

groups — the Popular Liberation Forces Farabundo-Martí (FPL-FM), the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN), the Revolutionary Peoples' Army (ERP). And the Communist Party (PCS) — which had been working with increasing unity during 1980. The FMLN can now count on at least 5,000 well-armed guerrillas and is also supported by a number of unevenly armed popular militias.

The leaders of the opposition's political wing, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), are based in Mexico City where an executive council has been established. From here efforts are being launched to fight for diplomatic recognition. And although the FDR has been unable to win the same level of diplomatic support enjoyed by the Nicaraguan Sandinistas before the fall of Somoza, it does count with the backing of the Socialist International and has good relations with Canada and Mexico.

The guerrillas of the FMLN are linked to the FDR through their close links with the various popular organisations. These organisations — the Popular Revolutionary Block, the Front for United and Popular Action and the 28th February Popular Leagues — joined more moderate opposition parties like the Social Democratic National Revolutionary Movement and the Social Christians to form the FDR in April last year.

The moderates of the FDR supported the military coup which deposed General Carlos Humberto Romero from power in October 1979. Several of their leaders served in the first two post coup governments. But the regime became locked in the grip of the ultra right and as it moved rightwards during last year, the moderates, like the liberal-constitutionalist sectors of the army which inspired the initial coup, became disenchanted with the government's brand of

reformism, which they labelled 'reforms with repression'.

The sacking in December 1980 of the leader of the army moderates, Colonel Majano, marked the end of the regime's association with even mildly progressive forces. In the January insurrection one barracks and thirty high-ranking officers mutinied. Although the Christian Democrat Party continues to support the government it has been seriously divided over the issue and large sectors of the party, including virtually the whole of the rank and file, have defected to the opposition.

The party's leader and the country's figurehead president, Jose Napoleon Duarte, and his sole remaining Christian Democrat partner in government, Antonio Morales Erlich, now live in a fantasy world. Few people attach much credibility to their view that the government is a moderate and reformist one, besieged by the lunatic violence of right and left. Even the showpiece agrarian reform, which was in any case a means to militarise the countryside, is now well and truly on the rocks.

Both the military and opposition realise that Duarte's role is to provide a liberal facade for what has become the most ruthless and brutal regime in Latin America. Last year over 10,000 people were killed in El Salvador, many of them in a horrific manner, by government sanctioned death squads. Among the 10,000 were six leaders of the FDR, Archbishop Oscar Romero and four American nuns.

Following the murder of the nuns last December, the Carter regime temporarily cut military aid. But in its final days aid was restored and since the accession to power of Ronald Reagan the Americans have stepped up military assistance. The new Republican administration has clearly stated that the alternative, an FDR government sympathetic to Cuba and Nicaragua, would represent an intolerable challenge to US interests in the region.

US-supplied armies from neighbouring Honduras and Guatemala have already intervened. In one week in early February the FMLN claimed that US airforce Hercules C-103s were making 10 deliveries of arms and munitions a day to El Salvadorean military airbases. US military sources themselves freely admit 20 military advisers are now in the country. The FDR claim the real figure is more like 800. Whatever the figure the signs are unmistakeable. This is how US intervention begins and full scale military intervention may well be on the cards here.

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EL SALVADOR

After its January offensive, the El Salvadorean opposition has now fully established itself as the only viable and popular alternative to the country's right wing military junta. The guerrilla units of the Farabundo-Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the popular militias which support them inflicted heavy losses on the regime's armed forces and have survived relatively intact to continue their general and final offensive. At the same time, the opposition's political wing, the broad-based Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) has gathered considerable international support.

The Farabundo-Martí guerrillas, who take their name from a Salvadorean communist leader killed during the bloody peasant massacre of 1932, united in October 1980. The FMLN groups together four guerrilla

