

WORKERS' TRIBUNE

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El Salvador and Imperialism

The bloody war in El Salvador is continuing. The brutal terror of the U.S.-backed military junta that left over 10,000 dead last year, still takes the lives of Salvadorean workers, peasants, and opponents of the junta every day. The U.S. is pouring in millions of dollars to arm and equip this reactionary, terrorist junta, and now admits to sending military "advisors", just like the initial phase of its invasion of Indochina.

At the same time, all the imperialist powers, the U.S., Russia, France, West Germany, etc., intensify their preparations for imperialist war. The arms race and world arms sales go on unabated. In the midst of this, we hear reports that the military junta and the guerrillas in El Salvador are arranging for negotiations to end the civil war. A new offensive of both the junta and the guerrillas is expected soon. The situation in El Salvador is reaching a critical, decisive point.

To understand these events, the character of the war in El Salvador must be explained.

The Character of the War

It is no accident that the U.S. in intervening in El Salvador by military means. The system we live in, imperialism, has the world divided into a handful of oppressor nations that oppress, plunder, and live off the vast majority of oppressed nations. Imperialism does this not out of any special malice, but because this is *most profitable*. The cheap labor, raw materials, spheres of capital investment provide the imperialist banks and corporations with superprofits. The rate of profit for U.S. investment in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is approximately five times greater than for investment in the U.S. and two and one-half times greater than for investment in Europe.

To guarantee these superprofits, imperialism stifles the development of the economies of the colonial and semi-colonial countries and makes them economically and politically dependent on imperialism. In agriculture, rather than emphasis on food production for the population, imperialist domination of the economy means more emphasis on cash crops geared for the export to the imperialist countries. In El Salvador, this has meant that coffee, sugar cane, and cotton dominate the economy

accounting for 75 percent of the export earnings. El Salvador is thus a semi-colony of imperialism, chiefly U.S. imperialism. This situation, while most profitable for the imperialists, is most distressing and barbaric for the workers and peasants who must toil and suffer under it.

These backward conditions have led to repeated uprisings of the Salvadorean workers and peasants to break the shackles of rule by imperialism, the landlords, and the national bourgeoisie. To suppress them, and thus guarantee their plunder and fabulous profits, U.S. imperialism has propped up one military regime after another. The present junta rules through terror by military and paramilitary units like ORDEN. The false "land reform" program of the junta actually strengthened the hand of these murderers; as it was, ORDEN members got much of the land. Small wonder, since the architect of this "reform" was Roy Prosterman, an American professor who devised Operation Phoenix in Vietnam, the program of rural "pacification" that assassinated both those suspected of opposition to the reactionary government and others indiscriminantly, to create panic and demoralization among the peasants.

It is these reactionary ends that have the U.S. government intervening in El Salvador. Lenin long ago demonstrated that "the specific political features of imperialism are reaction all along the line and increased national oppression resulting from the oppression of the financial oligarchy and the elimination of free competition . . ." (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, FLP, p. 133) The events in El Salvador are but one more proof of this time-tested teaching.

It thus follows that the war being waged by U.S. imperialism and the junta it props up is a reactionary, unjust, imperialist war. The enemies of the Salvadorean workers and peasants are the same as the enemies of the majority of workers and oppressed peoples in the U.S. — the imperialist monopolies and banks that rob us all every day. Workers and oppressed peoples in the U.S. have no interest in helping the coffee barons and bankers plunder of El Salvador. We condemn U.S. intervention in El Salvador, in any form, direct or indirect. Further, we work for the *defeat* of U.S. imperialism and its stooges in this imperialist war.

It also follows that the war waged by the Salvadorean workers and peasants to free themselves of this brutal exploitation

and terror is a *just* war that deserves the support, sympathy, and aid of all workers, oppressed peoples and progressive and revolutionary people. Support for this struggle is necessary to weaken the imperialist system.

The leaders of the AFL-CIO, however, lead workers to support the junta. This is because they represent the labor aristocracy, the bribed upper stratum of the working class that receives crumbs from the superprofits of imperialism. They, too, live off the exploitation of the people of the world. To protect their privileged position, they organize to protect the plunder of El Salvador by imperialism and the bloody suppression of the masses. The union bureaucracies, which themselves have become imperialist through massive investments of workers' dues in banks, bonds, stocks, etc., are the enemies of the majority of working people. Workers in the U.S., as part of the struggle against capitalism, must fight for democracy in the unions and to kick these traitors out of the workers' movement.

