

Castro unleashes El Salvador war

by Mark Sonnenblick

Fidel Castro launched the Salvadoran terrorists' "final offensive" Nov. 11, in which at least 1,300 people perished. Castro and the leaders of the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) knew they lacked the military strength to defeat the Salvadoran army. Their intent was, as with the Vietnam Tet offensive in 1968, to demoralize the enemy to the point that its Henry Kissingers surrender at the conference table, what had been won on the battlefield.

The aging Cuban dictator is again wielding his fire-brand, as best he can, in Ibero-America, to prove that "imperialism" can be defeated not through Gorbachov's propitiation but through straight-out confrontation. The flare-up in El Salvador blows a big hole in promises made by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze during his Wyoming talks with Secretary of State James Baker that the Soviets would cool out their surrogates in Central America, particularly in El Salvador.

After those talks, Shevardnadze flew to Managua, Nicaragua, and proclaimed that from now on, the Soviets and the United States would jointly enforce a "Pax Americana" in the hemisphere. Observers noted that the State Department and official Washington in general said not a word to refute the Soviet claim to have equal imperial rights over the Americas. That silence convinced the Soviets that by bandying promises of "enforcing the peace," they could bludgeon the United States into abandoning what had long been considered its most vital security interests.

A few weeks later, Sandinista honcho Daniel Ortega gave Bush a big slap in the face at the Costa Rican summit. Ortega got himself into a photo conversing with Bush and the next day scrapped the nine-month cease-fire with the Contras in Nicaragua.

One, two, many Salvadors

The freeing of U.S. military and civilian hostages held in the San Salvador Sheraton Nov. 22 will hardly end dramatic and heart-wrenching violence in that country. But Castro's current strategy is to create "one, two, many Salvadors." On Oct. 28, reported by the Cuban press agency two weeks later, Castro offered his indictment of Gorbachov's *perestroika* and of the reforms being made in Eastern Europe in response to

the growing anti-Bolshevik movements there. Castro proclaimed, "Now there are two types of revolutionaries, two types of socialists, two types of Communists: the good and the bad, according to the imperialist definition. And we—what an honor—we are among the bad, because we are incorrigible, because we don't do what imperialism tells us to do, we don't flirt and play around with capitalism in this country."

Like a "baaaad dude" in a crumbling ghetto, Castro is looking for any fight he can get. On Cuban television Nov. 15, he showed his paternity for the FMLN "final offensive." He bragged, "It is an impressive offensive, a kind of lesson to imperialism, which is currently all euphoric and thinks it has the world at its feet." "Just look how these people can fight!"

Castro is now threatening to set fire not only to El Salvador, but also to the whole South American continent. On Nov. 18, the pro-Castro Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) terrorists assaulted the Salvadoran embassy in Lima, Peru. They tossed three home-made bombs onto embassy grounds and painted the wall with FMLN slogans. Although they praise only Mao, Peru's deadly Shining Path is already on full terrorist mobilization.

"Watch out for Fidel, warned a commentary in Bogotá's *El Tiempo*, Nov. 20. "When he is threatened he becomes more dangerous, since his defensive tactic . . . is to respond with a surprise and almost always excessive attack. Everything points to the FMLN's bloody offensive being part of Castro's own counterattack strategy, just like the abrupt breaking of the Nicaragua truce and the simultaneous resurgence of guerrilla actions in Colombia.

"These are pieces Castro usually moves around the Latin American chessboard," the paper states. "Castro knows very well that his only hope is that Gorbachov and his *perestroika* fail, and the hard-liners like Ligachov returns to power," *El Tiempo* explains. It warns Colombians to expect sharpened attacks from the terrorist National Liberation Army and the Popular Liberation Army and from the Communist Party's FARC, which, "following the Farabundo Martí model, speak of dialogue without ceasing to strengthen their military apparatus."

The final offensive

Before daybreak on Nov. 11, some 5-6,000 FMLN guerrillas simultaneously attacked 50 targets, including 20 in the capital, San Salvador. "Our mission is to win or die," one told the *New York Times*. One squad, accompanied by reporters, laid siege to the President's house for an hour. Another did the same to the president of the National Assembly. A U.S. Pentagon official later said the guerrillas had failed in all their initial objectives: to assassinate the Salvadoran President, vice president and other top officials, infiltrate general staff headquarters and kill military leaders, and knock out the government helicopters at Ilopango Air Base.

The FMLN threw everything they had into their desperate show. For six months they had stockpiled weapons in safe-

houses, a source close to the CIA told *EIR*. The FMLN anticipated a mass insurrection of a population ravaged by a decade of war and of International Monetary Fund starvation economics. But the masses, even members of labor and community groups heavily infiltrated by the guerrillas, voted with their feet and tried to get out of rebel-held neighborhoods.

