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EL SALVADOR AFTER THE ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

The elections held in El Salvador on March 28 provide an historic opportunity to broaden the base of support for the government and also deal effectively with the continuing guerrilla insurgency. The electoral process has provided a means of selecting new leadership for the country as the Christian Democrats failed to get a majority of the votes cast. But while no one party secured a majority, the electoral process accurately measured popular democratic support for each of the six different parties participating. The opponents of the Christian Democrats, having received 60 percent of the vote, should form a new government. Although the Christian Democrats can no longer be expected to lead the government, the ARENA-PCN-AD coalition should encourage them to participate.

Only a broad national coalition government can create the unity necessary to cope with the severe security threat the Marxist guerrillas pose to the country. Just as Western democratic governments have formed broad wartime coalitions to deal with common threats, El Salvador now needs a similar structure of government that can rise above the often vicious partisan debate of the past twenty-nine months.

Creating a broad government of national unity with all parties sharing various posts in the cabinet provides the best and most viable alternative to increasing international demands for a government involving the Marxist guerrillas. In order to create a lasting democratic and pluralistic society, El Salvador needs the broad support of the people of the country, but Marxist rebels unwilling to participate in the democratic process should have no right to force their way into the government.

The United States should urge the Salvadoreans to form a broad coalition of all democratic parties in the country and continue to welcome dissident guerrillas willing to forsake the use of force. In particular, the U.S. government should strongly encourage the Christian Democrat party, which received 40 percent of the vote, to work with ARENA and PCN. The United States, a consistent supporter of the Christian Democrats and the election process, should now encourage a reconciliation of all the parties of El Salvador.

In El Salvador, the creation of a broad national unity government is the only means whereby severe internal factionalism can be resolved peacefully. Only if each of the four major political parties has a direct role in the next government of El Salvador can the trust of their respective constituencies in the future of the country be maintained. This is particularly true of the Christian Democrats and ARENA which have most vigorously contested the election. Christian Democrats must have a role in the government to ensure continuity in carrying out the reforms and maintain internal and international moderate support for the next government. ARENA and PCN should take the lead role in setting up the government on the basis of the majority of assembly seats they won. This reflects the legitimate concerns expressed by the people in El Salvador to enhance security and restore business confidence and economic productivity. Including Accion Democratica would bring in the other major constituency the country needs to effectively govern and reconstruct the nation.

ELECTION RESULTS OF MARCH 28

The elections held on March 28, 1982, revealed enormous support in El Salvador for the democratic process; over one million people voted in often very difficult circumstances. By a nearly unanimous verdict, international observers in El Salvador pronounced it a free and fair election. Only the overwhelming size of the turnout led to some bureaucratic problems in administering elections; the election board plan to open polling stations for two additional hours to accommodate the people had to be cancelled for security reasons. Father Theodore Hesburgh of Notre Dame University, one of the official observers, said, "I have never seen a fairer election at home." He pronounced safeguards from fraud as "foolproof." The enormous turnout led another foreign observer, former president Jose Figueres of Costa Rica, to conclude that, regardless of the winners, "the guerrillas lost."

The actual voting yielded results similar to European parliamentary elections, where multi-party systems often lead to no clear majority of support for any one party. The Christian Democratic Party, once expected to receive a majority vote, fell

Election Results

	<u>per cent</u>	<u>Assembly seats</u>
Christian Democrats (PDC)	41	24
National Republican Alliance (ARENA)	29	19
Party of National Conciliation (PCN)	18	14
Democratic Action (AD)	8	2
Popular Salvadorean Party (PPS)	3	1
Popular Orientation Party (POP)	1	0

substantially short. But they did receive over forty percent, a larger share than any other party. The Christian Democrats did demonstrate considerable strength and have claimed a victory over all other parties. However, under the proportional representation system the two other principal parties, ARENA and PCN, which won most of the remaining seats in the assembly can form a governing majority coalition. In this respect El Salvador parallels the electoral situation in Germany where ever since their first post-war election, the Christian Democrats have generally been the most popular party in parliamentary elections. The socialist party has consistently run second in the elections, but through a coalition with the liberal party of Germany they have been able to govern Germany following the last two elections.

Thus, just as El Salvador has entered the democratic process by having a free and fair vote, the country will enter the difficult process of attempting to form a coalition government. But parties forming a coalition government should look beyond simply creating a narrow majority in the 60-seat assembly; they should exercise broader vision in creating a government embracing elements of all parties. Having overcome enormous obstacles to hold a genuinely popular election, the deputies chosen by the people should attempt to create a political system that reflects the views of all elements of the population.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN EL SALVADOR AND NATIONAL UNITY

A strategy for a working coalition of the parties is very feasible because all the six parties contesting the election share basic philosophies concerning socioeconomic reforms and negotiating with Marxist guerrillas. A government of national integration with the collaboration of participating parties and other elements of Salvadorean society would provide the internal strength the government has lacked in the past year. This mechanism could achieve a political solution to the conflict by effectively isolating the Marxist-Leninist element of the extreme Left opposition in El Salvador.

