be forestalled. The only action that can stop this is if Mr. Carter and Mr. Reagan put out a common position supporting the Junta in El Salvador and join their efforts. . . .

**Q:** This seems very unlikely. What are the prospects without it?

**A:** Within a very short time-frame, this process could accelerate out of control. It does not take all the families to be kicked off, just a few thousand families, and the lack of confidence will spread. . . .

This threatens to greet Mr. Reagan with a by-then irreversible process of full-scale civil war in El Salvador, spreading throughout Central America. . . . This will become the central preoccupation and diversion of Reagan’s administration and the center of a polarizing debate within the United States.