

4/4/06

Dear Roy,

So let's try March 10, 11, and 12. After breakfast on Friday, we walked the few blocks to the Hotel Real Intercontinental. The event we were attending was a candidate debate on the theme: Analysis of the root causes of violence in El Salvador and the proposals of each political party on how to reduce violence in the country.

The debate was run for the time allotted by only the members of the FMLN and the CD (Christian Democrats) participated. The other two parties that had confirmed that they would attend did not appear. This was probably the only event organized by CIS that did not occur as planned. I believe that it was through no fault of theirs since the others had promised to participate.

Leslie again did a wonderful job of translating for us gringos. In the poor picture at the right, we have from left to right: the FMLN, the CD, and Leslie.



The lady who represented the CD began by saying that Latin America is one of the most violent places in the world. From a UN study, she mentioned several root causes including the after affects of war and the resulting proliferation of arms and explosives. She added later that poverty, the disintegration of the family, and migration were also root causes. She said the 13% of the GNP of El Salvador was related to violence control. Most legislators (ARENA) recommend using the "heavy hand" and don't look for causes. The CD representative recommended that there was a need to "purify the national police and justice system", make changes in the Attorney General's powers, and elimination of discrimination against youths.

The man representing the FMLN said that institutions that should help protect citizens and resolve the violence are failing to do so. The FMLN since 1994 have been working to prevent delinquency among youths. They work to strengthen public education and against its privatization. Education should not be the privilege of just a few. No one should have to pay to go to a public gym.

He also noted that it was easier to find alcohol than a drug store. He proposed that the National Police (PNC) and the Attorney General needed expanded investigative abilities. He suggested that the PNC was deteriorating causing more dependence on private security companies. (Powerful people would rather keep the PNC weak to profit from their ownership of the security companies.) Currently, the Attorney General does not investigate (No FBI function?). Finally, he suggested:

1. Disarm civilian society. (I hope they don't have an NRA.)
2. Strengthen the Attorney General.
3. Take the party politics out of the PNC.
4. All of the budget should be focused on violence. (I believe that was the PNC budget.)

Then questions were asked from the audience. From John Cosgrove's question, we found that an Attorney General was to have been elected last November. However, it did not happen. This indicated that the legislature was not following the law in this regard.

Another question brought out comments that the escalating violence injected into the El Salvador society has overshadowed the concern about drug traffic. Lots of money is being laundered in this country. The growth of shopping centers "smells of drying cash."

Neither party member agreed with the ARENA party's financial policies. One was opposed to taking out loans that did not benefit "the people." It was insinuated that the legislature was creating law that brings money to the rich.

Our Norwegian observer asked about the issue of violence against women. (She said, "We believe that a woman who needs an abortion is considered to as being a delinquent.") The FMLN man said that they struggle for the rights of women. The rights exist in statute, but are not carried out. For example, the Ministry of Labor supports paying women less than men. However, labor and construction laws support equality.

In the Salvadoran society, the predominance of large families is a problem. The FMLN panel member posed some questions. Is it a crime not to be able to support and feed your children? In many cases, when the family has 8 children, everyone suffers. What about the rights of the children? The prevailing belief is that a family should accept all the children God sends them.

On the matter of protecting the environment, the comment was that the Ministry of Environment has a budget, but the minister does not carry out the law. Trees are cut down without regard for the environment and the lower city sewers collapsed last year. The river running through San Salvador carries the city sewage. These conditions destroy the underground aquifer, but it does not bother them – the government. There is urbanization without planning.

What about election violence? The contention was that there were at least three items that would help. First, depoliticize the TSE (Supreme Electoral Tribunal). Second, regulate posters and painting. Third, control election financing.

The CD said that Wednesday afternoon somewhere the FMLN attacked the CD party offices. The FMLN dragged out the mayoral candidate and beat him. In times passed, the end of campaigning was not so violent. In the past however, the FMLN was beat up by ARENA, etc., etc. The Tribunal has permitted everything. It does not resolve any of these violent acts. During this election period there have been 12 denunciations --- accusations of one party against another. The PNC does nothing about the violence. It deals only with the penal code offences and these acts are covered under the election code. The Tribunal is too political, but still has no power to judge or punish violators. (I question whether we are any better than they are in El Salvador --- barring the overt violence. Among denunciations that are being registered is the complaint that President Saca campaigned for his party and allowed his photo to appear with candidates of his party on their political posters. We have accepted that behavior for years. I wonder what their law or constitution says on this matter.)

Another question that is not unlike our concern in the U.S. is: How do we overcome the political polarity? Your party is white and all others are black. Typically, during the fight over CAFTA, anyone against CAFTA was labeled a “Communist.”

A question was raised whether more violence occurred during the municipal or the presidential elections? The answer that was given was that the municipal elections spawned more violence. In these municipal elections there are 262 candidates (Sorry, I don’t know where this number came from – I believe that was the total nationally.). In the presidential election, there are only a handful of candidates and it is easy to know the political platforms. When there are many candidates, the platform is much less known and people go into the streets and propagandize. In other words, the responder thought that the people in the municipalities got more involved and had more opportunity to spread falsehoods and bogus claims during municipal and legislative elections. That involvement and those demonstrations generated counter-demonstrations and violence.

Crime and the penal code. Crimes committed by the poor are dealt with severely, but crimes by the rich are not dealt with. There are people in jail for stealing a chicken, but there is no one there for stealing a million dollars. The El Salvador penal system bites the feet of the persons without shoes. An ex-President has spirited dollars out of the country and into the U.S. Another ex-minister lives in France with money from water projects and was helped to leave the country by the PNC.

It was said that the media does violence in its handling of the news. In the predominantly conservative media, all favorable news centers on the ARENA party. The FMLN is 2nd page news, at best. Then it may only provide the photo of an FMLN person buying a pirated CD from a vendor. That is a form of violence inflicted on the society.

So ended the discussion. We left the hotel and went out into their courtyard. One of our team was living at the hotel. Seems that she was very close to the Yale student party for a couple nights. She left the Hotel Grecia and went here. I believe it was \$120 for “comfort and quiet”.

There were hor d’oeuvres provided in the courtyard. Elegant, as I recall. It was about lunchtime and we ate sparingly. When that event completed, we waited around as the teams left for their municipalities around the country. The busses that would drive them there all came to the hotel. Taline, being in charge of us San Salvador observers and the larger operation, was the last to get take the 11 of us under her wing and get us to our bus.

Our first stop was lunch. We drove to a shopping center. It looked very much like the U.S. It did



not look crowded. I can't say that any of our couple trips to shopping centers gave me the notion that they were as busy as our malls. The major remark about this excursion is that the food court looked like U.S. food courts as well. Burger King, KFC, Subway, Little Caesar, and Wendy's. Prices were the same. Taline would hand out money. Five bucks each for these meals. It worked just fine. I believe Bev and I bought bowls of soup in order to try to stay away from "same old, same old".

