POLITICS AND PUBLISHING IN TRANSITION IN EL SALVADOR

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VEREDAS DE AUDACIA: HISTORIA DEL FMLN. By Fermán Cienfuegos. (San Salvador: Arcoiris, 1993. Pp. 201.)
VISIONES ALTERNATIVAS SOBRE LA TRANSICION. By Fermán Cienfuegos, Mauricio Chávez, Norma Guevara, Francisco Jovel, Víctor Valle, and Rubén Zamora. (San Salvador: Sombrero Azul, 1993. Pp. 183.)
LA PERSONA, LA FE Y LA REVOLUCION. By Dagoberto Gutiérrez. (San Salvador: Ven y Sígueme, 1993. Pp. 187.)
LA TERQUEDAD DEL IZOTE. By Carlos Henríquez Consalvi. (Mexico City: Diana, 1992. Pp. 274.)
LAS MIL Y UNA HISTORIAS DE RADIO VENCEREMOS. By José Ignacio López Vigil. (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1993. Pp. 546.)
DEL EJERCITO NACIONAL AL EJERCITO GUERRILLERO. By Francisco Emilio Mena Sandoval. (San Salvador: Arcoiris, n.d. Pp. 368.)
UNA REVOLUCION EN LA IZQUIERDA PARA UNA REVOLUCION DEMOCRATICA. By Joaquín Villalobos. (San Salvador: Arcoiris, 1992. Pp. 81.)

The end of the war in El Salvador has brought (along with far more important consequences) a renewal of book publishing. During the 1980s, nearly all serious publications on politics or the war originated outside its borders. Within El Salvador, the most important books, whether original or reprinted from foreign publishers, were brought out by a single publisher: UCA Editores, the press operated by the Jesuit-run Universidad Centromericana.

Now several new publishing houses have been founded, some of them directly or indirectly linked to one of the five political parties that formed the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) in 1980. These new publishers are bringing out many attractive and interesting books that have opened the world of book publishing to representatives of the FMLN. Their publications offer histories of the war and analysis of the current political conjuncture as well as fiction and poetry by authors who have come down from the mountains or returned from exile. Some of these books have found a wide audience in El Salvador.

The books under review here represent a transition in that they

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assert the former rebels' status as officially accepted participants in Salvadoran politics and as legitimate subjects for books. These publications also offer a new perspective on the war. Most earlier works on the subject focused on civilians in one of three areas: the church, refugees, and health work. Although broadly sympathetic to the insurgency, previous publications presented an image of the Salvadoran people as innocent victims. These books featured devout, humble Christians inspired by the doctrines of liberation theology who were organizing to assert their dignity as human beings (see *Fe de un pueblo* 1983; López Vigil 1987); or citizens driven from their homes by bombing raids and military ground operations that targeted civilians and guerrilla fighters indiscriminately, forcing them to seek refuge elsewhere in the country or abroad (Instituto de Investigaciones 1985; Montes 1990); or foreigners with medical training coming in solidarity to work with poor Salvadorans (Clements 1986; Metzi 1988). There were a few exceptions: books by or about individual FMLN militants (Alegría and Flakoll 1987; Díaz 1988) and collections of fiction and poetry by guerrilla combatants (Huezo Mixco 1989; Castellanos Moya 1989).

The portrayal of Salvadorans as victims rather than protagonists supported a position that condemned the Salvadoran government's conduct of the war on theological or humanistic grounds without openly siding with the insurgents. In an era of heavy repression (when the Jesuit order and the university itself were among the most prominent targets), such a stance surely reflected a need for self-protection. Yet, it was possible to publish these books, whereas few books were written for general circulation that attacked the FMLN or defended the government. One exception was a long interview with Miguel Castellanos, a renegade FMLN *comandante* (see Rojas 1988).

The postwar books represent explicit political engagement. Several relate the guerrilla combat experience and show victims of deprivation and repression who did not just suffer passively but actively resisted. Others focus on postwar political struggles and assert the FMLN's place as a legitimate political contender.