El Salvador and Imperialist World War

The war in El Salvador is not an isolated event in the world. It is but one more example of the steps being taken by the imperialists on the road to world war.

All over the world the imperialists are competing for export markets, sources of raw materials, and spheres of capital investments. As the world capitalist economic crisis only worsens, they have no other "solution" than a massive militarization of the economy and war to re-divide the world. The focus of their rivalry are the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Already the greatest concentration of increases of arms sales and dispatching of warships and setting up of bases is the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. The imperialist wolves are especially planning war to seize unchallenged control of the world's oil, which is essential for both industry and war itself. The Secretary of State, Haig, on his recent trip to the Middle East, not only openly sold sophisticated war planes to the reactionary Saudi oil monarchs, but also signed several secret treaties that will place U.S. troops directly in bases in the Middle East. (*8 Days*, April 4, 1981) Already details of plans to station U.S. troops in the Egyptian port base of Ras Banas on the Red Sea have come out. Stationing of U.S. troops in Oman, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere may also at first be disguised by claims they are only military "advisors", "technical personnel", etc. One major purpose of their presence is to create a basis for creating a pretext for U.S. intervention. If one is shot or killed, the U.S. will committ aggression to "protect American lives," lives that were placed in such jeopardy on purpose in the first place. This is Haig's infamous "tripwire strategy," a ploy to stage incidents to justify invasion. A similiar situation exists in Latin America, also home of many U.S. "advisors," and bases in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Panama. Oil in Venezuela and Mexico, key oil routes through the Caribbean, and other economic, political, and military factors make the Caribbean and Central America a key region of rivalry between the imperialist powers. World wars do not come all at once, but are led up to by a series of contests, both military and political, in various countries and regions.

Until recently U.S. imperialism faced no serious challenge from other imperialists in Latin America. With the overall decline of U.S. imperialism, that situation is changing.

Militarily, the chief challenge to the U.S. both in Latin America and the world is from the Russian imperialists. The Russia of today is no longer the socialist Soviet Union that existed under Lenin and Stalin. In 1953, Khrushchev and Co., seized power, restored capitalism, and turned Russia into a predatory, imperialist power bent on maximizing profits and sub-

jugating whole nations. This has led to anarchy and chaos in the economies of all the revisionist countries. Today the Russian imperialists and their revisionist cohorts in their bloc can only rule over the workers by the bayonet, as we see in Poland, can only build "fraternal" ties with other nations by tanks, as in Afghanistan, and can only keep the workers and farmers from fleeing by closing the borders, as in Cuba.

Regarding world war, the imperialists are seeking to re-divide the world. The present division of the world is based on a balance of strength after World War II. With the decline of U.S. imperialism, the emergence of Russian imperialism, and the revival of West European and Japanese imperialism, a new balance of strength exists. But the whole world is already divided up. Re-division can only be made by force. Thus, to divide the world again, imperialist war becomes inevitable. This will be so as long as imperialism exists.

There are those that deny the inevitability of war under imperialism, or that deny that Russia is imperialist. All this flies in the face of reality. Russia's aims in Latin America are to oust

U.S. dominance and not achieve liberation. Cuba has become a Russian dependency, with disastrous consequences for the economy and the lives of the workers and farmers. The stagnation and decay of the Cuban economy is a direct result of its dependence on and domination by the Russian bloc. It is still a sugar-exporting economy, as El Salvador is an export economy. Another Cuba in El Salvador would just mean a gain for Russian imperialism and continued suffering of the masses. (For more on Cuba, see *Workers' Tribune*, April-May, 1981, p. 17)

For those who still reject reality and think Russia's aims benevolent in Latin America, the example of Russia's relations with Argentina further prove their imperialist aims. Argentina supplied Russia with grain during the U.S. grain embargo of Russia. That "socialist" Russia has to import gran from the U.S. or even Argentina is another example of the devastated state of agriculture under the revisionists. Russia returned the favor to Argentina by opposing in the United Nations a condemnation (weak and unenforceable as it was) of the tortures and murders by the Argentine military junta. The only difference between the terror by the El Salvador military junta and the terror by the Argentine military junta is that the former is dependent on the U.S., while the latter spreads out its dependence to include other imperialists like Russia. The Russian imperialists do not oppose such terror as in El Salvador — they only want to get a piece of the action. Likewise, the U.S. "opposes" Russian intervention in Afghanistan and Poland — so they can grab them for themselves.

