

March 21, 1984

## **EL SALVADOR'S ELECTION : THE PARTY LINEUP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Because of its history of military coups, bloody uprisings, and leftist and rightist terrorism, El Salvador's potential for progress toward a truly democratic system based upon law, elections, and peaceful alternation of power is often questioned. The Constituent Assembly election of March 1982 was observed by scores of foreign experts and by almost all accounts was judged fair and honest. Yet there are those who remain reluctant to call El Salvador's political system democratic.

The Constituent Assembly selected in 1982 nonetheless fulfilled its mandate of writing a comprehensive Constitution and creating the basis for the presidential elections to be held March 25, 1984.

This election, its electoral laws, electoral council, registration and voting procedures will be conducted under the close scrutiny of hundreds of observers representing different countries and professions for the sole purpose of determining for the world if El Salvador's elections are indeed fair and honest, and therefore truly democratic.

The candidates of the political parties range from right wing to left wing, although most of the parties fall in the middle. The leftist guerrillas, FDR/FMLN, again have refused to participate, renouncing the electoral process in favor of their demand for a negotiated power sharing arrangement and efforts at a violent overthrow of El Salvador's elected government.

The war, meanwhile, continues unabated. The guerrillas have announced that they will not attempt to violently disrupt the elections. Their assassinations of government leaders and other terrorist acts against the population and the economic infrastructure continue, however.

Nevertheless, most observers have noted that the voter turnout is expected to be as high as 1982's, which was 82 percent of the population. Despite the gruesome backdrop of a violent and repressive history, terrorism, and the ongoing war, the great majority of Salvadorans seem determined to have a democracy and to end Marxist and other extremist violence.

#### EVENTS BEFORE THE 1982 ELECTIONS

Although El Salvador has had elections since the early 1930s, very few, even when fair, have had a lasting impact. The military has been a major determining force, split internally with one force the ally of the wealthy classes and the other promoting economic and political reforms. When fraudulent elections or military coups attempted to maintain oligarchic control, the reformist elements would step in and restore El Salvador on its modernization course.

Pressures for change increased dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s when El Salvador underwent an economic surge, surpassing all other Central American countries in growth. A consequence of this growth was the rise of a middle class that was less tolerant of the closed political system dominated by the traditional elites. Its demands for a political opening were joined by the demands of the new radical leftist groups as well as elements in the Catholic Church.

In 1979, after change in the political structure had been thwarted by electoral fraud in 1977 and left-wing terrorism appeared to be growing, moderate officers of the military overthrew the government of General Carlos Humberto Romero and formed a military-civilian junta that sought to incorporate elements of the left as a means of ending the violence and instituting reform. This experiment failed. Left-wing violence escalated, the military was forced to reinstitute the state of siege, and the three civilian members of the junta resigned.<sup>1</sup>

A new and more stable government was formed that same year with the return from exile of Jose Napoleon Duarte, who agreed to become the provisional president of the junta on condition that reforms would be instituted. Duarte had left El Salvador in 1972 after an election he is widely believed to have won was altered in favor of Col. Arturo Armando Molina of the National Reconciliation Party. Under Duarte, El Salvador's agricultural, banking and export systems were changed extensively under state management.

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<sup>1</sup> Guillermo Ungo left the junta to join the guerrilla movement. He now heads the political arm of the guerrilla's organization, the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). The more powerful militant faction is called the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement (FMLN). Mr. Ungo has been useful in obtaining support for the militant faction particularly through Socialist International, of which he is a member.

Despite these comprehensive actions, violence from the left increased. As a consequence of this violence, as well as opposition to the instituted changes, the right began to resort to its own terrorism. This rigid polarization between the left and the right still exists in El Salvador. While the reforms have led to an intense reaction of some of the Salvadoran right and have neither appeased nor brought into the government the members of the far left, there have been no subsequent military coups.

Under the relatively stable government of 1979, concrete steps were taken to prepare for a Constituent Assembly election in 1982. Support for the election, to many peoples' surprise, was enlisted from all the different political groups and parties in El Salvador, except for the violent left, which instead announced a "Final Offensive" that called for a popular uprising and pledged to sabotage the success of the elections.