Four recent books tell stories of the guerrilla war from within. Francisco Mena Sandoval served as a captain in the Salvadoran Army until he deserted to join the FMLN. *Del ejército nacional al ejército guerrillero* is an engaging memoir of his life as an army officer and a guerrilla comandante. Mena Sandoval relates the modest circumstances of his childhood, his youthful rebelliousness as a cadet at the military academy, and his career as a young officer. He details various disillusioning experiences: the opportunities for corruption (while on active duty, he was hired by a bank as security chief and paid much more than his military salary); his participation in electoral fraud after ballot-box stuffing was presented as a "sacred, patriotic mission" (p. 91); and his discovery of

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death-squad activity while assigned to the Guardia Nacional. His growing disenchantment with the Salvadoran regime led him to become a key organizer of the Juventud Militar, a group of young officers who mounted the successful coup of 15 October 1979.

When faced with an increasingly militant popular movement that appeared ready to turn to armed struggle, the young officers installed a junta that they hoped would stop the campaign of state terror against activists and adopt policies responsive to the movement's demands. But after some initial reforms, the junta quickly moved to the right and repression mounted. Five clandestine political-military organizations that had been actively mobilizing peasants and workers joined forces to form the FMLN in 1980: the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL), the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño (PCS), the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC), and the Resistencia Nacional (RN). The FMLN announced a "general offensive" that launched a full-scale war on 10 January 1981. Forced to choose sides, Mena Sandoval and fellow officer Marcelo Cruz, followed by several dozen soldiers, abandoned the army on the day the offensive began and joined the ERP to fight in the mountains of Morazán, one of the poorest departments of El Salvador.

Mena Sandoval provides fascinating operational details on the organizing of the Juventud Militar, guerrilla military operations, and the training school that he directed in the mountains. Even more interesting is his ambivalence about his background after he switched sides. His officer's training continued to affect him in that he still respected many of his former fellow officers and hoped they would follow him. At the same time, he was struggling to overcome his sense of superiority about his formal training and learning to make war with antiquated weapons and limited logistical resources. Mena Sandoval also felt the contradiction between the values he served in the two armies. Only a few months before joining the guerrilla forces, he had led an operation against them in the same region, but his account proudly exclaims, "I did not carry out the order" to wipe out the civilian population of Villa Rosario (p. 204). Soon after, the former army officer had to confront the suspicion and hostility of many of his new comrades-in-arms: "I sincerely felt bad. . . . 'Son of a bitch! Not even when I'm here suffering with them,' I thought. They weren't entirely wrong; they saw in me a representative of an army that used poor soldiers to defend the interests of the rich. . . . I asked myself endlessly, how is it possible that they don't understand, when I've given up my comfortable life? . . . The truth is that I was the one who didn't understand" (p. 263). Mena Sandoval's honest self-portrait in *Del ejército nacional al ejército guerrillero* enhances his lively account of the military politics of the 1970s and the guerrilla experience.

As part of the 1981 offensive, the ERP founded a clandestine radio

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station in Morazán and recruited Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, a Venezuelan journalist working in Managua, to direct it. *La terquedad del izote* recounts the first years of Radio Venceremos. José Ignacio López Vigil, an Ecuadorian, went to Morazán to teach a course in radio production. During his stay, he interviewed radio staff members, combatants, and civilians in local communities and compiled a slangy and funny oral history of the station entitled *Las mil y una historias de Radio Venceremos.* Both these books focus on the station, but they also provide vivid accounts of the lives of guerrilla soldiers.

The two works naturally overlap, telling many of the same anecdotes. Predictably, there were times of intense stress: "What we wanted was to break the siege. . . . The idea was to walk all night. . . . But it was a huge pilgrimage, because we had to move the command post, the transmitter, the clinic with the wounded soldiers, the bomb factory—and all the population of the zone! If the peasants of the hamlet stayed home, the army would then come in and massacre them, claiming that they were the guerrilla army's social base" (López Vigil, p. 95). When bombing was heavy, the studio was hidden underground: "We didn't broadcast live; we recorded a cassette. . . . The problem came when we had to take the cassette from the clinic to La Parra, where we had left the transmitter buried. . . . Every afternoon the hour of Russian roulette came. Who would go with the program, whose turn was it to cross those endless hundred meters between our bunker and the transmitter? Every day, at quarter of six, when it was already getting dark, you said good-bye forever" (López Vigil, p. 88). But even during combat, there were periods of relative calm: "the Air Force bombs and strafes early in the morning. The afternoon is calm, only interrupted by a little cannon fire falling in Poza Honda" (Henríquez Consalvi, p. 47).

