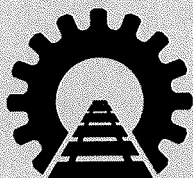


THE IMPACT
OF THE DEPRESSION
OF THE 1930'S
AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR
THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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THE IMPACT OF THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930's AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR
THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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POLITICAL RESPONSES TO THE ECONOMIC CRISES IN EL SALVADOR:
1930 AND 1980

I.

Contrary to the common image El Salvador on the eve of the Great Depression was neither a stagnant society nor was it a model for a liberal doctrine inspired state. For half a century, the expansion of coffee cultivation had been inducing profound social change in terms of land tenancy and social structure, as well as renewing the relationship with the world market (the market for indigo had been lost due to the competition from artificial dyes). By the beginning of the XX century, the biggest coffee growers and exporters were playing a dominant role in the economy and politics. They controlled the State. This state successfully performed the dual function of being an instrument for reshaping the economy and legitimizing the interests of the dominant class. The expanding export economy contributed to the economic and political marginalization of the newly dispossessed peasantry (coffee cultivation developed at the cost of communal lands) and the development of parallel economic activities in agriculture, small industry and services. This development became a differentiating factor, in the sense that the newly emerging economic groups sought a political position for themselves in the power structure. These groups had to look for allies and increasingly found them among the worker and artisan milieus. They even succeeded in attracting some opinion leaders and local caciques from the peasantry. While the bourgeois political groupings challenged the oligarchic monopoly of political power, aiming to build a new power bloc within the state, the exploited classes had reached the stage of incipient unionization. Also, by the mid-twenties the first communist groups were beginning to be active.

The process of realignment developed in circumstances unfavourable to the newly emerging forces. The main weakness was that the political articulation of their interests was taking place in a poorly structured political system. Political parties, in an European sense, were virtually nonexistent, albeit temporary substitutes for them did sometimes appear in the form of electoral campaign organizations; the electoral system was strictly controlled and manipulated by the dominant forces; differences within the oligarchy - sort of family quarrels - were frequently resolved by coups d'état; and the peasant masses periodically revolted against the system which had substituted private ownership for communal cultivation of the land (*ejido*) and relegated the majority to the insecure position of seasonal hired labour and/or poor tenant farmers.

For the new forces, however, the institutional underdevelopment sui generis of the Salvadorean political system was not devoid of a certain charm. The emerging bourgeois elite and the leftist oriented organizations (Communist Party included), while constituting a heterogeneous combination of forces, all saw the dominant class to be economically powerful but politically sterile and based on a rather small group of traditionalist families. The new forces were a dynamic factor and gave the impression of constituting a better organized bloc. The 1931 elections seemed to furnish proof of this, as the new forces' candidate won the presidency, while at the start of January, 1932, the municipal elections proved successful for a broad spectrum of antioligarchic tendencies (including trade unions, the Communist Party and many confraternities). It was at this point that the major confrontation ensued. To understand it fully, however, one first has to consider the changing trends in the economy.

The direct impact of the Great Depression was that typical for any export economy of the period: falling prices on the international coffee market, the decreasing value of exports and a falling capacity to import, an acute budget deficit and decreasing incomes for the coffee growers, insolvency among debtors (aging coffee planters), a worsening of the balance of payments, falling wages and salaries (including suspension of those financed from the budget), a worsening of the foreign exchange rate, unemployment, the accompanying effects of the agricultural crisis (particularly as regards the standard of living of the lower classes), etc. The overall effect of the crisis (as measured in real terms of the GDP) was not as deep as some descriptions might suggest. The future investigations on the national income will show, however, that the suffering was both real and profound, as we are convinced by the preliminary data obtained from the investigation in progress. Nevertheless, the GDP fell not so dramatically, typically for Latin America. Obviously, El Salvador suffered economically less than Cuba and - first of all - Chile, the worst-hit countries in Latin America.

Although each and every major social group in El Salvador had to respond to the crisis, the crisis itself was conceptualized in many ways and became intertwined with the other processes and developments that had to be dealt with. A survey of the available source material suggests that El Salvador's case is in many respects similar to those Latin American countries where the political and economic elites were very slow to grasp the true dimension and inevitable implications of the crisis.

For the contending bourgeois forces, the immediate and most striking effect of the crisis was the weakening of oligarchic domination and the undermining of their own economic position.

While the latter was a fact of life, the former involved an image of the oligarchy as seen by the contending forces. In any case, it seemed an opportune moment to exploit politically the uneasiness of the ruling few and make advances both politically and economically - the political projects of the new forces had always had economic underpinnings. The economic crisis became a factor in this process.

At the base of the social pyramid, the peasantry was now undergoing a process of pauperization, this process being accelerated by the crisis. The peasants had seen the immediate source of their misfortune in the changing system of land ownership. While aware of this, they personified the System. Their enemies were the local coffee growers, the local policemen, or officials in the nearby town. The Indian population had an even stronger motivation for resisting the prevailing social order. It is important to bear in mind here that the tradition of peasant resistance had been passed down from generation to generation in El Salvador. The worsening of living conditions caused by the crisis could only strengthen both these rebellious tendencies and the demands for land. Of course, the peasants were unable to conceptualize this worsening of their material conditions in terms of economic crisis; indeed, they identified both the old and new evils with the landowners and their coercive machinery. However, in 1930 an organization appeared among the peasantry that called these evils by new names. The newly formed Communist Party talked of capitalism, classes, exploitation, the class struggle, the state, etc. The party organized people from various walks of life: artisans, workers, dissident petit bourgeois, some students from well-to-do families, and peasants. The growing number of El Salvador's peasantry was already semi-proletarian.