The election that took place in March 1982 was one of the few in El Salvador not marred by fraud. While it is possible that there was some minor tampering with the voting results, they are not believed to have been significantly altered. Most allegations of large-scale fraud were carefully refuted or unsubstantiated.<sup>2</sup>

Most observers felt that the election, in which participation was higher than in any previous election, reflected the choice between a diverse set of political parties and between all those parties and the guerrillas with their far left allies. The failure of the guerrillas' much vaunted Final Offensive to obtain popular support at the end of 1981 and their failure to nullify the voting process by means of casting many blank ballots, a traditional way of protest in Latin and Central America, underscored the lack of significant popular support for their cause.<sup>3</sup>

## THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The March 25 elections will select as President and Vice President the candidates of one of the eight registered parties.<sup>4</sup> It is the second stage of a process that began in 1982 with the

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the U.S. Official Observer Mission To The El Salvador Constituent Assembly Elections, March 28, 1982, to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, November 1982.

<sup>3</sup> An estimate by Freedom House of the greatest possible amount of support the guerrillas could have received based on the number of blank or null ballots was about 10 percent. This estimate is considered by other observers to be high. See "Report of the Freedom House Mission to Observe the Election in El Salvador, March 28, 1982," Freedom House, no date.

<sup>4</sup> To qualify, a political party must have registered with the Central Elections Council no later than February 29, 1984, according to the Transitory Election Law passed on February 10, 1984.

election of the Constituent Assembly, which has recently become a legislative assembly. Following that election, in which no one party received a majority of the votes, an agreement was made among most of the parties for the formation of the government. This agreement, known as the Pact of Apaneca,<sup>5</sup> committed all the party representatives in the Salvadoran Constituent Assembly to a series of substantive principles dealing with pacification, democratization, human rights, economic recovery, social and economic reforms, confidence and security measures, and foreign policy.

Although the Pact of Apaneca did not include all the parties, such as Democratic Action, and was criticized by some for not including representatives from the left, it nevertheless managed to achieve a working consensus.<sup>6</sup> It provided a legal framework for the operation of the government and the Constituent Assembly. It also drafted and passed a comprehensive, liberal Constitution and prepared the way for a legally established electoral process.

The elections taking place on March 25 come at a crucial period of Salvadoran political life, because they focus on the relevant substantive issues: political participation, negotiations with the nonparticipating left, human rights, economic development and private property, and judicial reform. These are the issues being debated by the Salvadoran people and their chosen political representatives.

## THE POLITICAL PARTIES

The eight registered parties campaigning in this election are the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), the National Republican Alliance (ARENA), the National Conciliation Party (PCN), the Popular Salvadoran Party (PPS), the Authentic Institutional Salvadoran Party (PAISA), the Democratic Action Party (AD), the Popular Orientation Party (POP), and the Stable Centrist Republican Movement (MERECEN). (See Appendix for complete candidate lists.)

### The Christian Democrats

Founded in 1960 by intellectuals in the tradition of Latin American Christian Democratic parties, the PDC is interested particularly in economic reforms of a social democratic nature with a strong commitment to agrarian reform. The PDC has also developed an association with labor and peasant unions. Its presidential candidate is Jose Napoleon Duarte, who, as noted, ran as

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<sup>5</sup> The Pact of Apaneca is not an unusual agreement. It has several precedents: Pacts of Moncloa, Spain; the Pact of Punto Fijo, Venezuela; and the Pact of Sitges, Colombia. The English text of the Pact of Apaneca may be found in the El Salvador News Gazette, October 4-10, 1982, pp. 1-11.

<sup>6</sup> For an example of this criticism, see Enrique Baloyra, "Political Change in El Salvador?" Current History, February 1984, pp. 54-58.

a presidential candidate in 1972 and became head of the civilian-military junta in 1979, which managed to remain intact until the 1982 elections despite a period of heightened political violence and a full-fledged guerrilla war.

Duarte's campaign platform has not yet been fully articulated, except for the publicized Central Elections Council "roundtable" discussions that have included all the parties.<sup>7</sup> During these talks he has emphasized judicial restoration and economic improvements. As for possible negotiations with the guerrillas, he vaguely stated that there must be a "dialogue" with all sectors.<sup>8</sup>

Duarte has been trying to mend his relationships with the army and the private sector, which suffered because of the nationalization of the banks and the export sector and the sweeping land reform measures enacted during his Presidency. He has taken a more moderate line with regard to reform and has begun promoting the idea of private sector development. The military has been more sympathetic to Duarte than in the past, partly in response to these overtures, partly because some the military fear that a victory by Duarte's primary opponent, Roberto D'Aubisson, would result in the cutoff of U.S. military aid.

Duarte's major base of support, however, is in the urban areas where his appeal is strong among labor unions. Recently Duarte received the endorsement of the umbrella union organization the Popular Democratic Unity (UPD), which includes important rural, as well as urban, unions.

