

EL SALVADOR :
The Long Journey from Violence to Reconciliation

Charles D. Brockett
The University of the South

- FROM MADNESS TO HOPE: THE TWELVE-YEAR WAR IN EL SALVADOR; REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE TRUTH FOR EL SALVADOR.* By Belisario Betancur, Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, and Thomas Buergethal. (New York: United Nations, 1993. Pp. 252. Paper.)
- EL SALVADOR'S DECADE OF TERROR: HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE THE ASSASSINATION OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO.* By Americas Watch Committee. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991. Pp. 207. \$25.00 cloth.)
- ARCHBISHOP ROMERO TEN YEARS ON.* By Julian Filochowski. (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1991. Pp. 14.)
- EL SALVADOR: TESTAMENT OF TERROR.* By Joe Fish and Cristina Sganga. (London: Zed, 1988. Pp. 147. \$22.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper.)
- PLACES OF ORIGIN: THE REPOPULATION OF RURAL EL SALVADOR.* By Beatrice Edwards and Gretta Tovar Siebentritt. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1991. Pp. 158. \$27.50 cloth.)
- GOING HOME, BUILDING PEACE IN EL SALVADOR: THE STORY OF REPATRIATION.* Edited by Vic Compher and Betsy Morgan. (New York: Apex, 1991. Pp. 146. \$17.50 paper.)
- THE COMANDANTE SPEAKS: MEMOIRS OF AN EL SALVADORAN GUERRILLA LEADER.* Edited by Courtney E. Prisk. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991. Pp. 145. \$25.00 paper.)
- EL SALVADOR EN LOS 80: CONTRAINSURGENCIA Y REVOLUCION.* By Mario Lungo Uclés. (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1990. Pp. 218. Paper.)
- DIALOGUE AND ARMED CONFLICT: NEGOTIATING THE CIVIL WAR IN EL SALVADOR.* By Riordan Roett and Frank Smyth. (Washington, D.C.: School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, 1988. Pp. 40. \$26.75 cloth, \$10.00 paper.)
- DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND PANAMA.* By Marc Lindenberg. (Boston, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 1993. Pp. 23. Free pamphlet.)
- EL SALVADOR.* By Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr. (Oxford: Clio, 1988. Pp. 215. \$60.00 cloth.)

Violence was a fire which swept over the fields of El Salvador; it burst into villages, cut off roads and destroyed highways and bridges, energy sources and transmission lines; it reached the cities and entered families, sacred areas and educational centers; it struck at justice and filled the public administration with victims; and it singled out as an enemy anyone who was not on the list of friends. Violence turned everything to death and destruction, for such is the senselessness of that breach of the calm plenitude which accompanies the rule of law.

From Madness to Hope (p. 10)

On 16 January 1992, the civil war in El Salvador formally ended with the signing of a peace agreement at Chapultepec, Mexico. Twelve years of fighting had left a death toll equaling about 1.5 percent of the population, displaced another 30 percent of the population from their homes, and battered the nation's economy. The causes and the course of this journey, first into violence and then toward social reconciliation, present crucial issues for social scientists. The publications reviewed in this essay thus are useful in advancing scholarly knowledge about El Salvador and about the social dynamics leading to civil conflict and conflict resolution.

None of these books and pamphlets attempt to examine contemporary El Salvador comprehensively. Each study focuses instead on parts of the story.¹ They can be loosely grouped together as addressing the following issues: the violence and its impact on the civilian population; repopulation and repatriation; the role and strategy of the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN); and the peace process. Although none of these publications are ambitious theoretically, several make important contributions to the study of El Salvador.

As social tensions heightened in the late 1970s, violence against civilians in El Salvador intensified. These tensions exploded into civil war in 1980, when violence against noncombatant civilians escalated to extraordinary levels. Definitive studies of this violence and its agents are now available in the significant publications by the Americas Watch

1. Nonetheless, two of the works under review here provide succinct but sound syntheses that teachers might find useful for instructional purposes. Ralph Lee Woodward's *El Salvador*, part of Clio Press's World Bibliographical Series, opens with an excellent ten-page historical summary that begins with indigenous settlement and concludes with the last days of José Napoleón Duarte's presidency in 1988. *El Salvador's Decade of Terror* also begins with a historical overview, this one focusing on the period following World War II. These sixteen pages cover much territory, not just descriptively but also by way of explanation.