The dominant oligarchy was also painfully hit by the crisis. The unity of this group had already been impaired by the political activities of the newly emerging forces. One faction favored incorporation of the new bourgeois groups and sharing political power with them. Another was more inclined to continue on the same course, opposed to any experimentation. Faced by the grave economic difficulties, the oligarchy became less open politically than it had been, organizing its defense around the state apparatus.

The period between March 1931 and March 1932 was a crucial one. The government created by Arturo Araujo, who was elected on behalf of the new forces, representing both the bourgeois and the popular, proved incapable of satisfying the political demands of these forces. This was partly because of incompetence and partly due to the impact of the economic crisis. The rupture between the governing elite and the masses was complete. Repressions against the peasantry were being resumed in an effort to maintain control over the crisis-stricken population.

Moreover, the victorious bourgeois camp was itself becoming divided, with the ruling group increasingly isolated from its former supporters. One reason for the disintegration of the new alliance was the President's refusal to adopt certain classic anticrisis policies, notably a devaluation of the *colón* and measures to prevent indiscriminate wage-cutting in agriculture, policies being suggested from quarters that had helped Araujo to get elected. When he then advocated inconvertibility and therefore imposed restrictions on the banks to stop the outflow of gold from the country, they retaliated by refusing credits to the coffee growers. These latter now found themselves facing very low prices on the international coffee market and a lack of funds to hire labour, with the result that many of them did not harvest their coffee. At the same time, since imports had fallen and the treasury was not receiving its usual injection of custom duties, state revenues dropped to such an extent that, despite a *de facto* suspension of servicing the foreign debt, the government was unable to pay out salaries to the civil and military machinery of the state. What is noteworthy in this connection is the consequence of the nonexistence of a central bank in the country. The three private banks had a monopoly on the emission of banknotes and the provision of credits. Does such a financial system negate the assertion put forward in this paper that the Salvadorean state was not based on liberal doctrines? The answer to this question is no, for as long as the state functioned as part of some sort of family enterprise controlled by the oligarchy there was no difficulty in achieving harmony within the organizationally divided economic system. The lack of a central bank and the relevant regulations testify rather to the fact that the State had no relative autonomy; indeed, it had been institutionally underdeveloped precisely because of its total submission to the interests of a single small and fairly homogeneous dominant class. It was only when political power was successfully contested by the new groups that this institutional underdevelopment made itself felt - combined with an insufficient understanding of the new trends in the world economy the state could offer only a limited framework for articulating a response to the economic crisis.

No convincing explanation for Araujo's politics has yet been offered. Araujo was in any case removed at the end of 1931 in a coup d'état. A thesis has been advanced that the coup was engineered by civilian and military circles close to Araujo's former supporters to save the original compromise between the new and old forces. This rescue operation, if it was such, came too late to be effective. The peasantry and the oligarchy were also forces to be reckoned with on the Salvadorean scene. The peasants rebelled, and the oligarchs reacted accordingly, using all the means at their disposal. In the face of this threat from the masses, power was assumed by the vicepresident, general Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, a soldier and politician closely involved in the coup who led the state machinery in crushing the antioligarchic revolt. In the space of a few weeks, beginning with the last decade of January, 1932, some 30 thousand peasants

and sympathizers were killed by the army and the death squads of the National Guard. Two birds were killed with one stone. Firstly, the social base for structural reform of any importance suffered physical and moral damage on an unprecedented scale; secondly, the political infrastructure of the broad masses and the Left was destroyed (including the Communist Party, which had been trying to coordinate various centres of the spontaneously maturing rebellion and channel the movement into a political uprising). Both of these things were to have significant long-term implications. The immediate effect was a reduction of the economic militancy of the masses, not an unimportant achievement for the dominant class in a time of depression.

However, the events that culminated in the coup, Hernández Martínez' takeover, and the suppression of the rebellion had two aspects of strategic importance. One can be formulated in the assertion that the long history of patronage and domination bore fruit, with the oligarchy - political debates and economic difficulties notwithstanding - finally being able to use the most important part of the state machinery to reaffirm the old order. The other is that the process in question helped to emancipate the state apparatus - from 1932 onwards, the link between economic domination and the running of the state ceased to be as direct and simple as in the old days of unquestionable oligarchic rule.

In the years 1932-1935 the Hernández Martínez government took a series of measures to develop the financial infrastructure of El Salvador and provide the state with new methods of controlling the popular masses; these measures stabilized the economic position of the dominant class - landowners, bankers and big merchants - and developed the institutional instruments of the state both as regards managing the economy and ensuring internal security.

As regards internal security, 12 legislative decrees were issued: strict control of the population's movements was introduced and identification procedures were made more effective; the provision of the Penal Code were amended to cover any activity even remotely related to the opposition; immigration was restricted on an openly racist and anti-leftist basis; the National Guard was strengthened; the jurisdiction of Courts Martial was extended to include civilians charged with rebellious and/or seditious activities, and the new regulations even provided for capital punishment in the case of suggesting to conspire against the government.