The Russian imperialists are not alone in this game. *Economically*, the chief challenge to U.S. imperialism both in Latin American and the world, comes from the West European and Japanese imperialists. Trade, investment, and loans, by these imperialists to Latin America has dramatically advanced in recent years. All over the world the U.S. can no longer compete with products from these countries. This has led to economic rivalry and political crisis, such as the growing discord in NATO.

The U.S. has been unable to whip its "allies" to support its intervention in El Salvador. Thus, West Germany, through the rotten "Socialist International", has been supporting the opposition. The West German banks want to make profits by increasing loans to colonial, semi-colonial, and dependent countries through the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For this, they need stable governments to repay the loans. They also want regimes that will not be too closely tied to the U.S., so that they can share in trade and investment. Thus,

they have turned a deaf ear to appeals for support for U.S. intervention.

The Russians have also decided to back off a confrontation with the U.S. over El Salvador, especially in return for a U.S. promise or signal that it would not prevent a Russian invasion of Poland, or respond too harshly. The inability of the U.S. to gather support has led to a situation where negotiations over El Salvador are being openly discussed. The recent visit of the Salvadorean Bishop Arturo Rivera y Damas to the U.S. and Europe brought public news that both the government and the opposition were ready to negotiate. Now the U.S. hypocritically criticizes the Treasury police for the terror, apparently in an effort to blame it alone for the terror.

The purpose of a negotiated deal would be to stabilize El Salvador so the imperialists could make their profits in "peace" It also would allow the U.S. to try to repair relations with Western Europe through a compromise that would give them all superprofits. Further, it could avoid detracting attention away from the big prize, Middle East oil. It would thus be a *robber's peace* and only further guarantee imperialist exploitation.

Against a National Reformist Betrayal

Unfortunately for the Salvadorean workers and peasants, there is every sign that the leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) will be partners to this betrayal. The FDR president, Guillermo Urgo, is a representative of the "Socialist" International, and wants to sell his country to the German banks, rather than the U.S. banks. The revisionist Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS), a handmaiden to the Russian imperialists, plays an important role in the guerrilla movement. Other forces see their mentor as Fidel Castro, and would sell their country to the Russian imperialists. Thus, the FDR leadership is an alliance of pro-Russian and pro-West European imperialist force.

The perspective of these forces is not to create a workers and peasants government in El Salvador, which is the only path leading to true liberation. This path demands the hegemony of the proletariat, the creation of Soviets (Councils) of workers and peasants that seize political power, and the leadership of a vanguard party modeled after the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Stalin. On the contrary, the platform of the FDR will guarantee power and profits for the national bourgeoisie of El Salvador which is tied hand and foot to imperialism. It is nothing but a national-reformist platform. All that will be changed will be the imperialist master, if that at all. A leader of one of the guerrilla groups supposedly to the "left" of the revisionist PCS told the Cuban newspaper *Granma* that he *opposed* a workers and peasants government, and instead wanted one that included "business men" and others. (quoted in *Revolt in El Salvador*, p. 29, pamphlet of Trotskyite SWP, which supports FDR)

The guerrilla groups are also being forced to negotiate because their support from the workers and peasants is lessening. A general strike in 1980 paralyzed El Salvador. Yet the supposed "final" or "general" offensive in January, 1981 was a failure and weaker than the 1980 strikes. The opposition has thus resorted more to isolated raids, like the hit-and-run strafing of the U.S. embassy (which follows years of individual terrorist actions like blowing up embassies and kidnappings), and to negotiations to sell out the revolution. The continuance of the guerrilla war is *not* to achieve liberation. Rather, it is to vie for the best position to bargain from at the negotiating table.

A deal would only lead to the disarming of the workers and peasants and their crushing, as in Iran, Zimbabwe, and Nicaragua. The FDR, in power alone or in a coalition with Christian

Democrats like Duarte, would participate in stopping strikes and forcing peasants off the land. Some reforms may be made — but all at the expense of stopping the revolution.