Committee and the United Nations–sponsored Commission on the Truth for El Salvador.² Together these two reports provide evidence sufficient to establish beyond any doubt the culpability of the armed forces of El Salvador and their allied death squads for the overwhelming preponderance of the civilian casualties. These volumes also identify authoritatively the authors of many of the most notorious murders and massacres of this tragic period. In this regard, these publications make available an important body of evidence for evaluating past statements by Salvadoran and U.S. government officials.

El Salvador's Decade of Terror by Americas Watch Committee is organized topically. Following a valuable historical overview, the main part contains chapters on the right's assault on civil society, combat-related abuses by government forces, and abuses by the guerrilla forces of the left. Subsequent chapters address the administration of justice, impunity, refugees and the displaced, and the role of the United States. The volume also includes an in-depth chronology of human rights events in El Salvador for the period from 1979 to 1991. Throughout the presidency of Ronald Reagan, Americas Watch and his administration clashed over their differing conclusions regarding the Salvadoran armed forces' responsibility for the high number of civilian killings in the country, as recounted in this volume. The evidence compiled by the Commission on the Truth in *From Madness to Hope: The Twelve-Year War in El Salvador* amply vindicates the stance taken by Americas Watch in reinforcing its indictment: "In a country where thousands have been murdered or have disappeared for far less offense than speaking out against government abuses, the [U.S.] embassy's campaign to protect the Salvadoran government by defaming its critics was unconscionable" (p. 130).

The Commission on the Truth for El Salvador was mandated by the peace agreements to investigate "serious acts of violence that have occurred since 1980 and whose impact on society urgently demands that the public should know the truth" (p. 11). The peace negotiators and commissioners clearly hoped that this public truth-telling would serve the cause of justice and foster reconciliation and peaceful reconstruction. A panel of three distinguished commissioners was assembled along with an international team of investigators.³ In the brief six months of its mandate, the commission investigated thousands of complaints, following both an "open-door" policy for hearing testimony and a "closed-

2. The main body of the commission's report is available in both English and Spanish. Nine annexes that provide documentation for the main report were also published, but only in Spanish. They can be consulted in the United Nations' Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York City.

3. The three members selected were Belisario Betancur, chair and former president of Colombia; Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, former foreign minister of Venezuela; and Thomas Buergenthal, former president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

door" policy for protecting confidentiality. Numerous other sources of information were also examined.

The resulting report is organized topically but unlike *Decade of Terror*, it focuses more completely on individual cases. *From Madness to Hope* examines and condemns FMLN violence against opponents but devotes more attention to violence from the other side, not surprising given that 85 percent of those testifying before the commission identified the agent of the violence as the state or death squads, with almost 60 percent of all complaints directed against armed forces personnel (p. 43). This type of violence was separated into death-squad assassinations, massacres of peasants by the armed forces, and violence against opponents by agents of the state. A number of cases were examined in each of the four categories, with each section opened by a case selected as illustrative: the summary execution of mayors by the FMLN,⁴ the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, the murders of the Jesuit priests in 1989, and the massacre at El Mozote in 1981. These four cases are also examined in *El Salvador's Decade of Terror*.

The commission remained consistent in its commitment to international law on human rights, as evidenced by its treatment of the FMLN campaign between 1985 and 1988 to murder mayors whom it considered to be working with the counterinsurgency effort. The FMLN justified this policy by claiming that the mayors' activities abetted military repression of the civilian population, making the mayors legitimate military targets. The commission rejected this argument, upholding the principle that although belligerents may punish individuals in areas under their control, they are obligated to observe the basic elements of due process. There is no evidence that a proper trial was held prior to executing any of the mayors. In addition, the commission established that this campaign, although approved by the FMLN's Comando General, was carried out by the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP). Thus the leader of the ERP, Joaquín Villalobos, bears special responsibility for these deaths, a finding that disqualified him for public office under the peace agreements.

The assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero played a tragically critical role in polarizing Salvadoran society. Julian Filochowski's *Archbishop Romero Ten Years On* is another of the many testimonials to his importance in his lifetime and as a martyr. This brief pamphlet prints a lecture given on the tenth anniversary of Romero's death by one who knew him through several years of service in Central America with the Catholic Institute for International Relations of Great Britain. Characterizing Romero as "the voice of the voiceless," Filochowski finds in him

4. Both publications also discuss other extrajudicial executions by the FMLN, such as the Zona Rosa killings in 1985. In addition, the Americas Watch volume also examines the use of land mines and forced recruitment by the guerrillas.

“a patron saint for the whole justice and peace enterprise of the post-Vatican II church” (p. 2).⁵

Positive identification of the murderers of figures and forces like Archbishop Romero and the Jesuit priests is a matter of supreme importance. The Commission on the Truth for El Salvador does not mince words: “There is full evidence that . . . former Major Roberto D’Aubuisson gave the order to assassinate the Archbishop and gave precise instructions to members of his security service, acting as a ‘death squad,’ to organize and supervise the assassination” (p. 131). Various individuals involved in executing this assassination order are named. The commission also faults the Salvadoran Supreme Court for preventing the extradition of a key figure in the case.⁶ Americas Watch’s *El Salvador’s Decade of Terror* had already published a more detailed discussion of the case and the suspects, an account substantiated in its most important details by the commission’s findings. Concerning the murders of the six Jesuit priests, their cook, and her daughter in 1989, *From Madness to Hope* presents the more complete account of the two. Again, the commission expresses its conclusions directly: the order for the killings came from the top of the military command, and then the military pulled together to cover up the responsibility of the top leadership (p. 53).⁷

Throughout the war, the Salvadoran military was accused of massacring noncombatant peasants. Perhaps the most important of these instances is that of El Mozote, not only because of the number of victims but also because of strong denials issued by the Salvadoran and U.S. governments that a massacre had occurred and their efforts to undermine the credibility of the journalists who first reported the massacre. Crucial to the commission’s conclusions was the exhumation by an international team of experts of the human remains in a building next to the church in El Mozote. They identified the skeletal remains of 131 children, whose average age was about six years old (p. 118).⁸

Together, *From Madness to Hope* and *El Salvador’s Decade of Terror* vividly remind readers of the terrible human toll of the Salvadoran violence—from peasants and laborers to teachers and party activists, from mayors and children to nuns and priests. Together, these two accounts clearly document that the primary source of violence was the “intransigent opposition of the military to the rule of law” (*El Salvador’s*

5. Filochowski means “saint” literally; both he and the Catholic Institute for International Relations have advocated beatification of Romero.

6. The president of the Supreme Court is cited again for his interference in the investigation of the El Mozote massacre (p. 120).

7. For its first conclusion, the commission found “substantial evidence” (meaning “very solid evidence”); for the second, the evidence was “sufficient” (meaning “more evidence to support the commission’s finding than to contradict it”). For details, see p. 24.

8. The reports of the forensic investigation, as well as a photographic report, are available in the first volume of the annexes to the commission’s report.

Decade of Terror, p. 81). Accordingly, they demonstrate that “the unre-served, unconditional subordination of the military authorities to civilian authority” is critical to a democratic and peaceful future for El Salvador (*From Madness to Hope*, p. 14).