As far as the economy is concerned, these measures included 24 legislative decrees including the creation of the *Banco Central de Reserva*, the introduction of a debt moratorium, the establishment of extensive credit facilities, the creation of

the *Banco Hipotecario*, and the ratification of inconvertibility. Some measures, however, remained largely on paper, notably the first attempt to distribute some state land among landless peasants.

One interesting point about the problem under consideration is that in spite of the Salvadorean dependence on foreign markets, foreign influence was rather limited. A nationalistic (xenophobic) component in the politics was weak in comparison to what was typical of Latin America, albeit some people were critical about the imposition of the U.S. goods on the Salvadorean market or because of the troubles linked to the international discussion on the diplomatic recognition of the new government. Neither the foreign debt (small and suspended) nor a foreign direct investments (virtually nonexistent) nor the probability of a full-scale military intervention (very low) would generate xenophobic feelings.

It would be rather futile to classify the Salvadorean State as either a passive or an active one as far as its performance is concerned; as to the economic crisis both attitudes were present, in a consecutive order. The transformation was largely conditioned by the acute political conflict. One could possibly say, however, that the initial passiveness toward the crisis did contribute to sharpening of the political conflict, whereas the later adopted active attitude did strengthen economically the politically victorious forces.

It was rather a political conflict that contributed most to the process of institutionalization and autonomization of the State; it was the world economic crisis, however, that played a role of the catalyst in the political process. Hence the specific features of institutionalization and autonomization of the State in El Salvador. What had started as a political reaction to a political problem, acquired in the process a dimension of a political response to the economic crisis as well.

II.

El Salvador was doubly hit by the world economic crisis of the years 1979-1982 (preceded by the so-called oil crisis of 1974-1975). First, both demand and prices for El Salvador's traditional exports declined. (In 1974-1975 the smaller volume of exports was partly compensated for by increased prices for El Salvador's coffee, cotton and sugar.) Then, this external factor contributed to a decline of the rate of economic growth, which was almost immediately combined with the start of a political process that accelerated a slump in economic activity (the crisis of General Carlos Romero's dictatorship and his subsequent down fall on October 15, 1979).

In January 1980, the first junta resigned. Its members had included representatives of certain reform-oriented and Leftist groups united in the *Foro Popular*, established in September 1979. The second junta primarily represented the right wings of the army and Christian Democracy. From the moment of its accession to power, the economic and political crises - which quickly evolved into civil war - constituted one coherent syndrome. It became no longer possible - even theoretically - to distinguish between (political) effect and (socio-economic) cause. The civil war became the basic factor sustaining the economic crisis. Meanwhile, the crisis fuelled the war by reproducing its basic causes. This syndrome led to a particularly sharp decline in Salvadorean economic activity compared to other Central American countries of a similar economic structure.

But it should be added here that even before the outbreak of the full-scale civil war in 1980 the situation as far as GDP and living standards of the majority of population are concerned was not too rosy either. The Salvadorean GDP grew at a relatively fast rate primarily in the first half of the 1970s. However, in 1976, it decreased by 1.8 percent, in 1977 it increased sharply by 10.3 percent, while in 1978 it fell equally sharply down to 5.9 percent, in order to become negative (-1.6 percent) again in 1979. This means that in the period 1975-78 GDP increased by around 12 percent, while in the years 1972-75 it grew by over 20 percent. The worsening of the economic situation in the second half of the 1970s is thus quite obvious. This also involved substantial growth in instability, an important fact to be considered in searching for the socio-economic sources of social tensions in El Salvador. On the other hand the statistics on minimum real wages in 1971-1979 show that in the case of agricultural labourers the real wages they enjoyed in 1971 were never again repeated in the 1970s. In other sectors (industry, and trade and services) minimum real wages declined in 1975-1976, although in 1979 they were still higher than in 1971 (according to other estimates, industrial real wages declined below the 1968 level). And finally, the 1970s - and the second half of the decade in particular - were a period of rising inflation. Whereas in the years 1961-1970 the average annual increase in the consumer price index stood at 0.7 percent, in the period from 1971 to 1975 it amounted to 8.9 percent, and reached 13.2 percent in 1978, then 15.9 percent in 1979.

The recent crisis syndrome in El Salvador appeared in circumstances partly resembling those of the 1930s, especially as regards the role of the external factor (the crisis of the world economy) and, to a lesser extent, the dynamics of the social, economic and political processes within the country itself.

The significance of the external factor as the trigger of the economic and political crises seems obvious. Despite the fact that in the years 1950-1980 the Salvadorean economy achieved a certain degree of diversification and certain industries were developed, its overall dependence on traditional exports (and agriculture) has remained very strong. In 1960 the agricultural sector's contribution to GDP amounted to 30.8 percent, in 1978 - to 23.1 percent. In the same period the contribution of manufacturing increased by a mere 3.3 percentage points, from 14.5 percent to 17.8 percent. The tertiary sector displayed the fastest growth. On the other hand, the contribution of coffee, cotton and sugar to the total value of El Salvador's merchandise exports increased from 58.8 percent in the years 1970/74 to 7.3 percent in the years 1975/79. The index of "foreign trade sensitivity" (calculated as the relation between the value of merchandise foreign trade and GDP) amounted to 45.2 percent in 1960, and 54.4 percent in 1978. This is why it was extremely difficult to cushion the negative effects of the world crisis by policies designed to influence the domestic market (and demand). The analogies with the crisis of the 1930s are both clear and close.