Because the state of the economy is the major issue, Duarte's past performance as president of El Salvador could be a liability, since during his tenure El Salvador's economy went into a steep decline. Roberto D'Aubisson is capitalizing on this fact, asserting that El Salvador's economic ills are largely due to the massive reforms under Duarte.

#### The National Republican Alliance (ARENA)

ARENA was formed in 1981 by Roberto D'Aubisson, who is their presidential candidate. The ARENA platform was first articulated in the Central Election Council January 24 roundtable and has been somewhat amplified since. Essentially, ARENA opposes further state control over the economy and emphasizes private sector development. ARENA also appeals to traditional nationalist concepts of family, Christianity, private property, and the productive sector, which it calls the "four pillars of private enterprise, the Church,

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<sup>7</sup> FBIS, Latin America, February 22, 1984, P2 gives transcript of a Central Electoral Council roundtable program that includes presentations by ARENA, PAISA, and PDC, on January 24, 1984. For Francisco Jose Guerrero of the PCN, see FBIS, Latin America, February 27, 1984, P9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., P2.

justice and the law and the judges; and the Armed Forces."<sup>9</sup> The resistance by ARENA representatives to broad state-enforced social reforms stems from their belief that the state is unable to support such programs economically. They assert that social reform will come more easily and more fairly from the dynamics of productivity: "one of the principles that we most firmly believe in is that productivity generates the resources for the social function."<sup>10</sup>

The Christian Democrats and ARENA disagree mainly over the issue of negotiations with the guerrillas. Unlike the Christian Democrats and another political party, Democratic Action, ARENA has adamantly refused to consider negotiations. According to D'Aubisson, "power emanates from the vote, from...the people."<sup>11</sup> This position is probably most popular with the military, who naturally eschew the idea of negotiations or a negotiated settlement with the guerrillas.

ARENA's base of support is predominantly in the rural areas, which might seem surprising as ARENA's support of land reform has been somewhat ambivalent. But the issue of order is probably paramount among the campesinos or farmers and peasants, who are often the victims of left-wing guerrilla efforts to undermine the economy by disrupting agricultural production. This would explain their preference for D'Aubisson, who has been successful at projecting the image of a strong leader. There is also the factor of traditional loyalty to the "patron" or the large landowner, who supports ARENA. Furthermore, associations such as the Coffee Growers and other large landowner groups were among those that formed ARENA, so that ARENA's base of support was originally rural.

#### The National Conciliation Party (PCN)

The National Conciliation Party was founded in the 1960s to represent the predominantly traditional military and wealthy classes that ruled El Salvador from 1961 to 1979. After the 1979 military coup, the party fell into disarray and has since been reassembled through the efforts of Francisco Jose "Chachi" Guerrero. Under his leadership, the party has retained its original nationalist and anti-communist character but has also embraced certain ideas of reform. It is considered to be slightly right of center but independent of the military and the upper classes.

As the PCN presidential candidate, Guerrero has come across as a moderate, which has gained him more favor with outside observers than with the Salvadorans, who do not support him because of the PCN's past association with the military and the oligarchy.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., P5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., P6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., P6.

El Salvador is also in the midst of a war, and elections during a war do not turn to compromise and moderation. Guerrero's platform so far has emphasized the economy, especially private sector development, although he is careful to distinguish between private enterprise that benefits all the workers and that which benefits only a small wealthy elite.

### Democratic Action (AD)

Democratic Action is a middle-class professional and business party led by Rene Fortin Magana, the presidential candidate for this election. Although a liberal party in such respects as social programs, it is noticeably more conservative with regard to land reform, which it supports in principle but questions as to its overall economic benefits. Democratic Action considers itself to be a nationalistic compromise between left and right. It is also the leading supporter of negotiations with the guerrillas but not a negotiated settlement or power sharing solution.

### PPS and PAISA

The Popular Salvadoran Party (PPS) and the Salvadoran Authentic Institutional Party (PAISA) were only one party until 1982. The original PPS is a remnant of a conservative party that dates back to the 1940s. Essentially PAISA and PPS reflect the same ideological position as ARENA. However, they have remained reluctant to become a subparty of the D'Aubisson dominated ARENA. They offered to join ARENA in a coalition, which, however, was not achieved by the February 26 deadline.

### Other Parties

The Popular Orientation Party (POP) and the newly formed Stable Centrist Republican Movement (MERECEN) are conservative parties that have little support. POP, which ran in the last election, did not obtain enough votes to have a delegate in the Constituent Assembly. Neither has thus far articulated a platform.