An examination and comparison of objectives of the leading parties indicate that they should be able to form a progressive

and effective coalition. Although the immediate atmosphere of election rhetoric has made this appear unlikely, elements of most political factions in El Salvador support this approach to solving their political problems. The parties are analyzed in the order in which they drew votes on March 28.

1. Christian Democrats (PDC). The PDC shared the power with the military after a third reshuffling of the junta. In 1972, the PDC joined forces with the Democratic Nationalist Union (UDN), then led by Dr. Manuel Ungo, and the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). It was through this coalition that Ungo and Napoleon Duarte lost power due to fraud in the elections. The Christian Democrats initiated and pledged to continue socioeconomic reforms already partially implemented. Through this they hoped to establish a lasting "Democratic Society" through "a legitimate government."

The PDC came under heavy criticism during the campaign for its failure to develop a successful land reform program and for preventing private enterprise from playing a role in the economic administration of the government. Ever since the restructuring of the PDC in May of 1981, the party continued to pursue their objectives of:

Dialogue with private organizations to find possible common ground.

Dialogue with the government on national problems.

Introduction at local level of community projects.

Mass support for the PDC derives primarily from lower and middle class sectors of the populace along with a large number of the campesinos. They have suffered from the most violent attacks of any political party during the last two years; some forty PDC mayors have been assassinated. Despite much press speculation that the PDC would negotiate with the guerrillas, party leader Napoleon Duarte has adamantly denied this. At a press conference on March 24, Duarte charged that when insurgents call for negotiations "actually they are asking for unconditional surrender."

2. The ARENA (The National Republican Alliance Party) has been the strongest opponent of the PDC and Duarte. ARENA is led by its Secretary General, former Major Roberto d'Aubuisson. In the few short months since the party was formed, d'Aubuisson was able to capture support from both the private and middle class sectors together with numerous groups of campesinos. The objectives of the ARENA platform are: nationalism, individualism, free enterprise, national security and anti-communism.

Contrary to general impressions, ARENA has backed some of the reforms already implemented, but with a few differences. They would like the land reform laws changed to benefit the campesinos as much as the former land owners. At present, they

claim the campesinos are not the legal owners of the land because deeds and titles have not been given to them. They would like to turn the present reforms into a free enterprise system whereby the campesinos can choose their own method of operations and decide on their own crops. Thus, they concur with the reforms, but dissent from part of the implementation. They also advocate a prompt and adequate compensation to previous landowners, as does the PCN.

In an effort to end the violence after the elections, ARENA would be willing to seek the help of all the friendly nations of the world in order to exert pressure on the guerrillas to lay down their arms. They hope to persuade the nations supplying arms to the guerrillas to stop; this would be followed by an armistice and the declaration of full and free amnesty. Should this effort fail, it would be up to the Salvadorean Army to handle the situation in whichever manner is most effective. ARENA leader Roberto d'Aubuisson promised to end the guerrilla insurgency in three months if given the power to act decisively. Much of the support for ARENA, manifested in their large vote, derived from the demands of the people for stronger leadership in government.

3. The National Conciliation Party (PCN). The PCN was the official party of the government from 1961 until the October 15, 1979, coup d'etat. The PCN, together with the army, has been accused of fraud during previous elections, with the particular allegation that they stole the presidency from Napoleon Duarte. In contrast to the two leading parties, PCN lacks a charismatic leader, but is the best organized party in El Salvador. The current party platform supports a number of rather radical reforms compared to the old PCN party. Some of the most significant platform proposals are the following:

Establish the state's obligation to indemnify the owners of expropriated properties, to avoid seizure and confiscation based on absolute power of the state and to guarantee just treatment of owners.

Establish state support for social housing.

Guarantee respect for human rights under international agreements which the Salvadorean legislature has ratified and which El Salvador is compelled to comply with.

Establish salary equity for men and women.

The right to organize unions and to contract collectively.¹

¹ Party Platform excerpts from paid political advertisement in El Diario de Hoy, March 9, 1982; FBIS, March 12, 1982, p. 7.

4. The Democratic Action Party (AD). AD was registered as an independent political party under the electoral schedule decreed by the Central Elections Commission in March of 1981. Dr. Rene Fortin Magana is one of the most prominent of the party leaders in Salvadorean politics, particularly in academic circles. He was a member of a governing junta that ruled El Salvador for three months in 1960.

AD is close in ideology to the centrist Christian Democrats. It also shares a commitment to land reform programs with both ARENA and PCN. The AD constituency, though small in number, is influential, consisting of middle class professionals, the business community and some labor leaders.