However, the problem of the internal dynamics of Salvadorean society, which determine both the appearance and the shape of the present crisis, is something more complex. The problem cannot be fully explained, for example, by analogies between the accelerated social and economic polarization of the countryside in the 1930s and at present or the violent popular response to the economic policies of oligarchy and the State.

Such analogies, which imply a stagnant vision of Salvadorean society and its "traditionalism", in fact disregard the dynamics of social processes. The appearance of the present crisis and the political responses to it involve new phenomena, one source of these being the methods used to solve the crisis in the 1930s. Therefore, there are only indirect analogies between these two crises, and these must make provision for the mediatory role of history. It is only within this "cognitive perspective" that we can determine, for example, the context which defines the specific present-day response to the crisis - not a short-lived, spontaneous revolt of peasants and agricultural labourers, but a protracted civil war waged by organized social forces (the "state" and the "counter-state").

We have already pointed out that one of the consequences of the events of 1932 was the initiation of the process of the relative political and economic autonomization of the state apparatus. An offshoot of this phenomenon was the gradual "structuralization" of the political system in the decades that followed. Salvadorean political scientists write in this connection, for example, about the "moderate desarrollista military-bourgeois authoritarianism" of Presidents Osorio, Lemus

and Rivera (1950-1967) and about the "militarybureaucratic authoritarianism oriented towards structural reforms" which prevailed until the mid-1970s, when the autonomous political and economic activities of the state apparatus were the most fully developed. Leaving aside the question of whether these concepts are adequate or not, we have to admit the institutional development of the state and political system at that time. The rapid quantitative growth of the civilian state apparatus (in 1930 - 6,600 people, in 1956 - 30,000 people, and in 1979 - 60,000 people plus 27,000 people employed by state-run public utilities) has since the 1960s been accompanied by the appearance of political parties representing more than mere electoral machines (the only exception here is the Communist Party, which has operated, although with various degrees of effectiveness and intensity, since the 1930s). "State-parties" (this seems how we should define political organisms existing in symbiosis with the state apparatus), such as Maximiliano Hernandez's *Pro Patria*, Osorio and Lemus's PRUD or Rivera's PCN, met with increasingly strong competition, firstly from amorphous Leftist groups, then from José Napoleon Duarte's Christian Democrats (PDC) - who in 1972 elections formed a bloc, with the Communists, among others - and since the mid-1970s, from revolutionary left parties and organizations (guerilla groups, mass political organizations in the towns).

Until 1979, however, the internal dynamics of the process of institutional development of the political system and the state was not enough to transcend the limit market by the economic interests of the dominant rural bourgeoisie and the agricultural-industrial and commercial oligarchy. Even if such attempts were made, they soon ended in a fiasco and the political defeat of their sponsors. This was the case, for example, in 1976, when Parliament passed a bill proposed by the government of President Colonel Arturo A. Molina on a limited land reform, despite the objections of the National Association of Private Enterprises (ANEP). The idea of restricting the power of the oligarchy and agrarian bourgeoisie over a few percent of the country's farmland raised howls of protest from the representatives of "agrarian interests". As a result of threats and demonstrations by a short-lived extremist organization called the Front of Agriculturalists of the Eastern Region (FARO), which was politically controlled by ANEP, Parliament decided to reconsider the Association's position and *de facto* repealed the law it had passed only a few months earlier. In this open conflict, the "new-force" that was to be the non-oligarchic industrial and financial bourgeoisie came down on the side of the dominant interest groups.

This meant that the process of the political emancipation of the urban classes, including the class of industrial workers that had been emerging particularly since the end of the 1950s, was entangled in the structural conflict between the legitimizing functions of the state and the political system on the one hand,

and the basic economic interests of the dominant groups on the other. The latter set the limits to the autonomy of the state apparatus.

This conflict applied, above all, to social relations in the countryside. The reformist factions of the state and military bureaucracy, allied with part of the middle class and a narrow sector of the urban bourgeoisie, did not offer particularly sharp resistance to the neo-capitalist modernization of social relations in non-agricultural sectors. Such concessions as the right to form trade unions and to strike, the Labour Code, and national insurance, which were granted in the years 1950-1979, did not diminish the oligarchy's economic power, based on its control of the land, the processing of agricultural produce, and on foreign trade. This is why the status quo ante restored in agriculture in 1932 has continued. The possibility of negotiating or bargaining stopped at the boundaries of the coffee *fincas* or cotton plantations. This was all despite the fact that the largest planters, such as Alverez, De Sola, Dueñas or Wright, were also energetic modern industrialists and financiers who closely collaborated with modern foreign capital and appreciated the significance of such institutions as the Labour Code or trade unions. This, however, applied only to the towns. The big planters' only concession to the countryside involved their support for the para-police Nationalist Democratic Organization (ORDEN), created in 1966 among the rich peasants and directed by retired security officers, and their tolerance for the moderate peasant Salvadorean Communal Union (UCS), which was organized under the tutelage of the government and the U.S. AIFLD. (After October 15, 1979, the UCS underwent a radical evolution; as a result, many of its leaders and activists were killed by the army or right-wing terrorist organizations.)