This late-twentieth-century guerrilla war was fought with radios (two-way and broadcast) and computers as well as with rifles, and it brought peasant combatants together with urban and international militants. Both accounts highlight the encounter between their worlds. The city-bred journalists were introduced to peasant culture, sometimes formally: "Nolbo gave us a dazzling description of the Calihuate, the indigenous dance that they held every year in the village of Cacaopera . . . , a cultural remnant that had practically disappeared. With the repression around Cacaopera, the dancers had to flee; many joined our camps. The old man who played the music on flute and drum is in the refugee camps of the UNHCR [United Nations High Commission for Refugees] in Honduras. It occurred to me to preserve the indigenous dance" (Henríquez Consalvi, p. 225). Other initiations were informal. Isra, a peasant combatant, showed a foreign journalist how to catch a rabbit: "It was about noon. We walked twenty minutes from the camp, until we got to a little hill in a maguey grove. 'Don't make any noise,' he whispered to me. 'It's

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here.' And I watched that tall, solid man turn into a cat and walk forward without disturbing a leaf. He came to a little cave, stuck in his hand, and *whoosh*! A rabbit by the ears. Without a shot, without even a stone. Nothing. He had just observed that rabbit's habits and knew where the animal was going to rest" (López Vigil, pp. 74–75).

The educational process became reciprocal when journalists trained peasants to run a radio station. Thirteen-year-old Misael's job was to monitor the Voice of America: "After a few months, Misael—without exaggerating—had turned into a New Yorker. 'Misael, what's going on in the Congress?' 'Look, the Democrats said this and the Republicans said that. But Reagan called up all the undecided ones to get their votes'" (López Vigil, p. 309).

Both books recount in detail the two major incidents of the war in Morazán, the massacre at the village of El Mozote and the ambush of Colonel Domingo Monterrosa. In December 1981, the Salvadoran army swept through El Mozote and neighboring villages, rounded up the entire civilian population and systematically slaughtered them. Reports circulated that more than a thousand peasants had been killed.[1] Radio Venceremos, the one news source close to the events, interviewed the only surviving witness, Rufina Amaya, and a month later led reporters Raymond Bonner of the *New York Times* and Alma Guillermoprieto of the *Washington Post* to the site. When Father Rogelio Ponceele, a Belgian priest who accompanied the guerrilla army, said a mass at El Mozote, he commented, "Who would think that the only radio station that carried a mass for the dead was Venceremos!" (López Vigil, p. 160).

Three years later, the FMLN exacted its revenge for El Mozote on Monterrosa, who had conducted the operation. He had been built up by the Salvadoran media and the U.S. Embassy as a hard-driving officer whose military competence and determination made him a match for the guerrilla army (for a detailed portrait, see the account by Mena Sandoval, who was once his second-in-command in the paratroopers' unit). Radio Venceremos was Monterrosa's bête noire, and the feeling was mutual. After FMLN soldiers retreated from an engagement on 23 October 1984, army troops radioed to headquarters that they had captured the Radio Venceremos transmitter. Monterrosa immediately flew to the site to retrieve it, accompanied by a large staff and many journalists, and announced in a radio interview that "the myth of Morazán is over" (López Vigil, p. 330). But as he took off in his helicopter to return with the prize, the booby-trapped transmitter exploded, killing all those aboard. The

1. After more than a decade of denial by Salvadoran and U.S. government officials, the UN-sponsored Comisión de la Verdad established by the peace agreement sent a team of forensic investigators to dig up the remains of the victims (see Comisión de la Verdad 1993; Danner 1994).

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trap had been laid by the guerrilla army, confident that Monterrosa would rise to the bait and bring his trophy in personally.

The combatants depicted in these two accounts are not one-dimensional heroes. Nor does the jovial tone obscure the burdens of their lives as guerrilla fighters. They fought with humor and dedication, admitted their exhaustion, reveled in victories, suffered over sexual rivalries (in an army in which nearly one-third of the combatants were women), and grieved over the deaths of comrades. Of the two books, Henríquez Consalvi's *La terquedad del izote* is the more personal account, and he sometimes underscores his distance from the peasant combatants with his flowery language and references to Balzac and García Márquez. The variety of voices and the lighter tone of López Vigil's *Las mil y una historias de Radio Venceremos* make it a delight to read.[2]

Henríquez Consalvi refers several times to the *izote*, the flower whose stubbornness inspired his title. Following Salvadoran lore that the izote regenerates itself whenever it is crushed, Henríquez Consalvi adopts it as a metaphor for the resistance of the Salvadoran people. He does not quote his own moving tribute to the Jesuit priests of the Central American University massacred during the 1989 offensive, but López Vigil cites his eloquent words:

