

hardliners defended labor-repressive institutions and practices until FMLN's emergence. Salvadoran history can thus be characterized by elite resistance to change. It resulted in an economy based on export agriculture, elite reliance on the political control of labor, and elite opposition to political reform.³ By the 1970s, the quiescence of those who were economically and politically excluded gave way to protest and political mobilization. Urban and rural youth found little opportunity for upward mobility, and social actors began to contest economic and political exclusion. For example, some elements of the Catholic Church began to encourage *campesinos* (farm laborers) to reflect on the Bible's implications for contemporary issues of social justice.⁴ Such organizations as the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants demanded land and better working conditions for *campesinos*. And Christian Democrats extended their party organization to the countryside from its origins among urban professionals.

As political mobilization increased and developed a national following, the Salvadoran government responded with a wave of repression. On February 28, 1977, for example, security forces opened fire on a midnight vigil following a political rally, leaving dozens dead.⁵ Later in the year, repression deepened after the government suspended constitutional protections. Violence against progressive Catholics escalated as well. Between 1977 and 1979, six priests were killed.⁶ In addition to controlling the army, El Salvador's military controlled the national guard, treasury police, national police, national intelligence directorate, and paramilitary civil-defense forces.⁷ These forces functioned as

³ Wood (2000, pp. 25–51).

⁴ Carlos Rafael Cabarrús, *Génesis de una Revolución: Análisis del Surgimiento y Desarrollo de la Organización Campesina en El Salvador*, Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1983; Rodolfo Cardenal, *Historia de una Esperanza: Vida de Rutilio Grande*, San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1985.

⁵ William Deane Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador*, Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1996, pp. 109–110.

⁶ Anna Lisa Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, pp. 63–65.

⁷ El Salvador's security forces included 40,000 Army, 1,200 Navy, 2,400 Air Force, 4,000 national guard, 6,000 national police, 2,000 treasury police, and 24,000 civil-defense forces