### The Military

The Army has officially declared its neutrality toward the elections.<sup>12</sup> The Armed Forces recently reiterated their past neutrality stating that they will "abstain from voting and will dedicate their efforts to protecting its public security, peace, and tranquility during the electoral process."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, which controls the army, despite the protest of the opposition parties, has allowed members of the military to vote. In addition, the Sandinistas, who have instituted mandatory draft of 18-year-olds, have lowered the voting age to 18. This step has also been hotly contested by the political opposition who see it as another step by the Sandinistas to control the outcome of the elections.

<sup>13</sup> FBIS, Latin America, March 5, 1984, P4.

Despite the shortage of supplies and ammunition, the Army has made extensive plans to protect the 1984 elections as they did successfully in 1982.

### The Guerrilla Left

As they did in the 1982 election, the members and leaders of the FDR/FMLN guerrillas have refused to participate in the 1984 elections. Instead, they have called for a negotiated settlement that would incorporate them into the government, abolish the Constitution, purge the Armed Forces (and replace them with guerrilla forces), and eliminate all right-wing groups from any participation. These demands have been rejected by all the political parties.

In Mexico City on February 9, 1984, spokesmen for the FDR/FMLN, in a widely publicized press conference pledged not to militarily sabotage the elections. In contrast, in 1982, the same spokesmen threatened to disrupt the elections and kill those who went to the polls. When most Salvadorans went to the polls anyway, the guerrillas' image as popular revolutionaries suffered a humiliating setback. This may be the reason they have proclaimed to the world their willingness to let the elections take place without their interference. At the same time, their clandestine radio broadcasts have been announcing a new campaign of violence and terrorism to coincide with the elections.<sup>14</sup>

### The Legal Framework

There are three principal laws in El Salvador that will govern the 1984 elections: the Constitution, the Transitory Electoral Law, and the Electoral Financing Law.

1) The Constitution, passed by the Constituent Assembly on December 20, 1983, defines the legal framework for a democratic polity in El Salvador, limits the powers of the President and Vice President to this legal framework, and details the rights and duties of voters.

2) The Transitory Electoral Law passed on February 10, 1984, sets forth the procedures for the campaign and the election, the rights and duties of all the participants and calls for the use of a list of eligible voters called the Electoral Registry. The law requires that all political parties must have officially registered by February 29, 1984. Party coalitions are permitted, but they must have been registered by February 26. Once registered, the candidates on a ticket cannot be changed. In the

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<sup>14</sup> FBIS, Latin America, February 27, 1984, P15. A broadcast from Radio Venceremos stated that "the FMLN has begun a new national political-military campaign. We are disclosing that the General Command (will) unleash the power of our weapons in a new guerrilla campaign throughout El Salvador."



event of a run-off, coalitions are allowed, but the ticket cannot be changed. The printed ballot, however, can reflect more than one party.

Although it is stipulated by law, the Electoral Registry is unlikely to be completed by the March 10 deadline. This will not necessarily result in fraud or difficulties for voters wishing to vote. Experts have stated that, in fact, the Registry is useful but not necessary; the indelible visible mark of ink on each voters thumb will ensure that each citizen will vote only once.<sup>15</sup> The purpose of the registry is to establish voter eligibility and to designate where each citizen may vote based upon their place of birth or where their cedulas (national identity cards) were last issued. This is intended to avoid the long lines that occurred in 1982 and to give added safeguards against double voting. The Registry will be more useful, however, in the municipal and legislative elections scheduled for 1985, when it will be crucial to keep voters within their designated districts. If completed for this election, the Registry will be available at each polling place to allow citizens, who are unable to get to their designated polling place, to identify themselves and vote.

The Electoral Law also states that the communications media, both public and private, must treat all registered parties equally with regard to access, time, space, and cost of resources.

3) The Electoral Financing Law specifies the allocation of public funds to political parties to ensure that all legal parties will have a fair opportunity to campaign before the elections.

#### Central Elections Council

The Transitory Electoral Law also establishes the Central Elections Council and grants its elected members authority and jurisdiction over the electoral process. Among its duties is the preparation of the Electoral Registry lists and having them distributed to the political parties and the department juntas or local electoral authorities by March 10, 1984. The departmental juntas then will distribute the list to the corresponding municipal electoral boards, which, in turn, will distribute them to the officials of each table (mesa) where the votes are cast. The lists will then be made available to the public so that the voters can check for their own names. If a citizen's name is not on the list, he can request that his name be included by telegram to the Central Elections Council.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Howard Penniman at American Enterprise Institute on March 5, 1984. Dr. Penniman was a member of the U.S. official observer mission in El Salvador in March 1982 and will also be observing this election. He has studied the electoral procedures of many countries throughout the world.