> Go back a month later and you will see the izote blooming again. Even if the machete cuts it at the root, the izote always grows up again. It always has that stubborn insistence on flowering anew, on continuing to live. It occurs to us that Ignacio Ellacuría is like those izotes. It occurs to us that Martín Baró, Segundo Montes, Amando, Juan Ramón, Joaquín López are like the izote flower, stubborn to deny, stubborn in their attempt to go on growing. . . . They were all teachers who multiplied their knowledge in the thousands and thousands of young people who studied with them. They disseminated those moral values of Christianity that are so compatible with the principles of the revolutionaries. The moral values that these priests transmitted are today thousands of seeds. . . .We know that the Salvadoran people will raise in their fists the izote flower as the symbol of that stubborn desire for peace that ran through the veins of the murdered Jesuit priests. (López Vigil, p. 534)

Dagoberto Gutiérrez of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación (FAL), the armed wing of the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño, spent most of the war at the Guazapa volcano, a rural area only twenty-five kilometers from the capital. Gutiérrez was also part of the team that negotiated the peace. *La persona, la fe y la revolución* represents his general account of the war combined with personal experiences and political analysis. Unfortu-

2. A heavily abridged English translation has been published recently by the Latin America Bureau and Curbstone Press. See *Rebel Radio: The Story of El Salvador's Radio Venceremos* (1994). The Spanish edition (as well as other books published by UCA Editores) is distributed in North America by EPICA (Ecumenical Project on Central America), 1470 Irving St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20010 (202-332-0292).

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nately, however, his story lacks the vividness of the books written from Morazán, except on one subject.

Gutiérrez's war looks rather different from that described by Mena Sandoval, López Vigil, and Henríquez Consalvi. Close to the capital, direct combat and bombardments were more intense and continuous than in Morazán. Gutiérrez saw more of the Salvadoran Army and its counterinsurgency campaigns among the civilian population. He also had more direct contact with urban guerrilla operations in the capital and took part in the 1989 offensive.

Gutiérrez's political analysis passes cursorily over a number of issues: the twentieth-century history of El Salvador, the strategic debates at the beginning of the armed struggle, the effect of the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, the challenges of peace, and the relation between Christianity and Marxism and between Christians and Marxists in El Salvador today. His account offers little depth or originality, sad to say, nor does he relate these issues to his own experiences. As a result, Gutiérrez's account does not live up to the promise of either the title or the prologue by Medardo Gómez, the Lutheran bishop of El Salvador. Gutiérrez tells readers that Jesus was a revolutionary in his day and that communists were wrong in the past to write believers off, but he does not explain the differences in the two outlooks or how the Salvadoran insurgency overcame them.

Yet Gutiérrez's blow-by-blow account of the 1989 offensive is riveting. Like Mena Sandoval, he comes alive when recounting the details of operations. For eleven days, his unit occupied Ciudad Delgado, a lower-middle-class and working-class community on the northeast side of San Salvador. The FAL expected fierce combat but assumed that the Salvadoran high command would not bombard densely settled civilian neighborhoods. They were wrong. After the bombs fell, the guerrillas regrouped and invaded the city once more, this time in the wealthy neighborhood of Colonia Escalón, which the air force did not bomb. The FMLN pounced on this decision as evidence that the armed forces felt free to target the poor but not the rich. Gutiérrez's account of the offensive in Escalón has moments of humor, as in describing the takeover of a wealthy man's home: "Don Roberto had had a party the night before with his friends, and his face and physical condition showed the evident traces of having imbibed a great deal of imported whiskey. So on top of the natural queasiness after a night of partying came the undoubtedly disagreeable surprise of having an entire guerrilla hospital as guests" (p. 104).

The offensive proved that the FMLN was at least equal and possibly superior to the Salvadoran Army in ground combat. Only the air war turned the offensive back. Gutiérrez downplays the number of casualties, however. He argues that the political and military campaigns were kept

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strictly separate throughout the war and gives the impression that large numbers of civilians joined the offensive. In reality, the offensive cost the FMLN many lives, especially among civilian sympathizers recruited for combat through the popular movement. According to most analysts, the response of civilians other than those who were already politically integrated fell far short of the expected popular insurrection (see Byrne 1994, 294–95, 300–301; Karl 1992, 152; LeoGrande 1990). Other war memoirs imply that the FMLN won wide support, but they do so via anecdotes rather than general statements. By not making sweeping claims, they leave the reader free (at least in principle) to make an independent judgment.

