

Editorial

Free elections in El Salvador

Elections are scheduled to take place in strife-torn El Salvador on the 28th of this month, but unless the violence of competing death squads there is brought to an abrupt end, those elections will be a fraud and a prelude to total anarchy.

Both the left and the right are attempting to win major military victories in the few weeks before a Constituent Assembly will be elected. The elected Assembly will then name a new government junta. Both sides, however, have already stated that they will not be bound by the results of the vote.

The strategy spelled out by rebel guerrilla leader Fermín Cienfuegos in a recent interview is to "defeat" the elections by "making the war felt at all levels." Slogans promising "Death to All Who Vote" have started to appear on walls in some parts of El Salvador. The right-wing leader Robert O. D'Aubuisson has stated that his forces plan to launch an extermination campaign against their opposition after the vote, whether from within or outside the government. This troubling scenario is not helped by the fact that the Haig State Department has named a six-person commission to "observe" the polling. On the team are three experts from the Vietnam War period, including Richard Scammon and Howard Penniman, who monitored the 1967 elections in Vietnam, as well as Clark Kerr, one of the architects of the "strategic hamlets" approach, which only succeeded in exterminating many Vietnamese civilians. Another State Department-appointed observer is Father Theodore Hesburgh, a leading U.S. zero-growth advocate whose role in coordinating the pro-leftist "theology of liberation" networks in this region is well known.

The presence of the old Vietnam apparatus should tell us something. Although many Americans still refuse to face the facts, Vietnam was engineered as a "population war" whose main purpose was not to defend U.S. interests but to reduce population. Hesburgh's role was interesting; silent until the war was well underway, he emerged in 1969-70 as an internationally prominent leader of the "peace" movement—itsself rife with zero-growth ideology.

El Salvador threatens to repeat that tragic episode in U.S. history, in a far graver world strategic conjuncture. As *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche observed in a recent Washington speech, the key to understanding the widening bloodbath in Central America is that the death squads, many nominally fiercely "anti-communist," create the guerrillas from among the civilian survivors of atrocities.

LaRouche has announced that he will personally head a newly formed "Commission for Free Elections in El Salvador," which will also include as members *EIR* Latin America editor Dennis Small and Fernando Quijano of the International Caucus of Labor Committees' Executive. The Commission will propose to Salvadorean junta President José Napoleon Duarte, Mexican President José López Portillo and U.S. President Ronald Reagan that the three presidents agree on a plan to guarantee the freest elections in El Salvador's history. The steps they take should include negotiating with the insurrectionary groups, if necessary. But the only *military* side of the operation will be to hunt down and summarily execute all of the "death squads" now operating in El Salvador.

The Commission is prepared to initiate activities to back such a plan in all three countries. If the presidents concur, LaRouche's Commission is prepared to recommend postponing the elections from March 28 until a date when they can be carried out freely.

LaRouche's initiative follows closely on the homily delivered by Pope John Paul II Feb. 28 in Rome. In that public statement, the Pope harshly condemned both extremes in the "fratricidal war" and repeated Salvadorean Archbishop Rivera Damas's words, "The foreigners supply the arms, but the dead are all our people." Mexican President López Portillo has also taken to the international press to plead for a negotiated settlement in El Salvador and the exclusion of arms shipments to *all* forces in the fray.

Reason can still prevail, if the warning of the Pope and López Portillo be heeded. Reagan should listen to LaRouche's advice—not Haig's.