In its platform AD calls for: anti-interventionism, professionalism of the Armed Forces, and elimination of corruption in government. They also favor free enterprise and private property, including opposition to the PCD plan of distributing estates of 247-1,235 acres. They call for the establishment of an "authentically democratic regime based on respect for individual freedoms."

The two remaining parties, the Popular Salvadorean Party and the Popular Orientation Party, also embrace general center-right platforms. They drew small portions of the vote and will not figure prominently in the political make-up of El Salvador. But they also reflect some additional support for the kind of center-right philosophy embraced by the electorate.

FORMING A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

As indicated in the above analysis, the differences between the six contesting parties in the election were not as great as the clashes of leading personalities, particularly Duarte and d'Aubuisson, indicated. In fact, immediately prior to the election some discussion of post-election reconciliation had already begun. Interestingly, d'Aubuisson, labeled an extremist by his rival Christian Democrats, expressed interest in working with some of his most bitter opponents. While charging the PCD with having ties to the revolutionary forces of the FMLN-FDR, d'Aubuisson promised that "we will invite those Christian Democrats who have the capacity to participate in a government of national conciliation to join us." The day before the election, d'Aubuisson repudiated promises allegedly made by some of his colleagues that Duarte and other leading PCD members would be prosecuted for corruption. Since the election d'Aubuisson's party leaders have continued to indicate willingness to work with all other parties.

Christian Democrats also, immediately prior to the elections, expressed interest in what they termed "a government of national unity." But doubts existed about the breadth of unity they would agree to. As a former Christian Democratic mayor of San Salvador stated, "We could not get together with d'Aubuisson. We are too different." The Christian Democrats may have been interested in

working with Accion Democratica, but AD has decided to unite with ARENA and PCN. The Christian Democrats under the leadership of Duarte have played a major role since 1979 in implementing reforms domestically, attracting some international support, and carrying out truly democratic elections. It is hoped they will continue to be willing to participate in the government even though now in a minority capacity. Only by joining in the government can the PCD exercise the moderating influence on ARENA and PCN which they believe is necessary.

Only by including representatives of all four major parties in the government can a viable political system develop in El Salvador to meet the challenges both at home and abroad. As ARENA and PCN proceed to form a new government they should be aware of the valuable assistance that AD and PCD could afford them. With its leadership and ties to key elements of Salvadorean society AD can contribute experience and a sense of greater stability to the new government. In particular, Rene Fortin Magana, the AD leader, should be called upon to lend his prestige to the government by serving as provisional president or in a cabinet post. He has already indicated his willingness to work with PCN and ARENA. Similarly, ARENA and PCN should realize that the large constituency represented by the votes given to PCD means they should also have a stake in the new government. Fears generated during the campaign could even lead to an exodus of some PCD members from the country. Besides losing potentially valuable citizens whose abilities are needed in the reconstruction of El Salvador, departure of PCD members from the country could severely damage the international image of the new government.

One of the fundamental problems from which El Salvador has suffered since the October 1979 coup d'etat has been the lack of broad domestic support for the government. Indeed, the major issues raised in the campaign concerned the failure of the appointed government of Duarte to deal with either the economic or security problems of the country. As American Ambassador Deane Hinton stated on election eve, the Christian Democrats "were running with all the handicaps of having been in power during a hellava difficult time." With 60 percent of the votes going to opponents of PCD policies, the people of El Salvador rejected the PCD stewardship of the country. The large voter turnout also revealed support for the political process as such and rejection of the guerrilla movement. The PCN and ARENA can most effectively take cognizance of the will of the people by magnanimously bringing all parties supported by the people into the government. As with the Western democratic countries in time of war, a grand coalition of all parties is usually the best method of uniting the people in the national interest.

U.S. POLICY: ELECTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

Only one week prior to the voting in El Salvador, the U.S. government appeared, through the mediation of Mexico, to be

pursuing negotiations with the Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador. The impression grew that the U.S. policymakers, desperate for some solution to the conflict, might seek negotiations which would largely supersede the elections on March 28.

However, only four days prior to the election, on March 25, both the White House and State Department vigorously rejected unconditional negotiations with guerrillas and reaffirmed support for the electoral process in El Salvador. In clarifying the U.S. position on negotiations, Secretary Haig gave tacit U.S. support for a reconciliation of all the democratic parties in El Salvador:

We have been in favor of a negotiated solution, but by "negotiated solution" we mean negotiations by all the parties who participate in the democratic process, which will begin with these elections and which will then go on to the selection of an assembly and ultimately a president.

What we have rejected is negotiations which would distribute national power over the heads of the people of El Salvador and without their choice.

White House Communications Director David Gergen took a similar position in a statement the same day: "Negotiations leading to power sharing by a violent minority...would constitute an usurpation of the right of the Salvadorean people to determine their own future."