These books are interesting in inverse proportion to the amount of political rhetoric they contain. López Vigil's *Las mil y una historias de Radio Venceremos* makes his political points by telling stories and being entertaining the whole way through. Mena Sandoval offers doses of rhetoric in his memoir but maintains a high level of interest with his insider knowledge and his personal story as officer turned comandante. These works deal little with politics and the makeup of the FMLN or its strategic decision making, however.

The fact that the FMLN fought the Salvadoran Army—vastly superior in troops, weaponry, and external support—to a stalemate and won significant concessions in the peace settlement was due largely to the combat capacity of FMLN fighting forces, as portrayed in the four books reviewed thus far. Recent events have revealed that the strategic unity that the five parties of the FMLN maintained throughout the war actually masked deep differences in political principles. Three recent books present the FMLN's postwar debates over political strategy.

Fermán Cienfuegos's *Veredas de audacia: Historia del FMLN*, like Gutiérrez's book, is something of a hybrid in mixing past and future, personal reflections and political analysis. Cienfuegos is the secretary general of the Resistencia Nacional, which split off from the ERP in 1975. He was also a member of the FMLN's general command. After the war ended, the RN moved rapidly and openly to the political center: it was the first party belonging to the FMLN to reject the label "socialist" and call itself "social democratic." The ERP, its former factional adversary, quickly followed, and both groups formally quit the FMLN in December 1994. *Veredas de audacia* (as well as the other books under review) predates the formal separation but will be read avidly for clues to the roots of the breakup of the FMLN and its implications for the Salvadoran Left today.

The title essay is a transcribed speech that Cienfuegos gave in 1985 to a cadre training school on the history of the FMLN, with some allusion to the historic differences among the member parties.[3] The volume includes more essays, literary in style, on the future of Central America in

3. For a view of the same events from the perspective of the FPL, see Harnecker (1993).

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general, and brief testimonies on the war by three combatants. The book concludes with two essays written after the war ended, in which Cienfuegos argues that the FMLN must adopt a modern outlook and abandon the outdated dogmatic concepts that other (unnamed) parties belonging to the FMLN maintain in oblivious disregard of today's reality. Their central dogma is the belief that the world is polarized between capitalism and socialism, with no room in between for a third way (p. 196). Cienfuegos argues that the Left must recognize that a social revolution can arise within capitalism and does not depend on a revolutionary seizure of power (p. 186).

Cienfuegos also implies that the FMLN or some of its factions are guilty of vanguardism because they illegitimately claim sole leadership of the Salvadoran Revolution. His argument is based in part on his reading of the FMLN's armed struggle as one sustained by a broad coalition of social forces that were not identified exclusively with the FMLN. In a revolution that is "popular and democratic," he observes, a national liberation movement can claim only "a share of power, not all the power" (p. 185).

Cienfuegos avers that he has overcome the dogmas in which his factional opponents are mired, but he does not spell out the political program underlying the revolution that he wants the FMLN to achieve. Although the RN calls itself social democratic, Cienfuegos does not present any economic program or model of society that corresponds to that label. His greatest concern appears to be to modernize the FMLN's outlook, and he consequently highlights the deficiencies of its political practice while ignoring the issues of social justice that underlay the armed struggle in the first place.

Two recent books devote themselves exclusively to analyzing the postwar political situation and the options for the Left: *Una revolución en la izquierda para una revolución democrática* by Joaquín Villalobos, secretary general of the ERP, and the collection entitled *Visiones alternativas sobre la transición*. Both works make clear the differences in vision and tactics among the five parties.

Visiones alternativas is a collection of short essays written by leaders of the FMLN and the moderate leftist parties that allied with it in the 1994 presidential election: Cienfuegos of the RN; Francisco Jovel, secretary general of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos; Mauricio Chávez of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación; Norma Guevara of the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño; Víctor Valle, head of the Movimiento Revolucionario Nacional (MRN); and Rubén Zamora of the Convergencia Democrática (CD), the coalition's presidential candidate. Editorial Sombrero Azul invited all the leftist parties in El Salvador to contribute. Those not responding were the ERP and the Unión Democrática Nacional, which was created two decades ago as the legal elec-

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toral front of the PCS but merged in 1993 into the Convergencia Democrática. Because *Una revolución en la izquierda* covers much of the same ground, it can be considered along with the essays in *Visiones* as representing the positions of the FMLN's five parties.