After lunch we visited a clothing factory in Soyapango, a first ring suburb so to speak. That was as far to the east as we got during our stay. In that urbanized area was much poorer than our neighborhood by our hotel. It was noticeable that there were few armed security guards in this area. The factory was referred to as the only unionized factory in El Salvador. It now goes by the name of Just Garments. It was originally a Taiwanese company begun in 2000. The plant opening was followed by the earthquakes of January, 2001. The building was damaged and yet it continued to operate.



Conditions and discipline were harsh. Workers tried to unionize. There were firings. After many thwarted attempts, the workers finally petitioned to become a union on 3/8/2002. A week later, the company decided to pull out of El Salvador. It fired the employees. Because of El Salvador law, most of the 2200 workers had to receive severance pay from the company. However, 80 people had to go to get other work, but they were blacklisted. They could not get work. The situation was publicized and was dramatized by a demonstration at a GAP corporate meeting.

The workers themselves tried to reopen the plant. There was considerable backing from the National Federation of Textiles and the workers union of the textile industry. In November, 2002, the Taiwanese came to remove the machines, but the workers stood in front of the doors. So the Taiwanese left of the machines. Who owns the factory? I have in my notes. Taiwan owns 99% and Just Garments owns 1%. It sounds like some sort of poor informal arrangement. The Taiwanese get nothing as rent for the machines. In March, 2003, the workers moved to new facilities and were operating by August. Just Garments pays taxes and pays rent to a Salvadoran who owns the building. Their rent has triple since they began their operation of the facility with many few workers than before. It sounded like they had had a contract with GAP but lost it in some squabble. It also sounds as if they are only subcontracting for other companies.

We quizzed them about some figures. They have overhead costs of \$25,000 to \$30,000 per month. But their current contracts are for only \$12,000. Workers get \$177 per month, which says \$5.90 per day for a 30-day month. However, we heard that they get \$5.13 per day. The minimum by law in El Salvador is \$5.05. (For more information, go to the Internet and search on "Factories in El Salvador".) You will find articles on Nike, sweatshops, etc.



Just Garments was clean. Some of the workers worked at sewing machines. Others were folding. All the items I saw had English labels.

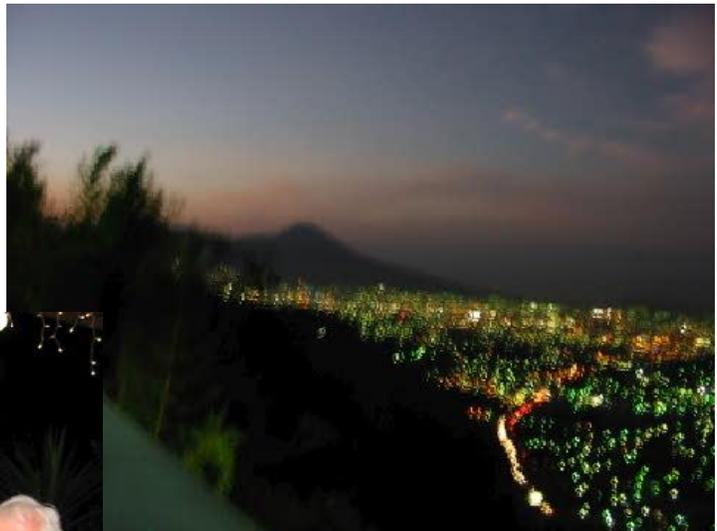
They hope to receive donations of \$120,000 with which they hoped to provide an increase in worker salaries to \$12 per day. Getting a loan seems out of the question. They also had some plan to get help from groups of students in the U.S. and from unions in the U.S.

We left Just Garments and headed west back to the hotel. I forget the logistics, but our next site of interest was going to be a hillside view of the city at dusk. Along the way, I tried to get some photos of shanties and the general trashiness of some of the roadside. It became dusk too rapidly and most photos were dark blobs that only I know are meaningful. To the right is a street corner decorated with dumpsters and a graffitied wall. Lots of trash had missed the containers and had freely spread around the area.



The trip up the hillside was picturesque. When we got to our vista, it was pretty dark. I attempted my first time photo where I set the shutter to close less rapidly than normal. That one shot showed that I could do it, but I had better not move the camera. It moved and the scene just became more colorful. The volcano is just to the left of center. I'll have to go back and try it again.

After this we went to Pupuseria Paty's. There Taline introduced us to a sort of filled flatbread called a pupusa. They were delicious. The pupusas were being sold everywhere, but Paty's was a particularly popular place. The parking



lot was full and there was live music and dancing. We had quite a party.

Incidentally, campaigning for the parties ended at midnight of March 8. Alcohol sales ended at midnight on this night, March 10.

Out in the parking lot, Tom Hooley struck up a conversation with the parking lot guard. He was young and carried his shotgun proudly. Tom knew enough Spanish that he was able to get some very interesting information. This young man worked there three days a week. His shifts were each 24 hours. For each day he received the handsome sum of \$10. How do these people survive?

We had an invitation to go to an FMLN Reception at the Holiday Inn, but we old folks chose the hotel. I do believe that Taline and Marvin may have attended.

This break between Friday and Saturday may be a place to insert a section on traffic in San Salvador. None of us with the CIS teams drove. CIS provided all the transportation. We traveled in small buses mostly. We got to know our drivers somewhat, especially Michael. Michael was young – in his twenties. His black hair was slicked up with mousse. Bev and I located his supply of mousse on the bus under one of the seats. It looked like a year's supply – a life supply for me. I believe Michael was with us three or four days. He seemed to be a good driver like the rest of our drivers. He was what I would call an aggressive driver as are other San Salvador drivers. However, with all that crowded streets and aggressive driving, we hardly heard the horns of irate drivers. They were pretty mellow.

In one driving maneuver on Saturday morning, Michael really amazed me. The plan was to stop on our drive in a busy part of town in order to buy a "pirated CD" of some Latin American group. The copyright laws are really ignored here. Anyway the transaction was to be very quick and it was. However it was the driving that was exceptional. We stopped as we were going through an intersection and *backed* (luckily no cars were behind us, I think) into a space to our right at the street corner. It really wasn't a parking space. Our bus covered the crosswalk (luckily no one was crossing) and extended out beyond the curb into the crossing street. Our buyer – a Salvadoran by the name of Marvin, who knew the ropes – jumped off the bus and disappeared into a vendor area a short distance down the sidewalk. While we waited, a parking spot became available right by the corner on the crossing street (a one-way street) just to our right. Michael decided to take that space so that he wasn't blocking the crosswalk. He cut it hard to the left driving into the middle of the intersection in the proper direction of the parking flow, stopping, and then *backing* into the new spot. There was traffic! I really don't know how he didn't get hit or attacked by irate drivers. Amazing! Marvin came back with the CD and we were on our way.