### The Voting Process

After the polls close, the officials at each voting table will break open the ballot boxes, fill out and sign the official tallies, and immediately turn the ballots over to the municipal electoral officials. Once the municipal officials have received all the ballots and documentation from their jurisdiction, they must, within 16 hours, turn them over to the departmental electoral officials. The departmental officials will turn the ballots and documentation over to the Central Elections Council no later than the day following their receipt. The Council will make an official vote count, based on the documents completed by the electoral officials. The Council will also make the final, official declaration of the election results and present official credentials to the winners.

### Monitoring by the Political Parties

The electoral law allows each party to name one poll watcher at each voting table or ballot box. They can also name one representative to monitor the municipal and departmental electoral juntas. There will also be equal representation on the Central Elections Council. ARENA, however, will not be represented on the Council because it missed the deadline for replacing a party member who had resigned.

### Run-off Provisions

The new Constitution requires that the winning candidate receive an absolute majority. If no candidate does so, then the two with the largest number of votes must enter a run-off election within 30 days after the results of the first election are declared official.

Because there are eight parties running, it is unlikely that any one of them will be able to obtain the needed majority in the first round. Should a run-off occur it is unclear where the losing parties will throw their support.

### OUTLOOK

Based on the 1982 electoral results (see Appendix), the Christian Democrats are expected to receive the most votes in the first round but probably not the needed absolute majority. ARENA is expected to follow with the next largest number of votes. ARENA could do better in this election and surpass the Christian Democrats since it is no longer the new party it was in March 1982. It is unlikely that the next largest party, PCN, will get more votes than the Christian Democrats or ARENA, although it is expected to do better than the remaining parties.

In the event of a run-off, ARENA could obtain the support of most of the losing parties who are closer ideologically to ARENA

than to the Christian Democrats. The important exception is Democratic Action, which has already indicated it will support Duarte.

## CONCLUSION

With its new Constitution and Electoral Laws, El Salvador is ready for an electoral process with full legal guarantees. Whether the contesting parties will abide by these laws and peacefully turn over power to opposition forces can only be determined by time.

The 1984 election is not the ultimate test of democracy in El Salvador, but it is another step forward that a majority of Salvadorans seem to support. Moreover, the elections per se will not end the war, since the guerrillas have refused to recognize the principle of self-determination and the legitimacy of the democratic process in El Salvador. In this context, the elections serve to underscore the lack of real support for the guerrillas who have become identified more with havoc and violence than with liberation. The elections also serve to show that Marxist forces, as in Nicaragua, Cuba, and elsewhere, reject liberal democracy.

The farther Salvadorans progress toward peaceful and authentic self-determination the less appealing the alternative offered by the guerrillas and their leftist allies will become.

The Salvadoran people, it is believed, voted in 1982 to end the war. Despite two more years of seemingly stalemated war, economic disruption, and stagnation, their participation in the elections this year testifies to their patient willingness to pursue peace and change through legal, democratic channels.

Esther Wilson  
Policy Analyst

APPENDIX  
The Candidates

Eight parties have nominated presidential candidates:

Christian Democratic Party (PDC)

President: Jose Napoleon Duarte  
Vice President: Rodolfo Antonio Castillo  
Percent of votes received in 1982: 40 percent

Democratic Action (AD)

President: Rene Fortin Magana  
Vice President: Luis Nelson Segovia  
Percent of votes received in 1982: 8 percent

National Conciliation Party (PCN)

President: Francisco Jose Guerrero  
Vice President: Anulfo Pio Ayala  
Percent of votes received in 1982: 19 percent

Authentic Institutional Salvadoran Party (PAISA)

President: Roberto Escobar Garcia  
Vice President: Armando Chavarria

Popular Salvadoran Party (PPS)

President: Francisco Quinonez  
Vice President: Ana Celia Campos de Tovar  
Percent of votes received in 1982: 3 percent

National Republican Alliance (ARENA)

President: Roberto D'Aubisson  
Vice President: Hugo Barrera  
Percent of votes received in 1982: 29 percent

Popular Orientation Party (POP)

President: Guillermo Trujillo  
Vice President: Rene Rivera  
Percent of votes received in 1982: 1 percent

Stable Centrist Republican Movement (MERECE)

President: Juan Ramon Rosales y Rosales  
Vice President: Rolando Lopez Fortis