The institutional development and "structuralization" of the political system, which only allowed certain new social groups in the towns to articulate and represent certain of their interests, and which, at the same time, prevented the major sections of the population from defending their interests, created a potentially explosive situation. This was aggravated in by the fact that changes in property relations in agriculture over the preceding twenty years, and critical tendencies in urban employment had contributed to the very rapid creation of a social basis for movements and organizations opposing the system. Another result of those tendencies was the gradual incorporation into the opposition movement of those unions or parties, which had originally been formed to implement the reformist project (for example, the Christian Federation of Salvadorean Peasants - FECCAS founded back in the 1960s with the help of the PDC and the Church; in 1977 its members took part in the first land invasion in 45 years).

Population density in El Salvador is the highest in Latin America; in 1981 there were 247 inhabitants per sq.km., with more than half the population living in the countryside. This points, among other things, to the almost complete closure of the internal economic frontier. In 1970, agricultural land occupied 77.8% of the country's total area (as against 22 % in Honduras, 30.2 % in Nicaragua and 54 % in Costa Rica). It is against this background that we should study the dramatically rapid process of the proletarianization and marginalization of the peasantry.

In the last two decades the expansion of export crops and the growth in the land concentration coefficient (0.85 in 1970) has led to the establishment of an extremely polarized socio-economic structure in the countryside, one that is also very close to the model of "pure" capitalism. In the years 1971-1975 alone, the proportion of agricultural labourers' families in the total number of rural families increased from 29.1% to 40.9%. If we also include families owning less than 1 hectare of land (*microfincas* or *milpas*), 31% of whose incomes are derived from wages, this index rises to 67.7% and 75% respectively. What is more, this groups' numerical growth did not slow down in the years that followed. 14 years earlier, in 1961, they had comprised only 53.4 percent of the rural population. In the 1970s, the degree of utilization of this labour did not go beyond 52%. Also, it should be stressed that a mere 25 of *milpa* holders were the formal owners of the land they cultivated. At the opposite end of this social structure in 1971 were 5.2% of all families, those who owned more than 10 hectares of agricultural land (in 1975 - 1.8%); 202 families owned as three times more land than that held by over 132,000 *milpa* owners. On the other hand, the group of independent peasant farmers and tenants working so-called sub-family farms (from 1 to 9.99 hectares in size), which had constituted 39 percent of the rural population in 1961, accounted for a mere 23.2 percent by 1975.

As a result of this accelerated proletarianization of the peasantry, part of the surplus labour was "expelled" to the towns. This wave of migration to the towns, combined with the high rate of national increase (over 3% per year) and the labour-saving character of modern industry, created a tremendous "informal sector" there. This primarily involved the slum population. Living standards in the slums differed only slightly from that of agricultural labourers or *milpa* holders.

Because of the crisis, this phenomenon of marginalization reached monstrous proportions. The rate of open unemployment alone (mainly urban) increased from 3.9% (?) of the economically active population in 1975 to 38.1% in 1982. The combined rate of unemployment and underemployment in the economy as a whole increased in that period from 42.5% to 89.9%. This acute

worsening of the situation represented the cumulative effect of long-term tendencies and a serious business slump resulting from the civil war and the world crisis. In the years 1978-1981, investments declined by 61.3%, while production of coffee, sugar and cotton fell by 20%, 36% and 40% respectively. At the same time, the degree of utilization of liquid funds at the private sector's disposal decreased from 87.7% in 1978, to 21.3% in 1980.

The coup d'état of October 15, 1979, carried out by the reformist *Juventud Militar* (Military Youth), was not just an ordinary military and political operation designed to settle internal conflicts within the dominant class. Simplifying matters somewhat, we can describe it as a dramatic attempt by the reformist wing of the army and state bureaucracy to abandon the model of the state based on its identification with the interests of the agricultural and exporting oligarchy (enforced under General Romero's rule). The aim of this was to preserve the (capitalist) foundations of the system as a whole. Competition from the Left had begun to grow in the second half of the 1970s, to really threaten these foundations by 1979. As the economic crisis deepened, especially in 1979, and General Romero's dictatorship grew more repressive, while the Sandinistas triumphed in Nicaragua and the local oligarchy firmly refused to introduce structural reforms, the threat of a popular revolt, whose effects would be incalculable, became no longer a mere battle cry of the popular organizations in the towns and the guerillas. To make the situation worse, unlike in 1932 - the memory of these events is still vivid on both sides of the barricade - the opposition on the Left enjoyed not only stable social support, but had also achieved a level of organizational development unprecedented in Salvadorean history. It was therefore impossible to eliminate the opposition swiftly, in one bloody military and police operation, repeating the "1932 model".

The first junta was a conglomerate of mutually exclusive political forces and tendencies. The military represented in it included the traditional "gorillas", pro-American modernizers, and supporters of the reformist *Juventud Militar*. Its civilian members mostly represented those political trends which opted for basic socio-economic reforms in the framework of capitalism and demanded curbs on the arbitrary practices of the army and security forces. A few weeks after the coup, the moderates and hardliners were already playing the leading role in the Permanent Council of the Armed Forces (COPEFA), formed on the initiative of young officers as a de facto guardian of the unity of the armed forces. The moderates' and hardliners' fear of any dialogue with the Left (the "extremists"), which was being suggested by the civilian *aberturistas*, transformed COPEFA into an instrument which enabled the army to preserve its full autonomy. This resulted in the gradual removal of the reformists, the blocking of any purges, and the continuation of the anti-leftist terror.