Joe Fish and Cristina Sganga’s *El Salvador: Testament of Terror* also addresses the violence and its consequences, but the purposes and value of this study differ substantially from the two previous works. Fish and Sganga have written a short volume that claims neither theoretical nor empirical objectives. Based on their travels to El Salvador and interviews with “Salvadoreans of all ages and from every class,” their explicit purpose is to portray “the effect of the war on those who live it,” to allow them “to tell their story from their own point of view” (p. 30). The authors depict the human consequences of the war well via many poignant testimonies along with numerous photographs, the primary strength of their book. Fish and Sganga focus on the countryside and the impact of the counterinsurgency campaign on noncombatants living in conflicted areas. They describe a “deliberate and systematic policy of depopulation being carried out in the mountains and villages of El Salvador in violation of international law” (p. 69).

One expects to find clear partisan sympathies in a work like *El Salvador: Testament of Terror*. Unfortunately, however, partisanship often leads to accepting assumptions based on wishful thinking rather than on evidence. Throughout this book, the conflict is presented as one between “the people” and the right-wing government. “The people” are presented without differentiation, seemingly monolithic in their support for “the revolutionary impetus” (p. 90). The account discusses events through 1986, with nothing in its analysis foreshadowing ARENA’s legislative victories in 1988 and capture of the presidency in 1989. Still, *El Salvador: Testament of Terror* has its insights. For example, when Fish and Sganga interviewed a priest working with those displaced from the countryside to urban areas, he spoke eloquently of “a whole generation . . . growing up having lost their traditional way of life; living in this situation of overcrowding, poverty and misery, this generation will find it very difficult to adapt to the life of the city—or rather to the life of these shanty-towns. And having lost their traditional values, these young people are not going to want to return to their places of origin, because they no longer know how to live there” (p. 85).

By the mid-1980s, a million and a half of all five million Salvadorans had been forced from their homes by the war. Of these, about a third had been displaced internally and two-thirds had fled the county, according to *Places of Origin: The Repopulation of Rural El Salvador* (based on data from the Universidad Centroamericana, p. 19). Internal refugees sought safety in the larger cities, especially San Salvador; others escaped across the border to refugee camps in Honduras or made long journeys to

Mexico or perhaps all the way to the United States. Although some of the displaced would not want to return to the countryside, as the priest pointed out, many others longed to return home and grew increasingly impatient as the war dragged on with no resolution in sight.

In *Places of Origin: The Repopulation of Rural El Salvador*, Beatrice Edwards and Gretta Tovar Siebentritt compare case studies of three types of repopulation projects developed in the country after 1985: projects directed by the government, those sponsored by nongovernmental organizations, and those generated from the grass roots. Coming from the international nongovernmental organization sector, Edwards and Siebentritt draw on interviews they conducted in El Salvador and some field observations. Their account offers useful descriptions of their cases (each one located in the department of Cuscatlán), but the work is weak as a comparative study. It also suffers from insufficient longitudinal data: although the book was published in 1991, the case material largely ends in 1987, early in the repopulation process.

The site of Edwards and Siebentritt's brief case study of a government-sponsored repopulation effort was Ichanqueso. Populated by some two hundred families before the war, about half that number had returned in late 1986 and early 1987. During a visit in July 1987, the authors found no grassroots leadership and little effort by authorities in that direction. The reasons for this are clear to the authors: "Counterinsurgency strategists . . . cannot allow project beneficiaries independently to organize because they would then face the consequences of true community development: a loss of control over the movement, expression, and sympathies of the people" (p. 80). In their view, the government project was conceived as a means of instituting control, and thus the repopulation effort was to be tightly controlled from the top down (p. 67).

Edwards and Siebentritt give greater attention to the repopulation of Tenancingo, a town of about ten thousand made famous when it was devastated in 1983 by military aerial bombardment. Repopulation was initiated by the residents themselves by enlisting the assistance of FUNDASAL, a progressive community development foundation backed by international funding. Small groups of residents began returning in early 1986 with technical and financial support from the foundation. The authors describe FUNDASAL as intending self-determination for the community but invariably acting in a paternalistic fashion. As a consequence, community cohesion and leadership development suffered. These unfortunate results of FUNDASAL's paternalism are considered by Edwards and Siebentritt as the primary reasons for an ARENA mayor being elected early in 1988 and increasing social tensions in the town (pp. 41–45). This argument, however, is incompletely documented.