San Salvador and, I suppose, the whole country depends on a lot of bus transportation although there are many cars as well. It does not look like there is any metro-transit system. Buses of many different colors and widely varying mechanical condition were packed with travelers. Very early we learned an interesting fact. These buses all had a prior life as U.S. school buses. They had reached some critical mileage in the U.S. and were sold to make way for newer equipment. Sure enough, on closer inspection, that is what they were -- repainted school buses. I never once saw a bus of the size and design of the city buses of Minneapolis.

Further, I believe that the bus system may be made up of buses owned by many small companies or even individual drivers. I heard that riding the buses is interesting but not necessarily rapid transportation. More than once, I noticed that a bus would pull up to a corner where there were several people. It would stop and a man would jump off. He was not a passenger, but a barker for

the bus. He would encourage people to “ride the friendly” streets on this bus. He was probably the brother-in-law of the driver.

Being a bus driver in the city was dangerous business. I suppose more dangerous in the eastern parts of the city than in the newer western parts. They were targets of the gangs. The unlucky drivers are charged a “war tax” by the gangs in order to stay in business. The term “war tax” is left over from the civil war days where the guerillas would charge such a tax – possibly in provisions – to the villages that they controlled.



At the left is another mode of transport. One sees pickup trucks just crammed with people like this. I have no idea how these people relate to one another, but this is what you call “up close and personal.”

Not to be outdone, San Salvador has its version of “Dominos Delivers.” A chicken company, not KFC, has a similar fleet. Check the graffiti on the building walls to the left of the motorbikes.



Saturday proved to be a very busy day. Quite exciting! We started early and went to Maria Madres de los Pobres (Mary Mother of the Poor). It is a parish near Boulevard Venezuela -- the nearest main street. It was a very poor area of the city. I believe the parish was really in the vicinity of the Boulevard (See Note A). We turned off the busy street, crossed a narrow bridge that you will see in a photo as we leave, and wound around on the far side of a ravine.

Note A: Interestingly, there is a different scheme of addressing in some part of the city – not just a house number and street name as it usually is. Maybe areas of the city get developed informally resulting in rather interesting addresses. For example, I believe this is the way an address might look.

Blvd. Venezuela final calle "A" Col. y Pje. Santa Maria casa # 14
Ciudad Delgado, San Salvador
El Salvador C.A.

The first line is the interesting one. It begins with the nearest main street. In this case it is Blvd. Venezuela. All the rest seems to be telling you street corners or something. I recognize “y” as the word “and” --- “calle” is “street” --- “final” seems like “end”. With all that, the address gives directions to the house.

The second and third lines are similar to ours. Ciudad Delgado is Delgado City in the Department (they don't have states) of San Salvador. The bottom line is the country with C.A. for Central America.



People at the clinic

Back to the excursion. We entered the gates of what I believe was the back of the church grounds. We disembarked and went to a set of tables that was being set up by our hosts. We were all liberally hugged by one of the women and we were invited to sit for an introduction to the activities that occur here. This meeting place was in a covered area, but it was open to the outdoors and blue sky on the north end. One of the nice things about our visit was the weather that allowed us to eat and meet outdoors many times. Insects were not seen at all.

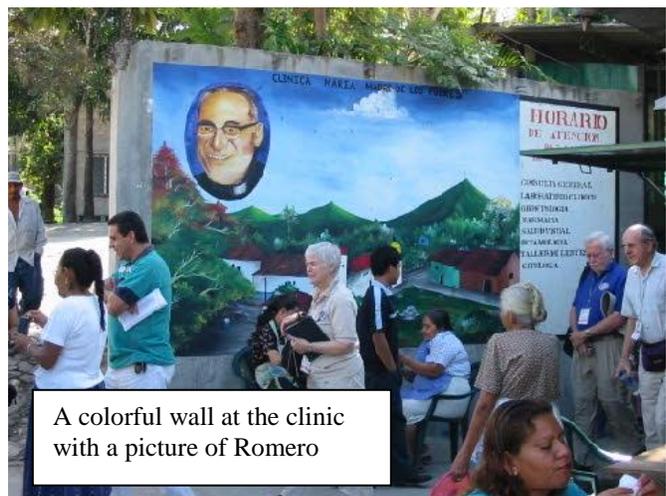
These people here really make one feel welcome. They provided coffee and eats. They were all eager to contribute and relay their story. The church's pastor was David Sanchez. The center/parish has 53 employees. Thirteen are doing construction on a school for the parish. It was mentioned that the population of the region serviced by the parish has 25,000 to 30,000 inhabitants.

The discussion mentioned evangelical churches. It was noted that such churches are growing rapidly. They are mostly conservative and the more conservative – the more political. The Baptists and Lutherans are generally liberal. The definition of conservative seemed to mean (excuse me if I am wrong) that the church had a focus on heaven and not on earth. In other words, fewer social programs.

The Anglican church in the vicinity (not conservative) sponsored a meeting to discuss peace --- peace based on justice. Another study session at another church discussed Romero and the Koran with Muslims. There is also a very progressive Jewish educational project.

Mary Mother of the Poor is an apolitical parish church. "The parish will help anyone." It has sister parishes in German, Spain, and 4 in the U.S.

The FMLN mayor (really broke with the



A colorful wall at the clinic with a picture of Romero

FMLN) is trying to keep the river clean. The ARENA does nothing. It is a problem that no controls are placed on factories.

Who is working to improve housing? The work of the parish is toward improving housing conditions. No actual new construction is being done. Structurally, houses are concrete block and sheet metal. No wood. There is some old stone. Very few houses have everything fixed that should be fixed. In the extreme, a house recently collapsed killing the 6 inhabitants. Work is done to protect windows and doors to help eliminate robbery. The government has not given one cent for housing. All housing money has come from Spain, Italy, Germany and the U.S. If the government is not pressured from the outside, it will keep moneys that are available or should be made available.

The clinic staff is all paid. (We stopped into the clinic after the set down question and answer. It was really quite lean. Very little in the way of equipment. Two women were staffing it.) There are gynecological services and there is a dentist. Medicine is not donated by must be purchased. The major need is doctors. Send doctors! Cuba offered 300 doctors, but because of U.S. pressure El Salvador would not let them in. Doctors Without Borders is a help.

Last year there was a health awareness week that attracted 1000 participants. People who helped with that program last year will not be providing money this year. They are going ahead with plans anyway and are planning for the program in August.

Five hundred children have godfathers and godmothers who provide \$20 per month which helps with education, shoes, health, food,

As mentioned when we left our set-down information session, we visited the clinic. But then we rushed back to the bus to head to our next meeting. There was quite a bit of activity. As we left, an older man with a broad smile and thick gray hair came through the gate dressed in FMLN colors. He was Salvador Sánchez Cerén, one of the FMLN leaders if not the



current leader of that party since the former leader had died in December. Later, I saw his picture in the paper as he spoke at rallies. He was greeted by the people and posed for pictures with some. I just have the notion that I

am able to say that I saw someone who had survived his guerilla days.