During the war, the ERP was regarded as the most militaristic of the five organizations because it emphasized victory in battle over political work among the population. But when peace broke out, post-cold-war pragmatism led the ERP to adopt a much more moderate orientation and to cooperate with its longtime enemies on the right. In 1993 the party renamed itself Expresión Renovadora del Pueblo to reinforce its new political image. Although logically there is no necessary correspondence between military strategy and peacetime political stance, many observers found the ERP's new line a surprising reversal.

Una revolución en la izquierda lays out the ERP's new orientation clearly. Like Cienfuegos, Villalobos strongly emphasizes the need to modernize leftist thinking and practice. The book was written before the ERP formally embraced social democracy, but Villalobos explicitly rejects conventional definitions of socialism and emphasizes the need to rethink completely goals and strategies in the contemporary world. Major changes in the world conjuncture have imposed that need: the collapse of the Soviet and Eastern European regimes revealed the inadequacy of statist socialism and (although Villalobos does not raise the point) eliminated a major potential ally. The Salvadoran armed struggle was settled by negotiation, not victory, and consequently, the Left is in no position to impose sweeping structural changes. Instead, it must find ways to cooperate with political opponents (pp. 5–10).

The Left's program consequently must be gradual and democratic. Villalobos believes that socialism today must be interpreted as entailing democratic politics and the market economy as well. The power of the state should decline, not increase. The Left must assert itself through conventional political channels but also (and perhaps mainly) in civil society. Regardless of whether the Left gains power, it must push to consolidate the political reforms promised in the peace agreement.

Villalobos also calls for emphasizing a new economic sector that he terms *social property,* by which he means small businesses organized along cooperative or associative principles in which producers control their own means of production. The sector of social property must submit to the discipline of the market and must "prove that solidarity, cooperation, and association among workers and/or small and medium producers are better for producing riches and development and therefore for bringing social justice and solving poverty" (pp. 26–27).

All the parties of the FMLN have established small businesses since the end of the war, but the ERP has made a special point of it. Radio Venceremos, for example, has moved to San Salvador, where it is attempt-

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ing to succeed as a commercial radio station. The station has formally dissociated itself from the ERP but in practice is applying the ERP model of private enterprise.

Villalobos appears to consider these small, socially controlled units of production to be the main vehicle for hegemony in civil society. Efforts to rethink the socialist model in other eras have emphasized achieving electoral power (Eduard Bernstein's evolutionary socialism) and hegemony in cultural institutions (Eurocommunism in the 1970s). Villalobos's emphasis on the popular economy and the achievement of power through accumulating capital may be the most distinctive contribution of Salvadoran revisionism.

Villalobos argues for a pluralist party structure open to "new actors and new bases," including "middle sectors and even big business leaders and military officers who favor democratic change and social justice" (p. 23). Thus in a variety of ways, he calls for accommodation to the existing structures of capital in El Salvador. The traditional oligarchy has been discredited, providing an opening for the Left to reach out to the middle sectors of society. But even so, Villalobos argues, unions and other popular organizations must overcome their habitual oppositional stance and find ways to cooperate with capital. He openly endorses *solidarismo* in labor relations, an approach that has taken hold elsewhere in Central America but has been condemned by many unionists as an attempt to buy off workers through company unions and minimal welfare benefits (p. 49). In the political arena, the Left must consolidate the reforms agreed on in the peace settlement regarding the police, the armed forces, the courts, the electoral system, and the parliament (pp. 73–81). Villalobos places great faith in what the negotiations have already achieved and hardly mentions the forces that continue to oppose these reforms.

Like Cienfuegos, Villalobos gives highest priority to adopting a modern outlook and rejecting dogmatism as the means that will enable the Left to broaden its appeal: "If the Left . . . persists in dogmatically believing that the new conception of power and revolution means embourgeoisement, ideological weakness, individualism, and decay, the wheel of history will not pause, new groups will arise, and the protagonists of the struggle will be displaced by other actors who will take up these tasks" (p. 34).