The final case study was made at Hacienda El Barillo in the foothills of the volcano Guazapa. Unlike the other two cases, El Barillo was repopulated through a grassroots effort. Interviews conducted in 1987 (about a year after the repopulation effort began) found a cohesive and self-determining community that was much more concerned with social justice than the other two. Critical to the success of this effort was a nongovernmental organization, but unlike FUNDASAL, the Coordinador Nacional de Repoblación (CNR) had been formed by the displaced themselves. This model is the one explicitly preferred by Edwards and Siebentritt not just because it was more successful as a community-development project but also because it “is a self-mobilized popular movement that threatens traditional structures of power and domination” (p. 80).

Although readers might agree that CNR’s efforts at El Barillo provide the superior normative model, its applicability to other situations is not clear. El Barillo was a cooperative farm prior to the war, one of the few beneficiaries of the limited reforms of the administration of Colonel Arturo Armando Molina (1972–1977). El Barillo’s repopulation attracted substantial international attention that brought not only financial support but also some measure of security from the armed forces, as Edwards and Siebentritt acknowledge. In contrast, the inhabitants of Ichanqueso were largely landless before the war, while Tenancingo was much larger than both and highly stratified. Edwards and Siebentritt place the blame for the limited success in Tenancingo on the organizational approach of FUNDASAL, but it seems more likely to me that the causes lie deeper. Altering structures of leadership, power, and wealth successfully is difficult even in peacetime. The idea that it could be accomplished in an unprotected community in the midst of a civil war in which the armed forces were killing community developers with impunity strikes me as impossible. Few communities would have the ingredients vital to El Barillo’s success: preexisting community cohesion, financial backing, and protection from the armed forces.

In the early years of the civil war, thousands of Salvadorans fled to Honduras and were eventually housed in large refugee camps. As the years passed and the conflict continued, many decided that they preferred the risks of returning home to remaining in the severely overcrowded camps. The first significant repatriation occurred in October 1987, when more than four thousand refugees returned home from the Mesa Grande camp. The difficulties involved in winning the reluctant consent of Salvadoran authorities and in making the trip are recounted in the last part of *Places of Origin* as well as in *Going Home, Building Peace in El Salvador: The Story of Repatriation*. Neither work covers the difficulties encountered in rebuilding the refugees’ homes and communities after they returned.

Such an analysis lies far outside the purpose of *Going Home*. This short work, edited by Vic Compher and Betsy Morgan, is a composite of brief testimonies interspersed with some background material and many excellent photographs. Some testimonies come from the refugees themselves but more are provided by the North Americans and Western Europeans who accompanied the refugees on the risky trip back to El Salvador. This makeup is unfortunate in terms of the utility of the volume. With more accounts from the refugees themselves about why they fled from their homes, the perils of their flight, life in the refugees camps, and why they were willing to undertake the risks of returning home, *Going Home* could have been a much more useful book that would have appealed to a much larger audience.

The Comandante Speaks is the memoirs of Napoleón Romero García. Known as Miguel Castellanos, he was one of the top leaders of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL), a constituent organization of the FMLN. Arrested by the national guard in April 1985, he decided within a few days to collaborate with the authorities. Following his release, he worked with moderate political forces as the highest-ranking defector from the FMLN.⁹ The book is based on three interviews conducted with Castellanos (in 1985, 1987, and early 1989) that are woven together thematically. Given that at least one interview was facilitated by the U.S. Embassy and the preface written by the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, some caution in reading the book would seem prudent, especially in view of some of the questionable assertions that Castellanos makes about actors outside the FMLN. His testimony about conflicts within the FMLN, however, fits with what is already known and appears to be straightforward. The result is an interesting portrayal of tensions within the FMLN over strategy and tactics.