We drove out through the narrow streets and we approached the one-vehicle bridge that would get us back to the Blvd Venezuela. We had to stop and inch toward the bridge because we were stymied by an ox cart. The beasts under yoke hauled a small wagon of what looked to be black dirt. Very thought provoking in this day and age.

When we got on the bridge, Michael stopped so that I could take a picture of the foamy water off the right side of the bus. Being in the dry season there wasn't much water moving through the gorge and whatever chemicals were in the river must have been concentrated. Out of the left side of the bus, we could view more rocky flats at the bottom of the gorge. There grazed a very lean cow.



We drove off the bridge and down to the corner where we would turn onto Blvd. Venezuela. The buildings to our left were roofed by corrugated steel. I took a shot of another of the guards. I have no idea what he could have been guarding. Whatever. He was talking on a cell phone.

Now come the meetings with the three mayoral candidates. Taline, our team leader, really made our Saturday memorable by her efforts to get us to see these three people. (Unlike the U.S. Ambassador on Tuesday, all three of these busy people obliged our Saturday visit.) Indeed, Taline kept us busy, interested and informed. Besides planning out all these events and translating for us, she provided us with a handout of about 15 pages which capsulated the election in San Salvador.



Our first stop then was the campaign headquarters of FMLN party. There would meet Violeta Menjivar who was the FMLN



candidate for mayor in El Salvador. The term for a female mayor is "Alcadesa." Dr. Violeta (medical doctor) arrived to meet us at about 10:30 AM. She wore the party colors always – bright red. (I wonder how many red suits she must own for campaigning.) As usual, we sat in the open air. We were under a red canopy that shielded us from the sun.

She began by saying that the election process does not follow the law. However, the presence of observers would help neutralize any intentional fraud. Her party had high hopes bolstered by the polls. Good prospects for gaining deputies and municipalities were predicted. She said that they had 31 deputies in the National Assembly and they hope for as many as 36. (They actually ended with 32 and ARENA had 34.) The youth of the party have worked a lot. On March 12, they hoped to be celebrating victory for the FMLN.

She spoke of having a government in San Salvador where the people participate. In her very special campaign she claimed to have visited 55,000 homes in the city. She was optimistic about becoming the first woman mayor of San Salvador. The major planks in her platform included 1.) Decreasing the delinquency rate, 2.) Environment., 3.) Economy, and 4.) Women.

Notably on the environment, she said there had to be a stop to the deforestation. Hurricane Stan caused considerable flooding in the lower part of the city and the country. This resulted from not having a plan to inhibit the deforestation occurring in the higher elevations. Further, companies must be forced to cleanup. The floods carried commercial and solid human waste down to the lower levels. The problem of reducing waste must be separated into organic water issues and inorganic water issues.

On the economic side, she spoke of the 12 municipal markets in San Salvador. She proposed that the small local vendors get organized. (After organizing they might be able to deal with the politicians that want to remove them or relocate them in the city.)

There are many women's issues to consider. There is considerable violence against women. The status of women in El Salvador is denigrated when it is traditional for a father to tell his son to go find a prostitute as his initiation into manhood. Women need to have strengthened rights to own land. Breast cancer prevention and awareness programs need to be established.

Violeta spoke of the election process that she proposes needs to be transformed. As we heard everywhere, the TSE that governs elections is politicized. Further at the national level, the Administration needs to be separated from the Judiciary.

A question went to Violeta about whether gay and lesbians were considered in the plan of the FMLN. She replied that they take a holistic view of human rights implying that gays and lesbians were included. She continued that laws concerning sex workers had to be revised for they are now persecuted viciously. The handicapped should be employed in factories but the law ignores them.

Some Salvadorans are denied their vote because the factory owners say they need to appear at work. Owners threaten that that their factories will close if the FMLN gets control in a municipality.

Following our meeting with Violeta, we all shook hands with her and had a group photo. Beverly and I got in two city newspapers on Sunday in color pictures. We were seated listening to Violeta in the picture in *El Diario de Hoy*. We are standing behind her in another in *La Prensa*. I scanned the newspaper pictures and found that they turned out, but with very poor resolution. Luckily, Taline knew the *de Hoy* photographer and he sent her 6 real good photos. Here I include one photo

of Bev and I with Violeta. (As time goes on you will see Bev with the other two candidates whom we visited.)

We left the FMLN headquarters and took a bus ride to the place where we were to observe the election the next day. We drove in and spoke with some Salvadoran people who were there. Ultimately we went inside and looked at one of the buildings that was empty of people but was set up with tables and cardboard voting booths. This was the inside of one of the three buildings at the Feria Internacional. These were designated the “A”, the “B” and the “C” building. San Salvador residents whose names began with “A” would vote in the “A” building. “B”’s in the “B” building and so forth. In those three buildings were 167 voting tables. Each table had a maximum of 400 people who were to vote there. A total of over 66,000 people could vote at the Feria Internacional on Sunday, March 12.

In the city there was a total of 17 locations for voting. There were 687 tables.

After viewing the building, we took a side trip to a building in the Feria where the computers were set up to handle election returns. The grand plan had been to have a setup where each of the municipalities would be able to fax their results to a computer in this building. By this time, it was certain that the system did *not* work. So some other scheme was used for getting the results to this building. Technology would have to wait to the next big election in 2009. One feature of the computer building I really liked. Air-conditioning!

There was a lunch in here somewhere. Taline never let us starve. We would pull in some place and she would provide us each with \$5 for lunch. We never went hungry and sometimes we could give some change back.

Our next candidate was the mayoral candidate of the ARENA party, Rodrigo Samayoa. Arriving at his headquarters, we picked our way through an entryway crowded with political workers. We went up a narrow stairway to Rodrigo’s office. Rodrigo was a middle-aged man with short black hair and blue eyes – not typical in these parts. Like all the mayoral candidates, he wore his party colors. His shirt was white and decorated by neat red and blue stripes coming down from the collar and over the shoulders and sleeves.



Rodrigo had studied in the U.S. So this was a presentation in English. This candidate sees many problems in the capital. He has consulted with many individuals in the run-up to the election and he hopes to take San Salvador, a city that he sees as “having lost ground.” “The Communists have been taking much away.” (The usual shot at the FMLN.)

He sees that CAFTA forces El Salvador to improve – to compete, but the value of foreign investments have gone down.

Rodrigo promised cooperation with “the government” and his party leader, President Saca. He stated that the drainage problem could not be solved without government help. Security will be gained by working with the PNC (the national police). Violence should be handled firmly. (The ARENA mantra.) Be certain that there are enough streetlights and introduce electronic security circuits.