The FMLN risked everything. They ordered into armed combat the entire secret logistical and propaganda structure on which any urban guerrilla depends. The "independent human rights groups," whose half-truths about "army-linked death squads" are cited uncritically by liberal U.S. politicians, unmasked themselves. As he toured the streets of the FMLN-held Zacamil neighborhood Nov. 15, Reuter's war correspondent recognized several such pacifist leaders brandishing M-16 assault rifles. Bernardo Rodríguez, the leader of a group known by its acronym PAEDCOES, which supposedly protects war refugees, told the reporter, "We held marches, we held strikes, and the government, instead of solving our problems, they massacred us. We decided that the only solution is to take up arms." Privately, however, he confessed that his group had longstanding ties to the FMLN terrorists.

Mari Ortíz, also with her M-16, is the leader of a group of the mothers of people who have disappeared known as FECMAFAM. She also admitted she had been with the FMLN underground. The Salvadoran authorities had long known that the safehouses run by such groups serve as the logistics and control centers for the assassins. FMLN squads would go out to murder officials or to blow out the capital's electric power lines and then disappear into a densely populated neighborhood. If the Army surrounded them, they would pretend to be civilian refugees. During the November offensive, they made the most cynical use of civilians to shield themselves from bombardment by the Army.

Again, during the Nov. 21 seizure of the Sheraton Hotel, the terrorists pinned down dozens of civilians, including the secretary general of the Organization of American States, for up to 10 hours and U.S. military advisers even longer. FMLN spokesman Salvador Sanabria, who for some reason is allowed to operate freely in Washington, D.C., told a press conference there that the guerrilla attack on the hotel was designed to bring the war into an area in which the government would not be able to counterattack. He claimed the hostages "are not hostages." He said they would be released as soon as the United States forced the Salvadoran government to let the International Red Cross ferry the encircled terrorists back to their bases.

The U.S. almost surrenders

Six Jesuit priests were murdered Nov. 15. With its liberation theology, the Jesuit order was the intellectual author of the brutal, decade-long guerrilla insurgency which has cost over 70,000 Salvadoran lives. They were frequently accused of aiding and abetting the terrorist Farabundo Martí Libera-

tion Front (FMLN).

That provoked a universal explosion of condemnation of the Salvadoran government, and almost resulted in the United States cutting off military aid. Assistant Secretary of State Bernard Aronson shared with the press his "gut reaction" that the perpetrators were right-wing death squads linked to President Alfredo Cristiani's party.

However, the Salvadoran government television and radio has repeatedly broadcast tapes of the martyred Central American University President Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., giving a speech a few months ago in which he distanced himself from the guerrillas and began cooperating with President Cristiani's efforts to put an end to the genocidal conflict. It should not be ruled out that the FMLN may have slaughtered the priests in order to trigger Washington's political outrage and economic sanctions against the government.

Bishop's murder ignored

The international uproar over these death contrasts sharply to the complete lack of concern when Cuban-run National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas assassinated Colombian Bishop Jesús Emilio Jaramillo Monsalve on Oct. 2. Although the ELN acknowledged it had killed the bishop, whom the terrorist group called "the traitor," most U.S. newspapers and television did not even mention the murder. No one in Washington talked of giving Colombia military aid to be used to bring the guerrillas to justice. No one in Washington talked of taking reprisals against Fidel Castro, the controller of the ELN.

Many members of Congress fell into Castro's El Salvador trap. Democrat John Kerry of Massachusetts demanded in the Senate Nov. 17, "not a dime of military aid should go to El Salvador" until its military were purged of people accused by the human rights groups of death squad activities. In an emotional outburst, Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) charged that "military forces are involved in acts of murder. President Cristiani . . . is unable to control right-wing death squads operating under the protection of U.S.-armed military forces."

The Bush administration, for once, held its ground, and Congress did not cut aid. But, it did introduce into the foreign aid bill more of the kind of restrictions which permitted the terrorists to maintain legal front-operations in the capital of a country they are ravaging.

Although the United States is spending \$1 million a day on El Salvador, Salvadoran strategists, such as the late Edgar Chacon, charge that the strings to the U.S. aid put the government forces in a no-win situation and prolong the bloodshed. Now, the FMLN is trying its best to provoke direct U.S. military involvement in a Central American Vietnam, under similar no-win conditions. President George Bush stated Nov. 21 that such intervention was being considered. The *New York Times* the next day reported special units were ready to jump in.