Castellanos was recruited by the FPL in 1975 to organize students at the Universidad Nacional, where he had enrolled in 1973. Assigned in 1977 to clandestine work with popular organizations, he was elected to the central committee of the FMLN in 1980, and by the following year had risen (according to his account) to sixth or seventh in the command structure. From this vantage point, Castellanos addresses a number of issues that have been controversial throughout the Salvadoran conflict. All are important topics for further research in order to deepen understanding of the Salvadoran story and also improve social scientific knowledge of revolutionary situations and processes.

A key issue is the roles played by Cuba and Nicaragua in support-

9. Castellanos was assassinated by the FMLN in February 1989 in an act of "revolutionary justice." The FMLN justified his murder as a legitimate execution of a traitor whose information to the government contributed to repression of the FMLN. The Commission on the Truth for El Salvador's conclusion on this case is concise: "international humanitarian law does not permit the execution of civilians without a proper trial" (p. 163).

ing the Salvadoran revolutionaries. The more general theoretical question is, what are the conditions necessary for a viable revolutionary challenge to the state? If the coercive capacity of the state is weak, then external assistance for challengers might not be necessary. Conversely, if the armed forces remain cohesive, penetrate the national territory, and have international backing, then the importance of substantial and stable international support for the revolutionary forces would become more critical. Castellanos claims that when Fidel Castro parented the unity of the FMLN, he promised that sufficient arms would be provided: "The Cubans became the managers, and Nicaragua the warehouse and the bridge" (p. 25). Castellanos estimates that by 1983, about 60 percent of the arms were being provided internationally, usually coming over water from Nicaragua or in air drops (pp. 36–38). But dependence has its drawbacks. As the Reagan administration made its threat to the Nicaraguan Revolution credible via escalating pressures culminating in war, the Sandinistas understandably placed priority on preserving their gains and at times cut back on arms delivery to El Salvador. Castellanos perceived Castro too as more committed to protecting Nicaragua than to advancing the Salvadoran Revolution, an attitude that made international support unpredictable, unlike the abundant support of the United States for the Salvadoran government (pp. 82, 110).

Paralleling the issue of external support for revolutionary movements is that of the organization of popular forces: to what extent does constructing assertive and long-lasting popular organizations require the organizational expertise and commitment of outside agents? Also, are some types of organizers more successful than others, for example, party activists, religious leaders, or revolutionary front organizers? On this subject, Castellanos presumably had much experience that he could have related. While a student organizer in the mid-1970s, Castellanos succeeded in forming UR-19, in keeping with the FPL's desire to establish mass organizations that were not pacifistic but had "combative spirit so that they could advance and incorporate themselves in the armed struggle" (p. 10). Yet *The Comandante Speaks* is particularly disappointing on this topic. Castellanos's comments are few and scattered. While tantalizing, some of his remarks are so inaccurate that they cast doubt on the reliability of his other observations. For example, his claim that Archbishop Romero supported the FMLN (p. 117) weakens the credibility of his assertions concerning the role of the FLP in organizing both the Bloque Popular Revolucionario (BPR) and the Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas (CRM).

What feels more solid is the discussion by Castellanos of tensions within the FLP and the FMLN. The problem stemmed partly from ambition and dominance. Five revolutionary organizations were brought into the FMLN, but complete integration was never achieved because "each

organization wants to be dominant" and "no one wants to be told what to do by another" (p. 28). Reinforcing these rivalries were acute differences in strategy and tactics. Here Castellanos remains true to the FPL perspective in sharply criticizing the ERP and its leader Joaquín Villalobos, who he claims never won the full confidence of Castro either. According to Castellanos, the FMLN was plagued by an insurrectionist mentality that undermined building the enduring and revolutionary mass base necessary for a prolonged war. The FPL favored neither the "final offensive" of January 1981 nor the call for insurrection again at the time of the 1982 elections. Yet the Cubans and the Sandinistas were "possessed by a triumphal euphoria" that reinforced the "short-term mentality" of the ERP, the Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC), and the Resistencia Nacional (RN), a mind-set that was "congenial to their political-ideological development." After 1982, the Cubans and Sandinistas finally corrected their approach and began working with each organization to change strategy, although no collective evaluation of past mistakes was ever undertaken (pp. 35–42).