Buildings damaged by the earthquake (like the coffee exchange shown in my second letter) will be razed to get rid of the gangs that use them. As mayor, he will clean the center of San Salvador. He plans to convert some buildings into bus terminals. He hoped to create the conditions for investment in the center of the city by making access readily available by small buses. He claimed that the idea had been proven in Quito, Lima, and Mexico City. He wanted to reverse the chaos in the whole city. “The people want change. The people want results.” During his campaign his party provided some neighborhoods with streetlights and some plastic laminated roofs. “By this, ARENA showed it had the will to give people these things.”

But people are leaving El Salvador. That trend must be reversed. Even if the price of coffee is down, there must be new insights about ways to bring investments to San Salvador.

Rodrigo’s four planks were 1.) honesty, 2.) economic conversion, 3.) improve/rescue the center of San Salvador, and 4.) handle the floods. He claimed to have lots of friends among the poor. With the new ARENA party, he hoped to get true civilian participation in his administration. I don’t know if he was referring to the fact that ARENA did not appear at our debate on Friday, but he mentioned that rather than debate other parties he proposed to use his energy with the people.

He proposed to clean people from the city center by giving them “credits” to go from informal to formal commerce.

He warned that violence was moving from east to west through the city. Further, prostitution was on the rise. (I noticed in some article that recently two prostitutes were found dead on the street near a police station. They had been beheaded.)

Rodrigo said that there had to balance between the rights of companies to expand and the maintenance of a healthy environment.

Mr. Samayoa had considerable experience in politics. He has been in the Central American Parliament for 15 years and has served as its president eight times.

Near the end of the talk, the candidate opened up a laptop computer and showed us a PowerPoint slideshow of charts in which I believe he sought to show that he had a plan for revising the administration. In the U.S., such a slideshow would have been projected on a screen for all to see. However, Rodrigo at least tried to use the technology available and sat with the PC on his lap. The diagrams were very intricate organization charts. Difficult to see. It made it discouraging to follow what he was trying to tell us.

Like Violeta before and Carlos to follow, all three seemed like very good individuals -- genuinely concerned about the city. The issue however is not the character that they portray in a discussion like ours, but how, once elected, they would be able to work in the political atmosphere of San Salvador – its parties and its media. It will be interesting to watch Violeta, the eventual winner, for the three years beginning May 1, 2006.

We moved on to the last of the meetings. It was scheduled for 5 PM. I believe we started about 15 minutes late. One can only imagine what these candidates were doing in these last days and hours before the Sunday election. Campaigning ended by law on Wednesday at midnight. However, I assume the candidates had a full slate of meetings and possibly receptions like the FMLN had last night.

The photographers were here again. Two or three of them. They just circulated with us as we met with the candidates. (Imbedded reporters so to speak.) The *de Hoy* photographer took all three shots I present here.

Carlos Rivas Zamora was the incumbent mayor. He had been mayor for 9 years. Prior to that he was the legal advisor to the mayor. He came to the office as the FMLN candidate. However, in this last term, I believe, he broke with that party and created a coalition of the FDR, the PSCC, and the CD parties (Excuse me, I won't go into decoding the alphabet soup). Their party color was a bright gold and the symbol which designated them on the ballot was a collage of two or three symbols.

Carlos indicated that his major challenge was to improve the finances of the government and produce a better quality of life in the city. He proposed that economic, social and environmental issues represent huge problems in San Salvador. His platform was constructed by approaching the people of each neighborhood and asking about problems.

On the security front, he has been working with Los Angeles as a sister city. Efforts have gone into training police and creating mediation centers for dealing with family violence. We need better lighting in the city. Youths should have training and sports centers to attend. The current government (He must mean the national government.) only provides punishment. Youth need social training so that they learn to help solve problems. Youth need to feel that they are part of society.



Street sellers are also people who feel outside of society. There are 20% more street sellers each year. Carlos blamed this on some failure in an effort to which he applied the label “neo-liberalism.” Within the next year, he proposed to do something to coordinate the formal and informal commerce in the city. In terms of the informal, he pointed out that they do not pay taxes, but they do

contribute to the trash in the streets. (My comment is that this is true. However, there is lots of trash in the streets having nothing to do with informal commerce.)

Carlos has an idea about something called “microcredits” for the informal commerce sector. There may be already or there may be planned a \$50,000 fund focused particularly on women and youths. Further, he proposes high-rises for these people. That is part of his housing plan.

Other municipalities have the same problems as San Salvador. Quito, Lima, and Bogotá have all been transformed. Street vendors have gone away.

With respect to the ecology, he planned to work on protecting the rivers and renovating the drainage system. \$174 million of federal money is earmarked for this sort of work for the primary cities. The International Development Bank has provided \$11 million of San Salvador to improve the drainage system, water quality, public spaces, etc. Carlos hopes that his efforts might improve the quality of life here and make San Salvador the best capital in Central America.

The pollution of the big companies might be approached by providing tax credits for cleaning up.

Some work to improve the gang situation is going to occur in partnership with Los Angeles. LA promises to train some police. “Gang members are the unlucky sons of neo-liberals.” (There is that term again.)

Carlos left the FMLN because members of that party are “the clay that ARENA can play with.” The majority of the constituency of the FMLN is culturally conservative. But the poorest people of that constituency vote for ARENA. They feel like they will be a friend of the wealthy. The FMLN needs to work more intelligently. Carlos believes that the FMLN gives a false message to the people.

Three out of four Salvadorans want to live in the United States. 700 people leave El Salvador each day. ARENA tells the people that they need the U.S. In the problems that this causes, the FMLN has no solution – no plan to change the flow of people north. The FMLN just passes the buck to the ARENA. The parties just fight.

Mr. Zamora joined the choir of candidates saying that the TSE needs to improve. He also agreed that the polarization has to be broken. He ended by saying that he had visited 120,000 homes during his tenure. He sees Sunday would be a big day. “The big parties will try to squash us.” (He was right, and they did.)

Mrs. Zamora was present through most of the presentation. A TSE member was also there for the first part. Near the end, the mayor introduced a good-looking young man. That man was a singer by profession. He spoke to us in English. (Later, I spoke with him after finding that he received his bachelor’s degree from Buffalo State in N.Y. where I had taught in the ‘60s.) He hoped to work with the Zamora administration to improve the arts in San Salvador. He was planning to provide opportunities for children to study music, in particular, as a means to improve their mental health and to help keep them off the streets.

Near the end of the meeting, I believe someone asked Carlos about what we from the U.S. might do to help in San Salvador. He provided one direct and rather surprising suggestion. He asked that we ask the H. B. Fuller Company of St. Paul to stop producing and selling a type of glue that is used for shoe repairs, I believe. It is being used in San Salvador and all over Central America by youths seeking a cheap high. The following paragraphs came from an article on the Internet.

In Latin America, one of Fuller's most profitable divisions makes a glue called Resistol. Resistol--advertised with a cute cartoon elephant and the slogan "You stick it and it never comes unstuck"--is popular among shoemakers, who buy it by the pail and use it in small manufacturing operations, often for export to the U.S. It's also popular among street kids, so much so that glue addicts are known in many countries as resistoleros.