On election day, the FMLN-FDR tried desperately to disrupt the elections. According to elections commission head Jorge Bustamante, rebels put up signs which read, "Vote in the morning and you'll be dead in the afternoon." They also threatened to cut off the fingers of anyone who had ink on their hands indicating participation in the voting. But the prospective rebel offensive failed to either seriously disrupt or even substantially discourage the voting. Overall, the voting merely reaffirmed the lack of popular support for the guerrilla insurgency and consequently their need for negotiations as the only means by which they could obtain a place in the government.²

Critics of U.S. policy, however, mounted major offensives over the weekend of the elections, calling for withdrawal of U.S. support for the government of El Salvador and victory for the guerrilla forces. Robert White, former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador bluntly predicted "I don't think the government has a prayer for reversing the tide" of leftist revolution in El Salvador. The revolution, he said, would triumph within one year. But the people which Ambassador White and other proponents of unconditional

² On problems of negotiating with the guerrillas, see Alexander Kruger, "El Salvador's Marxist Revolution," Heritage Foundation Background No. 137, April 10, 1981.

negotiations support, such as Dr. Guillermo Ungo, appeared particularly embarrassed by the voting. Ungo, formerly part of the post-October 1979 junta in El Salvador who now resides in Mexico, predicted a minimum voter turnout of only 200,000 people and also called for his guerrilla colleagues not to disrupt the election. The enormous turnout of over one million people accompanied by widespread guerrilla violence only reaffirms the lack of authority Ungo and other so-called moderate guerrilla supporters exercise.

U.S. policymakers dealing with Latin America looked forward to the elections in hopes that they could somehow both bestow legitimacy on the government of El Salvador and vindicate previous U.S. policies in the region. Much of this speculation rested on the ultimately false hope that Duarte, the Christian Democrats and their social, economic and security programs would be sustained by a popular vote of the people. Instead, about 60 percent of the people of El Salvador expressed their dissatisfaction with their interim government by voting for parties that would modify, but not abandon, reforms and take a much tougher approach towards the guerrilla insurgency.

Thus, just as dissatisfaction has grown in the United States with U.S. government policy in El Salvador, so also dissatisfaction grew in El Salvador with their government's policies. The clear message in both cases reflected a need for the two governments to both more effectively articulate their policies and also to more dramatically meet the threat of guerrilla insurgency. Ironically, if the U.S. had been more effective in cutting off supplies and in other ways incapacitating the guerrilla forces, possibly the Duarte government could have won the election, as the U.S. government clearly desired. Similarly, if the U.S. had been able to show significant progress in combating the revolutionary movement in the region, U.S. policy in the area might now command more support in the Congress and among the American people. Instead the impression grew both in San Salvador and Washington that the two governments did not have clearly thought out or effectively executed programs to deal with either the social, economic or security problems in the area.

Elections have provided the basis for a consolidation of popular political support for the new government in El Salvador. Thus the opportunity now exists to create a durable basis for democracy. The Caribbean Basin project of the Reagan Administration addresses some of the social and economic problems of El Salvador. But the larger problem posed by Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan intervention in the affairs of other countries in Central America must be directly confronted. Through their votes, the people of El Salvador indicated that they supported a tougher approach in dealing with terrorists and revolutionaries who refuse to participate in democratic processes. U.S. policymakers, while encouraging a political reconciliation among all the democratic parties in El Salvador, should also steadfastly oppose any negotiations with guerrilla forces that could lead to their incorporation in the government. The United States should

not attempt to impose political arrangements on El Salvador that fundamentally conflict with the views of the Salvadorean people as expressed in free democratic elections.

CONCLUSION

In both El Salvador and the United States frustration has grown over the inability to satisfactorily end the armed conflict in Central America. The people of El Salvador manifested their frustrations and aspirations through the elections on March 28. The act of voting itself became an act of defiance of the FMLN-FDR guerrilla organizations and an affirmation of the democratic process for choosing leadership of the country. By casting a substantial majority of their votes for the three parties running against the Christian Democrats, the people hoped that new leadership could more decisively end the fighting.

The United States should respond to the elections by working closely with the newly elected democratic government of El Salvador. The guerrilla movement has been dealt a devastating psychological blow by the enormous vote in the election, and needs now to be confronted more decisively in the military area. If a broad national coalition government can be formed in El Salvador reflecting all elements of the population, the political base will be laid for defeating the guerrilla movement.

The guerrilla movement is now enormously vulnerable to pressures which can divide it between the minority elements genuinely interested in democracy in El Salvador and the militant leadership intent upon seizing power and establishing a Marxist totalitarian regime. The former can be worked with if they abandon their armed struggle; the latter must be militarily defeated. The election results provide the opportune moment for the U.S. to support democracy in Central America and resist externally supported revolutionaries. Otherwise, this election may be the last free election in El Salvador.

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