Disagreements over relations with the other revolutionary organizations also led to serious tensions within the FLP and between its two top leaders. These disagreements eventually led to the murder of Ana María (Mélida Amaya Montes) and the suicide of Marcial (Salvador Cayetano Carpio). Castellanos devotes substantial attention to these disputes, including their implications for relations with the Cubans, Sandinistas, and Vietnamese. In terms of his own history, the most important ramification was the role the disputes and deaths played in his decision to defect from the revolutionary movement. Because Ana María and Marcial had been surrogate parents to Castellanos, these events disenchanted him greatly. Swayed also by the democratization occurring in El Salvador in the mid-1980s and the lack of individual freedom that he found in his travels to Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and Cuba, Napoleón Romero García renounced violence and began working for what he envisioned as peaceful reconciliation (pp. xi, 110).

A different view of the relative wisdom of the revolutionary organizations is provided by Mario Lungo Uclés in *El Salvador en los 80: contrainsurgencia y revolución*. The scope of this work is much broader than its treatment of the FMLN, but breadth is its most valuable asset. The study is divided into four discrete parts, with the first and last dealing with the FMLN. The two middle sections summarize some of the economic changes of the 1980s and the evolution of the party system leading to ARENA victories in the late 1980s. The first section concentrates on some of the major strategic issues of the early 1980s, while the final section discusses the origins of the revolutionary movements and then skips to some of the issues they faced in the late 1980s. The viewpoint is definitely that of an optimistic partisan of the FMLN: the masses

are assumed to be adherents of the revolutionary political option (p. 184). In discussing the FMLN's constituent forces, Lungo Uclés is partisan as well: he cites ERP's Villalobos twenty-seven times, other comandantes four and five times, but the FLP leaders not at all.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of *El Salvador en los 80* is the first section, especially Lungo Uclés's discussion of the insurreccional strategy. Here he highlights the conditions in El Salvador that mitigated against a prolonged war strategy and the converse advantages of seizing insurreccional opportunities. He performs some historical reconstruction, however, by ignoring the "final" aspect of the January 1981 offensive when arguing for the advantages of a multiple insurreccional approach over time. *El Salvador en los 80* ends with the statement that the November 1989 general offensive proved that the FMLN was stronger than it had been in the 1981 offensive. The implicit thrust of the book is the growing strength of the FMLN challenge to the status quo, with the explicit emphasis being that the Salvadoran conflict could end only with the victory or the defeat of the revolutionary forces (e.g., p. 15).

Yet the prolonged war in El Salvador ended neither with victory nor with defeat but with a negotiated settlement between the stalemated belligerents. *Dialogue and Armed Conflict: Negotiating the Civil War in El Salvador* was published early in the peace process but contains some information useful for understanding this remarkable occurrence. Rioridan Roett and Frank Smyth provide short descriptions of the major parties to the conflict, their negotiating stances, and the difficulties through 1987 of advancing the beginning made at La Palma in 1984. The current utility of the volume is limited, however, not only by its brevity and datedness but also by its purpose. *Dialogue and Armed Conflict* was produced as an instructional module in a series of case studies on the process of diplomatic negotiation. The module presents a series of several pages of information and then invites students to simulate the roles of the parties to the conflict. Although I have found simulations an excellent instructional approach, this module presents so little information on the Salvadoran case per se that it would be difficult for students to approximate the Salvadoran situation in a meaningful fashion unless the volume were supplemented with more in-depth materials.

Democratic Transitions in Central America and Panama, a pamphlet published by the World Peace Foundation, abstracts the forward and concluding chapter of an edited volume by the same name. The full volume consists of opposing pairs of chapters on Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, with the Salvadoran chapters written by businessman Roberto Murray Meza and by progressive politician Rubén Zamora. Marc Lindenberg's conclusion identifies three patterns of transitions underway in Central America: the first is exemplified by Costa Rica; the second by El Salvador, Panama, and Nicaragua; and the third by

Honduras and Guatemala. For the third pattern, the present might be nothing more than continuation of the old cycle of military and civil alterations of power. The Panamanian, Salvadoran, and Nicaraguan cases, in contrast, represent the possibility of "new beginnings."