It's hard to resist H. B. Fuller's corporate charm. Their environmentally sensitive research lab sits on the shores of Willow Lake near St. Paul and supports a 115-acre nature preserve. Employees work for good wages and top-of-the-line benefits; in their spare time, they're expected to volunteer for charitable organizations, which also receive 5 percent of Fuller's pre-tax profits. The balance sheet sings' so do socially responsible investors, who hand Fuller award after award, along with their trust-fund dollars.

It's hard, too, to resist the pictures from Guatemala: street children crowded around dingy corners, buying plastic bags of glue for a dime apiece. When they sink their heads into the bags and breathe, hunger, loneliness, and fear give way to a sense of comfort and power. Kids who've done this for a while develop chronic coughs, lose use of some of their limbs, vital organs, and brain cells. Eventually they crawl the streets instead of walking, still begging or stealing for more glue. Many die of kidney or heart failure, hunger, or police beatings.

Odds are that the glue the kids are sniffing is made by Fuller. The company says it feels bad about this, but so far it's refused to follow the lead of other manufacturers and add a foul-smelling substance that may prevent abuse. Instead, Fuller has taken a series of highly publicized steps--adding labels, supporting social programs, even pulling out of some markets after it started catching national media attention. Today, after collecting a slew of awards and glowing editorials for the way it handled the problem, the company continues to sell its glue in the countries where kids sniff it. And nobody, except a few activists and social workers, seems to be too bothered by that.

So ended our day with the candidates. These last few pages came from my notes taken during presentations of those mayoral candidates. This prose comes in spurts. I attempted to provide the main points, but the transitions are lost. Looking back at what I presented, I guess there was little difference in these candidates. Their lists of concerns were all just about the same. The passion in their speech seemed lacking. They may have been tired from the long campaign. They certainly were not needed to capture our vote. Other factors might help us to choose. Other prejudices? Although he seems like a nice gentleman, Carlos, the incumbent, had had 9 years to try to make changes. He did not speak of accomplishments that I remember. Like the rest, he spoke of changes that needed to occur. I guess I left this last talk with the belief that the battle would be between the ARENA and FMLN.

I don't remember dinner that evening. Maybe Bev will refresh my memory. However, I believe we got home and went to bed early. Our election day would begin at 5:00.

Some adjustment of the time was made so the instead of getting on the Sunday bus at 5 AM, we left our hotel about that time and walked to the gas station at the corner. The city was still fairly dark at that hour. At the station, we looked around for something to eat. I believe I had a cup of coffee and a couple slices of awful plastic-wrapped toast. Looking in the newspapers, we found that Bev and I,

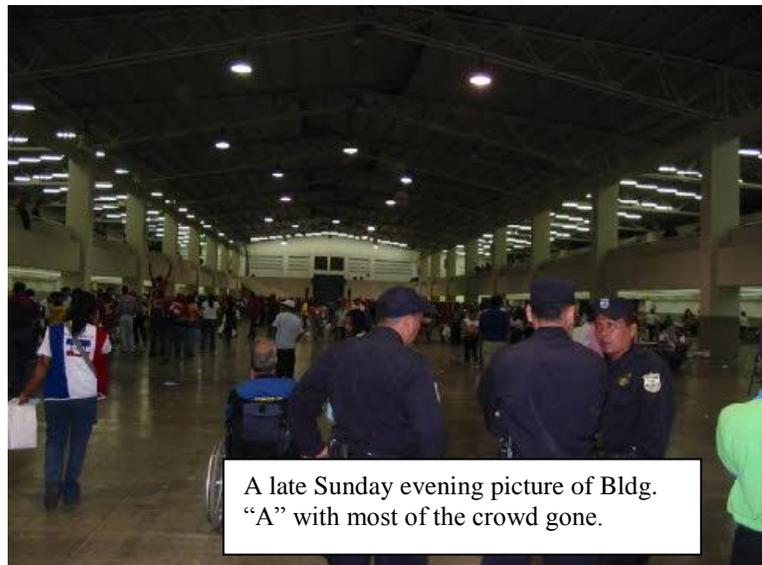
as well as some others, had pictures in the *El Diario de Hoy* and the *La Prensa*. I bought a copy of each.

The mini-bus arrived at the station to take us to the FERIA Internacional de El Salvador. We left the station and were met by three young boys --- probably 8 or 9 --- who were begging. Begging and giggling at 5:30 AM.

By the time the day ended, I had rather detailed notes on the questionnaire provided by CIS. That inventory was about 5 or 6 pages of questions concerning the voting process. We were to respond to them as we watched the vote casting through the day. Maybe it is fortunate for you that Taline collected these questionnaires after our debriefing on Monday. You will be saved from my recounting all the detail. However, fear not I still remember a lot of it.

I was in Building A at Table 11. That was just an arbitrary choice made that when we arrived. Most of my observing was done at that table. This table was one of 64 tables on the main floor and mezzanine of Building A. As I may have written earlier, each table was charged with handling a specific set of eligible registered voters. Table 11 had all the voters whose names were Aquirre to Augirre de Sanchez. Now these voters each had a picture identification card called a DUI (that stands for something and we pronounced “dewey”). Further in front of each table was an A-frame cardboard display area where the image of all of that table’s 400 DUIs were displayed on multiple 8 ½ by 11 sheets of white paper.

Most of our background on the voting process came from a half day of training and our observer packet that was produced by CIS. I will spend a little more time on the structure of the voting later; but for now, let me tell you that each voting table organization normally has 5 members. The table that had a full complement of officials had a president and a secretary and 3 people who had the title of “vocal”. There was a Vocal 1, Vocal 2 and Vocal 3. In order to function legally, the table needed a minimum of three of these officials.



Well my table had three officials. A president, a secretary and one vocal. (As long as I was around, I never saw the secretary leave her post.) When I arrived they were just getting set up. I interrupted their activity just long enough to introduce myself. My tee shirt identified me as an election observer. They smiled and shook my hand politely. They probably wondered if I would be one of their problems for the day. But I believe we got along quite well although I didn’t need to interact with them much.

The plan for the election is that they would get their packet of materials (a good sized box) for the table by 6 AM. Well with just under 170 tables in this complex and also some problems higher up, the box did not arrive until about 6:45. Incidentally, each table was called a JRV, another Spanish acronym. Their superiors who were responsible for training and the packets were the JEMs. My table set to work right away. They opened the box (I should have brought my pocket knife.) and took out pens and lots of different pads of paper. The ballots were there and had to be counted. There were separate ballots for the municipal election and for the delegate assembly. Sheets containing the pictures of the DUIs were taped to the display about 15 feet out in front of the table. The table members occasionally ran into a form or a situation for which they had to confer. There was a small booklet (56 pages) of regulations and instruction that seemed to resolve all the problems at this table. You could tell that this had been their training manual; because when they referred to the booklet, they seemed to know right where to locate the info. As happened at some other tables during the day, a JEM member had to be summoned to resolve a matter before the team would proceed.