The junta did not gain the support of either the oligarchy (represented by the ANEP, among others) or the majority of the Left. (The Communist Party was a significant exception in this respect. The CP was represented in the junta by its front organization the National Democratic Union - UDN. However, it kept its guerilla troops - FAL - in reserve.) The oligarchy found the junta's programme of land reform, nationalization of the banks and foreign trade and purging of the army and the security forces dangerously revolutionary. At the same time, the Left doubted the programme's credibility, because the greater part of the army, police and security forces remained under the control of the "gorillas" or the anticommunist, pro-American modernizers. The non-Communist Left shared the opinion of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) and the Popular Revolutionary Forces (FPL) that what had actually taken place on October 15 was an *autogolpe* (preventive coup).

Its inability to act, COPEFA's obstructionism and the army and police attacks against striking workers and peasants forced the first junta to resign. The radical Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Communists who were members of it realized they had been too optimistic in assessing the strength of the reformist young officers. The same applied to their assessment of their chances of bringing about a permanent split in the ruling class and winning the most modern sector's support for the programme of reforms and dialogue with the mass organizations.

There is no doubt that as a result of the coup d'état the oligarchy lost its monopoly on the representation of the ruling class's interest. The oligarchy's economic power was also diminished. That is why it opted for the extreme Right in the years that followed. However, the remaining part of the ruling class, represented by the PDC's right wing and the pro-American military modernizers, came out in favor not of joint experiments with the Left, but of a programme of reforms and repressions. The second and the following juntas, dominated by the PDC and backed by the Latin American Christian Democrats (mainly the Venezuelans) and the U.S., set out to implement this programme.

The programme of reforms and repressions consolidated the polarization of social and political forces and triggered off a full-scale civil war. The Left responded to this programme with strikes, developing armed struggle and a closing of ranks. In the first half of 1980, coordinating structures were built at the level of mass political organizations (the Revolutionary Coordinative of the Masses - CRM) and of guerilla groups (the United Revolutionary Directorate - DRU; later transformed into the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front - FMLN). Also, in April of that same year, a joint political representation was appointed, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). Thus the "counter-state" had acquired its first institutional form.

However, the other side in the conflict also reinforced its position. A limited land reform and nationalizations proved in practice to be less subversive than the oligarchy had expected. This consolidated the PDC's position among the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class and the rich peasantry (U.S.'s support for PDC was also an important factor in this respect, and economically - decisive). Nevertheless, the extreme Right, represented mainly by the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), forced Duarte and PDC to adopt a role on the Right rather than in the Centre (*derechización* - "moving to the Right"). This consolidated a considerable part of the ruling class at the decisive moment when the "battle lines were drawn" in spring and summer of 1980. (For example, in June 1980, the National Federation of Small Enterprises of El Salvador - FENAPES, which was an FDR member, left that structure and joined the rightist Productive Alliance - AP.) Thus, the oligarchy prevented a repetition of the "Nicaraguan model" of revolution, which had involved the total political isolation of Somoza and his repressive apparatus, and therefore entailed cooperation between mass organizations and a major part of the bourgeoisie and the middle class. In El Salvador the Left has many more enemies than just one single Somoza. These Somozes, among both the civilians and the military, are legion.

III

Does this mean we are for a repetition of 1932? Yes, as regards the ruling class's ability, when under real and direct threat, to arrive at a high level of understanding of its interests as a whole. This assertion has to be qualified, however, in the sense that it is no longer as homogeneous as before, and so various responses to such a threat are possible depending of which group is going to have the upper hand in the intra-class rivalries. Furthermore, class alliances stand in the order of the day. In a way, we are witnessing the process in which some groups of middle strata or the upper middle strata are achieving what some fifty years ago the forces emerging then were unable to attain.

What was substantially changed is the political and organizational, and military quality of the adversary of the ruling class (oligarchy) and/or alliances. But again, the adversary is no longer so homogeneous; indeed, it is very heterogeneous nowadays. After all, it is a fact of life easy to note that somebody is voting for Duarte, and someone is joining the guerilla. The decisive factor, however, is the growing strength of a radical alternative to the present State. To the "counter-state" (its social base included) the Salvadorean political and economic system seems unreformable (in a reformist style) indeed. This radical alternative is becoming a revolutionary one, and the quality of the movement makes the repetition of a spontaneous revolt of 1932 rather improbable.

Whether another massacre a *la matanza de 1932* is improbable that is an entirely different question because the foreign factor plays a different and much more important role than in 1932. This factor is partly political in nature and it is the United States. That country's attitude may well play a key role in the solving of the Salvadorean class conflict.

Now, the world economic crisis, which is another side of the external factor, seems to play a similar function as in the thirties in that it is both a trigger of the internal political crisis and a dramatical phenomenon in economic terms. However, it is essential to emphasize that the economic factor should not be reduced to the impact of the world economic crisis alone. It is a structural economic crisis of the peripheral capitalism that makes the situation in El Salvador so complex and difficult, and the political responses to each and every economic crisis are of necessity the system-related ones.

