El Salvador vote belittled

By Andrew H. Wall

"El Salvador has had enough political parties, election officials, voters...and elections. Yet another election won't have any impact," on the fighting and bloodshed occurring, asserted Anthropology Professor Martin Diskin, at a lecture last Thursday.

The MIT Social Science Group and the Committee on Central America co-sponsored the lecture, titled "Why El Salvador?" El Salvador has had, for fifty years, a series of repressive right-wing governments and the El Salvadoran people are finally rebelling against the repressive power structure, claimed Diskin.

Commenting on the recent elections in El Salvador, Diskin speculated four motivated many people in the polls, as non-voters could be identified by lack of a registration stamp on their ID cards.

Diskin attributed altruistics Roberto d'Aubisson's strong showing at the polls to his promises to end violence with the fact that, in d'Aubisson-controlled districts, "The most survival-oriented thing to do would be to vote for d'Aubisson," due to the lack of privacy and the soldiers at polling places.

Jim Harney, who recently returned from several weeks with FMLN leftist guerrillas in El Salvador, described their actions. He believes the current government lacks public support.

"The government without people," Harney noted the economy has taken a wartime direction, food production has been cut in half as a result. He commented, "The economic situation is bleak, and the economy is at the point of bankruptcy."

"The morale of the [El Salvadoran] people is at all time low," Harney claimed, citing a major barracks desertion in the San Miguel and Harney maintained, "Without US [support], the government would topple, and the people realize this."

However, the morale of the FMLN guerrillas is high, according to Harney. The FMLN operates local public support; he declared, "The sense of cooperation among the civilian population is very, very strong," Harney said the leftist guerrillas received little to no support from Nicaragua and Cuba, and asserted, "The revolution of the El Salvadoran people is indigenous to them."

When requested to return on the elections, Harney said, "The leftists in El Salvador set the elections in a 'bureaucratic' and illegitimate tool to legitimize the government."

The lack of violence during the elections was "not the military victory," later Harney said. "If we claimed it was," Martin Diskin maintained. Diskin said, in official statements, leftist guerrillas allowed the populace not to vote, and did not threaten voters with violence. He claimed voters could have been attacked relative easily, as many voters were concentrated in few polling places.

Diskin said negotiations between the right faction and parties could be a "realistic and ultimately beneficial" way to minimize suffering and bloodshed among the El Salvadoran people.

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