The forms were not completely familiar to the officers. However, they did quite well. Soon they were ready to vote. They essentially went through the same process as everyone else, but their names and DUI numbers were written on a special form. Also the DUIs of the officials at the table were ultimately bound up and put into the ballot box. That kept the officials honest – they could not loan their DUI to someone else or, more likely, go elsewhere and vote again. Remember, their names were not Aquirre to Augirre de Sanchez and they really would normally vote at another location in the city. I believe it was sometime around 7:15 when other voters were allowed to vote. Still that was good time.

Beverly reports that one arrogant gentleman was permitted to vote at her table before the officials at that table were done voting.

First, a voter comes to the Table 11 after finding that he/she has his/her DUI displayed on Table 11's A-frame display.

Here are the steps.

1. The President will
 - Take the DUI from the voter and confirm its validity.
 - Check hands for evidence of ink that would indicate prior voting.
 - Find the citizen in the President's Electoral Registry and mark the name that the person appeared to vote in 2006.
2. The Secretary will:
 - Sign and stamp (with the JRV seal) the two ballot papers.
 - Remove the detachable corners from the ballot papers and put them in the designated bag.
 - Give the citizen the ballot papers with the designated crayon for marking them.
3. The voter goes to the cardboard voting booth where he/she secretly marks the ballots. He or she will then fold the ballots and put one in each of the boxes as indicated by their colors.

4. The Vocal will:

- Match the citizen's DUI to the Electoral Registry.
- Take the crayon from the voter.
- Instruct the voter to sign the Electoral Registry.
- Mark the voter's thumb with indelible ink.
- Return the DUI to the voter.

This is how things worked at my table with only three officials. The Vocals duties at our table would have been spread over three persons normally. It worked quite well with three. I propose that the main reason for five officials is just because there were five major parties involved. Every party would then have a position at the table. What would happen if there were more than 5 parties? Things would get crowded.

In addition, there was another representative of each political party who stood by the table or helped voters. They were to be overseers for the party. They were call vigilantes. (Yup, like them thare scoundrels what strung up Pa! ☺) They wore tee shirts or vests in party colors that marked them as vigilantes. They could serve as a temporary replacement for the table officer of the their party. I believe each vigilante could have an alternate. That meant that each table could have had 15 people there to run and oversee the process. Mercifully that didn't seem to happen. My table did have the three officials and 5 vigilantes.

Voting did not require much time for a given individual. The ballot for deputies contained the logos of the 5 major parties for which one could vote and also the logo of the coalition party of the current mayor of San Salvador. The voter just put an "X" on the party whose candidate(s) he/she wanted for the assembly. Similarly, in voting on



The secretary, president, and vocal sit at Table 11. Marillos, Lori, and Claudia respectively. Vigilantes Sonja and Marco look on. A voter waits for his ballots.



Example of a ballot used in our training.

the municipality ballot, the ballot just contained party logos. One did not have to be literate to vote.

There were lots of rumors. One rumor was that some parties like the PCN were not able to muster enough people to fill all the spots at the tables. So to mount a presence, it was rumored

that some of the vigilantes were paid to come and represent the party. My PCN vigilante (Pictured in the blue vest) just stood there all day and never got involved with any aspect of the process until the very end when he collected the six ballots which his party received from the nearly 500 ballot sheets (2 per voter) cast at Table 11. Boring day for him.

There were rumors that busloads of people were brought in from other Guatemala and/or Honduras to fraudulently vote.

As the day progressed, the parties each supplied food for their workers. A group would come swooping in carrying multiple white boxes, find their representatives at the table, and put boxes in their hands. The food looked good in the box – even though it was ethnic. Maybe I was hungry. The voting tables were manned from 6 AM to nearly 7 PM so there were a couple deliveries per party. Lots of coordination, time, effort and money was expended to feed the workers. Think that every party had at least 1300 mouths to feed on election day at the voting tables. (687 tables in San Salvador with 2 to 3 party representatives per table.)

Now, if I list the anomalies that I saw, don't get the notion that it was a bad process. I think the process was really good as it occurred at the tables. Things did occur in the voting building that violated the code. As I mentioned before, the electoral code is not something that the national police enforce. So until teeth are added to the code, the anomalies will continue.

A picture of our voting booth is at the right. Voters could vote in front and in the back simultaneously. The middle of the three shelves was to be for voters in wheelchairs. However, it did not work well. The jury is out on the purpose of the bottom shelf. ☺ Durability maybe.

People complained at many tables that the indelible ink could be easily removed. Various fluids were suggested as working to remove the ink. I had my finger painted as a test, and I was unable to get all traces off until Monday. Most but not all came off Sunday. That was OK. However, there was quite a bit of consternation stemming from pens that dried up or ran out. It struck me that they didn't do much testing for the pens to see if they were adequate for the task.

Remember the display boards in front of the voting tables that held the replicas of the DUIs. A person would have to come to the board to find exactly what table at which he/she was to vote. Well, Bev noticed a rather common problem. It was common for these people to have as many as four names. (I don't have any good samples because I do not have my original questionnaire.) However, it was definitely difficult to decide how to collate a collection of names. Maybe in the case of Pedro Flores de Sanchez, was it in the F's or in the S's? Maybe that is not a good example, but it was a problem similar to that. More than once, a person



would be seen looking over several boards where it should have been an easy job of alphabetizing. But what are the rules?

Incidentally, to speed up the search, there were master displays outside of the voting buildings where people could have located their table before entering the building. They were little used. Cardboards with DUI pictures were hung on a long clothesline that hung at eye level in some spots on the line and at the ground as the line sagged between posts. Clumsy. As an alternative, some parties set up shaded booths at some prescribed distance from the voting building. They had the information that would provide the table number on computers. I believe I saw one of the cards from one of these assistance booths. The information was recorded for the voter on cards carrying the party colors. I believe that was contrary to election code.

Food vendors came inside the voting center. They were not supposed to. However, these people are quite oriented to buying from vendors, so there must have been a good market. I mainly remember vendors with packages of peanuts and Chicklets gum.

Probably the most flagrant infractions were the demonstration. I noted that there were three major demos. The FMLN had one at 9:15. There a crowd of chanting FMLN supporters traveled through our building and up the stairs to a table on the mezzanine. The occasion was the widow of the former FMLN presidential candidate (SCHAFIK HANDAL -- referred to as just "Schafik") coming to vote (Schafik passed away in December.) Lots of noise. There was an ARENA demo at around 10:20. But finally, there was a massive demonstration by ARENA when the current Vice President of El Salvador arrived to vote. She was an attractive lady who just happened to be accompanied by the U.S. Ambassador. The crowd was large and deafening. She voted and then displayed her ballot to the congregation as they blew off the top of the building with their noise. Not only were the demos not allowed by code, but it was said that table members throughout a building were distracted by such demos and even left their tables to watch.