Among those responses there is one that both in the 1930s and 1980s acquired a historical dimension and it is the tendency toward the autonomization of the State. In the 1930s, however, we saw various groups (of the same class) struggling for power and one particular class struggling for land; in the 1980s we are witnessing the phenomenon of all forces struggling for control over the State.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

1. Rate colón/dollar

1929	-	2.04
1930	-	2.07
1931	-	2.06
1932	-	2.54
1933	-	2.92
1934	-	3.50
1935	-	2.52
.....		
1970	-	2.50
1975	-	2.50
1982	-	2.50

Source: Data for 1929-1935 obtained from Marroquin (1977), p.132
 Data for 1970-1982 obtained from IMF, Balance of Payments Yearbook, various issues.

2. GDP per head, 1920-1982 (selected years)
(in 1950 dollars)

1920	110
1929	128
1939	128
1949	185
1959	192
1969	256
1979	289
1982	196

Source: Bulmer-Thomas (1983), p.276.

3. Rate of growth of GDP, 1920-1939, and 1954-1982
(rates expressed as geometric annual
averages at 1950 prices)

Year	Rate(%)
1920-24	4.3
1924-29	2.6
1929-34	-0.7
1934-39	3.3
1954-59	3.2
1959-64	7.2
1964-69	4.7
1969-74	4.9
1974-79	3.5
1979-82	-8.1

Source: Bulmer-Thomas, p.272.

4. Population structure in 1930 and mid-1970s
(%)

Category	1930	mid-1970s
Population	1.4 mln	4.0 mln
Men	48.6	49.6
Women	51.4	50.4
Urban	20.0	40.0
Rural	80.0	60.0
Indians	25.0	4.0
Mestizos	70.0	96.0
Whites	5.0	
Classes		
- "upper"	0.2	2.0
- "middle"	4.4	8.0
- "lower"	95.4	90.0
Property owners ^a	8.2	5.7

Sources: Data for 1930 obtained from Marroquín, p.115; data for the mid-1970s obtained from Statistical Abstract of Latin America 1972.

5. Public finances:
principal expenditures - 1870, 1920 - 1939
(%)

Year	General administration	Military	Culture, Education	Public debt service
1870	.	23.1	4.5	7.8
1900 - 1928/29	30.0	22.0	5.9	.
1929/30 - 1933/34	33.6	17.1	14.7	22.8
1934/35 - 1938/39	36.6	17.4	14.4	12.6

Sources: Data for 1870 are preliminary, the computation being based upon the archival research in progress; data for 1900 - 1939 obtained from Guidos Véjar, p.97.

6. Public finances: the budgetary receipts, 1928 - 1932

Year	1928=100	Principal items as percentage of the 1929 total	
1929	102	Import custom dues	54.5
1930	86	Beaverages tax	16.9
1931	69	Export custom dues	11.8
1932	50	Various charges	7.4

Sources: Data - approximate and/or rounded - obtained from Marroquín, p.127-128.

7. Export of coffee, 1922 -1935

Year	Volume (tons)	Value (1000 £/	Average price of 1 quintal 1925=100	% (rounded) of the total exports (value)
1922	43 079	28 574	70	88
1923	41 994	29 837	75	86
1924	48 809	45 438	98	93
1925	32 064	30 365	100	90
1926	50 626	46 720	97	95
1927	36 203	25 237	74	89
1928	53 109	45 428	90	93
1929 ¹	46 783	34 090	77	93
1930	58 621	23 914	42	88
1931	54 631	21 695	42	96
1932	39 655	12 867	34	93
1933	56 189	19 513	37	96
1934	49 866	22 824	48	95
1935	50 067	24 228	51	89

¹Main destinations of exports in 1929: Germany - 33.9%, U.S.A. - 17.8%, Holland - 10.3%.
Source and method: Calculated (and rounded) from data published by Guidos Véjar (1980), p.102. (based on a work by E.Richter).

8. Coffee: area under cultivation
and yield, 1921-1935, 1971

Year	Area (thousands of hectares)	Yields 1930=100
1921	57	n.d.
1924	81	n.d.
1930	94	100
1931	93	n.d.
1932	97	93
1933	95	93
1934	95	93
1935	n.d.	85
1971	147	136

Source and method: Data for area in 1921, 1924, 1931 and 1933 obtained from Guidos Véjar (1980), p.102 (based on a work by L.Zamosc). The remaining data for area obtained from Marroquín, p.130. and rounded. Yield calculated from data cited by Marroquín.

9. Land/Man Ratios*, 1930-1980
(in hectares)

1930	-	0.587
1945	-	0.824
1950	-	0.961
1960	-	0.928
1965	-	0.706
1970	-	0.663
1975	-	0.553
1980	-	0.558

*=Net arableland available for production of crops
for the home market (including subsistence) ;
Economically active population in agriculture

Source: Bulmer-Thomas, p.290.

10. Production of coffee, sugar and cotton, 1978-1982
(mln q.)

	1978/79	1979/80	1980/81	1981/82 ¹
Coffee	4.5	4.2	3.6	2.8
Sugar	6.0	3.9	3.8	3.0
Cotton ²	6.0	5.4	3.6	2.7

¹Estimates

²All types

Source: Camara de Comercio e Industria de El Salvador, "La realidad económica nacional de 1979 a 1981, y sus proyecciones para el año 1982", Estudios Centroamericanos, XXXVII (399:400), p.128.