New structures of governance are emerging in El Salvador through a negotiated settlement with broad political support.¹⁰ Continuation of this process represents the hope for a true transition away from the authoritarianism and violence of the past and toward an institutionalized political democracy. Clearly, substantial barriers confront the economic and political reforms essential for a successful transition, but these difficulties are addressed only briefly. The pamphlet concludes with suggested policies for consolidating the transition in El Salvador and the other countries. The reforms are organized under the following headings: institutional context; civil society and civic organizations; political society and political parties; new legislatures, executive staffs, and the judiciary; and ministries and government programs. The pamphlet is far too brief, however, to provide any guidance on how to engineer the acceptance of such reforms in a society as poor and polarized as El Salvador. Whether Salvadorans will be able to take the next steps toward building a more just and lawful society, as well as the lessons that the experience has to teach, remains for the next set of publications to explain.

Ralph Lee Woodward's bibliography, *El Salvador*, provides the opportunity to assess the present state of scholarship on the country. Woodward's volume covers the entire terrain, from architecture and the arts to flora and fauna and on to transportation and travelers' accounts. Each item is annotated descriptively and often qualitatively in evaluations with which I always found myself in agreement. The bibliography covers English and Spanish books as well as some of the relevant periodical literature. *El Salvador* does not claim to be comprehensive but rather to cover what is significant. Yet I had to search a long time before I could find something that was left out.¹¹ For the reader uncertain of what is most significant, Woodward's introductory essay points to the most valuable books in each area. Thus a new student of El Salvador who reads only English could quickly emerge well informed by following Woodward's advice to start with classics by David Browning,¹² Thomas Ander-

10. None of the books and pamphlets included in this review cover the culmination of the Salvadoran peace process. Useful summaries of the key events can be found in essays by Alvaro de Soto (the United Nation's key negotiator for Central America) and by Gary Bland in *Is There a Transition to Democracy in El Salvador?*, edited by Joseph S. Tulchin (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

11. Missing is Raymond Bonner's informative *Weakness and Deceit: U.S. Policy and El Salvador* (New York: Times Books, 1984), while the book of his colleague Tom Buckley receives an unfavorable annotation.

12. David G. Browning, *El Salvador: Landscape and Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

son,¹³ William Durham,¹⁴ and James Dunkerley.¹⁵ For those who read Spanish, I would add Oscar Morales Velado et al. to this list.¹⁶

But all these works are getting on in age and are being dated further by the fast pace of events in El Salvador. What I hope to find published in the near future are three classics-to-be. First, part of what makes Browning's and Durham's studies so valuable is how effectively they demonstrate the relationship between sociopolitical conflict in El Salvador and patterns of land use. After the dislocations of years of warfare and some reform, we now need a work that extends this analysis up to the present. Second, vital to the Salvadoran story of the past two decades has been the mobilization of a vital social-movement sector that persistently reasserted itself whenever the killing of its leaders slackened. A theoretically sophisticated analysis of this subject would greatly enrich understanding of El Salvador and would probably become an important contribution to the social-movement literature as well. Third, we need a new political history for the last thirty years or so that demonstrates for this longer period the detailed knowledge and insight displayed in Enrique Baloyra's *El Salvador in Transition* on the first part of this period.¹⁷ And when I dream, I imagine one book (admittedly a long one) that does it all.

13. Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).

14. William H. Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America: Ecological Origins of the Soccer War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1979).

15. James Dunkerley, *The Long War: Dictatorship and Revolution in El Salvador* (London: Verso, 1982, 1985).

16. Oscar A. Morales Velado et al., *La resistencia no violenta ante los regímenes salvadoreños que han utilizado el terror institucionalizado en el período 1972–1987* (San Salvador: Universidad Centroamericana, 1988).

17. Enrique Baloyra, *Salvador in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).