As a sidelight, Schafik is like a folk hero to the FMLN. There are many tee shirts with Che Guevara and Archbishop Oscar Romero. I saw Schafik tee shirts too. He died at 75. His funeral had a procession of 100,000 Salvadorans. He had been an activist and legislator for 60 years. One of the odd facts about him was that he was of Palestinian descent just like the current President of El Salvador, Tony Saca.

We stayed in the "A" Building until about 12 Noon at which time we left until about 3 PM. Taline gave us this time to eat and rest. The voting was to end at 5 PM followed immediately by vote counting. That counting activity was of primary interest for the overseers. It was open-ended as to how long that would take. We were to rest in anticipation of a long night as had been experienced in former years. Several people still remained at the building while we were gone for our lunch and siesta.

We chose to eat at the Metrocentro that is a shopping center about a block from our hotel. It is touted as the largest in Central America. Our choice of an eating establishment was as close to a U.S. restaurant as we had seen yet. It took a while to be order and be served. There were 6 or 7 of us. After eating, we went back to the hotel and got "40 winks." Then at 2:30 the bus promptly appeared and we went back to the voting center.

We returned to the Feria Internacional just in time to witness the noisy ARENA demonstration mentioned earlier. After that we returned to check the status of our tables. It was very warm in the un-air conditioned building. Voting tapered off as we got closer to 5 PM and closing. Somehow I seemed to notice more young voters around the last hour. Just my observation.

One of the FMLN vigilantes that had helped us set up the table in the morning was not fixed to our table. He was apparently a helpful “know-it-all”. He went away early and appeared late in the afternoon. He had replaced his FMLN vigilante tee shirt and replaced it with a red tee shirt with a hammer and sickle on the front. The party has factions as does every party. The pro-Cuba side probably makes negotiating difficult. One might say that the FMLN party has an image problem. It is said that Schafik’s rhetoric was such that he alienated many as being too much of a leftist. (And this last statement might be too reserved.)

At 5 PM, the voting ended. I wasn’t near a door to see what happened if anyone was still arriving with intentions of voting. Again, I heard of no problems. The voting just ended without any ringing of a bell or announcement. We just transitioned in to final wrap-up phase of this election day.

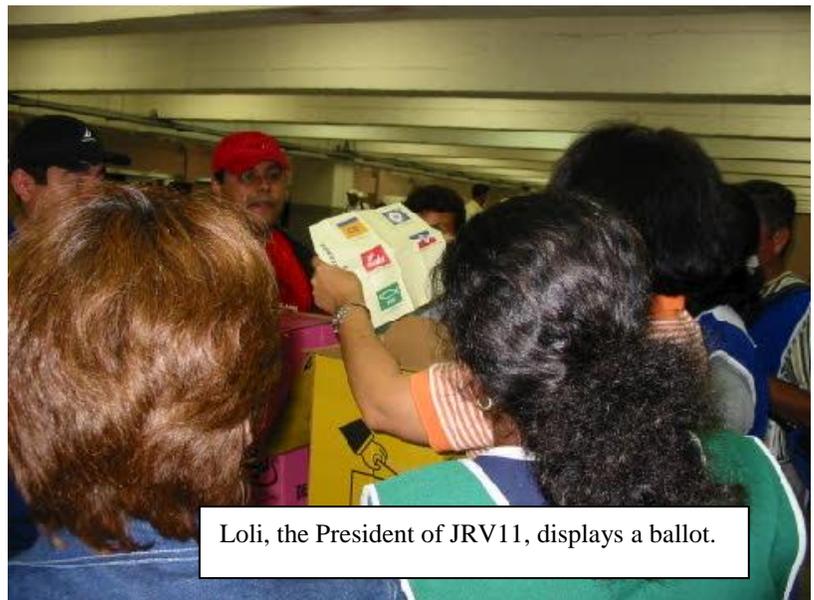
Among the things that had to be done was to count the remaining ballots. The corners of the ballots that had been collected in the secretary’s bag had to be counted. Everyone seemed to have at least a small task in preparation for the vote count. From counting the ballots and the torn off corners, we came up with a number of ballots that should be in the box. Fortunately, all counts came out as expected although we had to wait until both ballot boxes (one for municipal and one for deputy assembly votes) were completely counted before we knew we were successful. I believe the magic number was 238. Several of the early tabulations could have been prejudiced by knowing that total. However, the way in which the ballots were counted made it almost impossible to cheat.

When it was time to count the votes, the president of the table opened one of the taped ballot boxes.

She would reach in and pull out one ballot at a time. She would unfold it in front of all and looked at which logo had been checked on the ballot. She would then hand it to the table member who was a representative of that party. There was suspense early, at least for me. That dwindled somewhat as the predominant number of ballots were handed to the FMLN and the ARENA representatives.

This process went on for sometime. When done, the representatives

counted their winnings. The totals were totaled and the magic number of 238 legal ballots was confirmed. The number of votes each party received was then recorded on one of the ACTAs –



Loli, the President of JRV11, displays a ballot.

one of the 5 or so official records for the table. The process was again repeated with the second ballot box.

A party member for each of the parties signed the ACTAs confirming the vote count at the table. There were a couple damaged or blank ballots that went into a special category. All ballots were packaged up and a party rep from each party received carbon copies of a couple ACTAs to provide to their leaders. (At least the carbon paper forms were fantastic. Each ACTA was an original on top of several copies (maybe 10 or 12). The bottom copies were readable. No one complained.)

Several envelopes had to be filled with copies of ACTAs for government or electoral offices.

Incidentally, the vote at my table was:

	ARENA	FMLN	PCN	PDC	CD/PNL	Total
Deputies	99	100	6	3	30	238
Mayoral	107	106	5	3	17	238

The materials were packed to be delivered to the election office in the computer building, I suppose. Someone or two of the JRV carried the materials off. The women of the table chatted and hugged as they drifted away. Workers were at work tearing down banners and cleaning up already. Election workers still milled around. Shouting party workers staged mini-victory rallies.

We left the building and went off to the bus to eat. It was around 7 PM. Our major job was done.

As it turned out, we soon found out that the vote in San Salvador was very close. Our first report put ARENA slightly ahead of FMLN. Well, if it was going to be a problem it was a problem for the TSE who had their offices at the local Radisson. The beauty of the vote counting was that there would be no need for a recount of the ballots. Each table had handled that at the night of the election when each party's rep signed off on the table's vote count. The only thing the TSE had to do was to examine and decide on the disposition of the faulty ballots of which there was only a couple at my table. (Look, no more Florida or Ohio.) As it turned out, the winner in San Salvador was declared to be Violeta by just 59 votes. That was the headlines of the Wednesday newspapers as we left El Salvador.