We cannot predict when and if such a deal can be consummated by the imperialists and their agents. There are many contradictions among them they must solve. However, it is clear that they have all converted the popular, just movement of the Salvadorean people into a pawn in the rivalry of the imperialist powers. Just as we condemn all intervention by imperialism, we condemn all betrayals of the revolution that maintains imperialist exploitation and oppression. Whether the U.S. invades El Salvador or whether a deal is negotiated, any tactic they use to preserve their rule must be opposed. (For more analysis see "War and Revolution in El Salvador", *Workers' Tribune*, Apr.—May 81)

Anti-War Movement in U.S.

Whatever happens in El Salvador, it is but one chapter in preparations for a new world war. U.S. intervention in El Salvador has led to a revival of demonstrations and the largest anti-war activities since the Vietnam war. But precisely because they are so reminiscent of the anti-war movement of the 60's and 70's, they show the same weakness.

As before, this movement is overwhelmingly petty bourgeois and white. It is led by various petty bourgeois "left" and pacifist groups, and a section of the union bureaucracy more closely tied to the "Socialist" International and the revisionist "Communist" Party USA.

Union hacks like AFSCME District Council 37 head Victor Gotbaum, who gave away workers' jobs, benefits, and wages in New York to the banks, and who sits on the Rockefeller-dominated Council on Foreign Relations and is in the Democratic "Socialist" Organizing Committee, is among this group of bureaucrats. Also included are J. Sheinkman and Sol Stetinn (Also of DSOC) of ACTWU, who sold out the J.P. Stevens workers for next to nothing and agreed to stop organizing the majority of their plants (see *Bolshevik Revolution*, Dec. 1980). Naturally, such hacks will mobilize few if any workers or oppressed people to demonstrate against U.S. intervention.

The demands of the Peoples Anti-War Mobilization (PAM), the sponsor of the large May 3 rally in Washington, D.C., only spread pacifist illusions that imperialism can be made to disarm and be peaceful. Demands like "Stop the U.S. war build-up" and "Money for jobs, human needs, not for the Pentagon" promote these pacifist myths. Imperialist intervention in El Salvador and war in general are not "policies" of one or another politician that can be changed at will. They are inevitable features of a system that thrives on subjugating the whole world and fighting to see who will be top dog. The petty bourgeoisie seeks to "reform" imperialism by "curbing" the monopolies and going back to pre-monopoly, pre-imperialist capitalism. Such dangerous pacifist illusions were ridiculed by Lenin as "a pious wish". They were made, he went on by "a petty bourgeois democratic opposition", those "anti-imperialists" he characterized as "the last Mohicans of bourgeois democracy." (*Imperialism*, FLP, p. 133-4) It is this same petty bourgeois opposition leading the anti-war movement and once again giving platforms for the reformist bourgeois politicians.

They want another movement like the one during the Vietnam War. Yet that was a movement dominated by chauvinism that dried up and collapsed once the draft ended and U.S. troops withdrew. Some of the so-called "anti-imperialist" sections of that movement told us we had to support the leadership of the "liberation" groups in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Now that those "liberators" are in power, we have seen the horror and untold desti-

nation that has befallen that region. Vietnam forcibly occupies Laos and Cambodia, has expelled people of Chinese background and sold Vietnam to Russia and its economic body COMECON. The pro-Maoist Pol Pot regime in Cambodia had massacred countless people. And today in the U.S., the same Maoists, Trotskyites, revisionists, and assorted "leftists" of all shades insist we repeat this tragedy regarding El Salvador.

The task of the revolutionary Communists and all class conscious workers is to split from these opportunist forces. We must combat the wave of chauvinism that is being used to justify

imperialist war. We must combat all pacifist illusions and show how imperialism inevitably means war. We must educate and mobilize workers and oppressed peoples in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. When the imperialist war comes, our task is to transform it into a civil war against the bourgeoisie and work to defeat our "own" governments.

The workers and oppressed peoples need a truly revolutionary movement. To fail to do this, to persist on the path of reformism, is to betray the interests of the workers and oppressed peoples and only serves the imperialists and their allies.

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