The essays in *Visiones* are all short and somewhat elusive. Although they do not offer much originality or depth, they are interesting as documents of the organizations' contrasting positions. Even so, differences sometimes get smoothed over. Some of the contributors appear to bend over backward to take nonsectarian positions with broad appeal rather than to define positions sharply. Villalobos's *Una revolución en la izquierda* is much longer than any of these essays and much more explicit as well.

All the contributors to *Visiones alternativas sobre la transición* accept

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the premise that El Salvador is in transition: that it will not revert to the state prevailing before the war although its present state is not definitive, a lack of definition that presents opportunities for advocates of change. But the contributors are not clear about where they think the transition is leading. Some perceive the most important changes occurring in the realm of political institutions, while others focus on the areas of social and economic relations.

None of the contributors offer a specific political-economic program or design for the society they hope to build. Two areas of divergence stand out nevertheless. The first has to do with immediate political goals: for some, the most important goal is to consolidate democracy, which implies moderating economic demands, while others insist on progress toward social justice at the same time. The second difference of opinion is in the degree to which these opposition leaders regard the reforms achieved in the peace negotiations as firmly secured. Some appear to believe that the peace accords provide adequate guarantees for the democratic transition, and they therefore condone collaborating with the Right to achieve short-term goals. Others believe that the traditional right wing—the ARENA party, the military, and private enterprise—continue to threaten democracy in El Salvador.

The moderation of the Resistencia Nacional on both issues comes through clearly. Cienfuegos emphasizes consolidation of the democratic process and says little about social justice. He calls for cooperating with various sectors of society, including the ARENA party, to assure governability. Guevara, of the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño, emphasizes democratic consolidation more than demands for redistribution. The FPL's Chávez rejects outright any alliance with ARENA, attacking its structural adjustment policies, and he calls for social policy to combat poverty and social injustice, which are destabilizing and threaten to hinder democratic consolidation. Jovel of the PRTC expresses more concern than others about the persisting danger from the Right and complains that ARENA has not lived up to the peace agreement. But as head of the smallest party, Jovel also manifests eagerness to conciliate the differences among the parties and maintain the unity of the FMLN.

The differences in principles revealed in these essays (as well as historic rivalries among the organizations that were never really overcome throughout the war) led to serious disputes over policy and practice, especially regarding implementation of the peace accords. The campaign for the March 1994 elections, in which the FMLN ran a single legislative and municipal slate and a joint presidential slate with the CD and the MNR, was the front's last united act. Twenty-one FMLN deputies (a quarter of the total) were elected to the Asamblea Nacional, including Gutiérrez, Mena Sandoval, and Cienfuegos (under his civilian name of Eduardo Sancho). When it convened in May, the seven deputies from the

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ERP and the RN broke ranks with the other FMLN deputies and made a pact with ARENA to support each other's candidates for leadership positions in the assembly. For the next several months, the FMLN's five parties sought a formula for restructuring the FMLN and keeping it united, but to no avail. The formal split came when the ERP and RN withdrew in December 1994.

Of the seven books reviewed, most of those dealing with the war are lively and entertaining stories of real people and actual events. The works analyzing the political situation are more abstract and conceptual. The accounts of the war are clear both in their stories and in the issues they raise. The political analyses, however, remain uncertain about strategies and to some extent about goals. Without wanting to indulge in nostalgia for the "good old days" of the war, I think that this contrast is no accident. Nor is it merely a difference between storytelling and analysis. In wartime, the issues *were* clear—there was no doubt about who the enemy was. Life was dangerous and frequently tragic, but it was not boring or ambiguous. Even though the combatants in these books are not inflated to heroic proportions (part of these books' charm), they nevertheless did heroic things, and one can admire their courage.

With the advent of peace, heroism gives way to political bargaining and maneuvering. Battles become internecine. Instead of urgency and moral clarity, we find compromise and halfway measures. Political actors must make choices for which their experience offers no sure guides. The ambiguity is heightened by worldwide challenges to the certainties of the past. Perhaps inadvertently, the books about postwar politics in El Salvador convey this new situation, betraying the uncertainty prevailing in a new political world. Some of the authors also betray uncertainty by smoothing over differences rather than clarifying them. And they foreshadow the often unedifying conflicts that ultimately split the FMLN. Taken together, however, all these books shed light on the experiences that the guerrilla leaders bring to the postwar situation, their divergent views of the opportunities it offers, and the challenges confronting them as they adjust to the new reality.

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