11. Distribution of income, 1977
(per capita)

Monthly income (in colones)	No. of families	No. of persons	%
0.00 - 50.57	399 057	2 486 443	57.9
50.58 - 85.00	159 485	801 701	18.7
85.01 - 195.00	167 575	754 117	17.6
195.01 - 297.00	39 986	144 626	3.4
297.01 - 593.33	23 910	78 011	1.8
593.34 and more	8 193	24 023	0.6

Average monthly income = 125

Source: I.Martin-Baro, "Aspiraciones del pequeño burgués salvadoreño", Estudios Centroamericanos, XXXVI (394), p.780.

12. Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment, 1930, 1973-1982

Year	Economically Active population (EAP)	Unemployment	% of EAP	Employment	
				Full time	Underemployment
1930	.	.	(a)	.	.
1973	1 191 000	66 000	5.5	757 850	366 750
1974	1 230 000	50 000	4.7	745 792	426 608
1975	1 270 000	50 000	3.9	729 860	490 440
1976	1 313 000	50 000	3.8	707 480	555 720
1977	1 357 000	49 000	3.6	734 800	572 900
1978	1 403 000	51 000	3.6	653 540	698 960
1979	1 451 000	115 000	7.9	647 960	688 040
1980	1 500 000	293 000	19.5	379 700	827 300
1981	1 550 000	458 000	29.5	264 700	827 300 ¹
1982	1 597 000	609 501	38.1	160 960	827 300 ¹

(a) Estimates: men economically active - 40%, town population - 15%. Data obtained from Marroquin, pp.121-122.

¹ Information Lacking. Accepted the 1980 level.

Source: A.Montoya (1982), p.789.

13. Agrarian structure, 1971

Size of holdings (hectares)	No. of holdings	%	Total hectares	%	Forms of property/use				
					Property (hectares)	%	Others ¹ (hectares)	%	
Microfarms									
0 - 0.99	132 464	48.9	70 286.8	4.8	17 775.6	29.4	46 511.2	70.4	
Sub-family farms									
1 - 9.99	118 072	43.6	323 495.2	22.4	179 185.4	55.3	144 309.8	44.7	
Family farms									
10 - 49.99	16 150	5.9	342 429.7	23.5	293 374.3	85.6	49 055.4	14.4	
Multi-family farms (medium)									
50 - 199.99	3 341	1.3	306 220.0	21.1	267 234.9	87.2	38 985.1	12.8	
Multi-family farms (big)									
200 - 999.99	775		285 883.1						
1000 and more	63		123 579.5						
	838	0.3	409 426.6	28.2	347 824.3	84.9	61 638.3	15.1	
TOTAL	270 868	100.0	1451 894.3	100.0	1105 394.5	76.1	346 499.8	23.9	

¹Simple form of tenancy, property combined with tenancy, spontaneous settlements, etc.

Source: E.Colindres (1976), pp.466-467.

14. Structure of the agricultural GDP, 1966-1974 (%)

Year	Traditional Export Products				Internal Consumption Products				Agricultural GDP
	Coffee	Cotton	Sugar	Subtotal	Basic Grains	Cattle	Others	Subtotal	
1966	38.8	7.3	3.2	49.3	11.9	13.6	25.2	50.7	100.0
1968	36.4	7.0	3.5	46.9	15.4	14.0	22.9	53.1	100.0
1970	40.8	7.9	2.9	51.6	14.5	13.1	20.0	48.4	100.0
1972	37.3	11.3	4.5	53.4	9.7	14.0	22.9	46.6	100.0
1974	41.4	9.4	4.9	55.7	13.5	12.3	18.5	44.3	100.0
Source:			S.Ruiz		(1976),			p.159.	

15. Changes in the structure of the rural population, 1961-1975

Size of holdings (ha)	1961 ¹		1971 ¹		1975 ²	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Landless	30 471	11.8	112 108	29.1	166 922	40.9
Less than 1	107 054	41.6	132 907	34.6	130 838	34.1
1 - 1.99	48 501	18.8	59 842	15.6	62 385	15.3
2 - 4.99	37 743	14.7	44 002	11.4	24 400	6.0
5 - 9.99	14 001	5.5	15 730	4.1	7 545	1.9
More than 10	19 597	7.6	19 951	5.2	7 297	1.8
TOTAL	257 347	100.0	384 540	100.0	407 387	100.0

¹Basic units: agricultural holdings

²Basic units: households

Source: M. Burke (1976), p. 476.

16. Trade Unions, 1962-1976

Year	No. of unions	Membership
1962	78	25 917
1963	87	27 734
1964	70	20 922
1965	68	24 475
1966	80	24 126
1967	124	31 214
1968	104	34 573
1969	104	40 713
1970	113	44 150
1971	121	47 020
1972	124	49 886
1973	117	54 387
1974	122	62 999
1975	127	64 186
1976	127	64 986

Source: R.Menjivar (1979), pp.98,113.

17. Trade Unions in 1929

Type of the membership	no.of unions
Peasants	5
Workers and peasants	5
Workers and/or artisans	31*

*Of which, in San Salvador, 15

Source: Data obtained from
R.Guidos Véjar, p.89-92.

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