

Opportunity Organizations and Threat-Induced Contention: Protest Waves in Authoritarian Settings¹

Paul D. Almeida
Texas A&M University

The article combines two strands of political process theory (opportunity and threat) in a changing authoritarian context. Through the use of protest event, archival, and secondary sources on El Salvador between 1962 and 1981, the study examines the outbreak and forms of two protest waves that are generated by the temporal sequencing of political opportunity and threat environments. The specific opportunities of *institutional access* and *competitive elections* motivate regime challengers to form durable civic organizations. This newly available organizational infrastructure can be used to sustain reformist contention in the near term as well as be radicalized to launch more disruptive and violent protest campaigns when opportunities recede and the political environment transitions to one characterized by mounting threats (state-attributed economic problems, erosion of rights, and state repression).

INTRODUCTION

The political process model has reached near canonical stature in the study of social movements. The theoretical framework focuses on the specific political opportunities in a movement's environment that facilitate collective action by providing incentives such as institutional access, electoral realignments, elite conflict, external allies, and relaxation in state

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repression (Tarrow 1994; McAdam 1996). Yet, even with the recent gains in explaining social movement emergence and outcomes, we still know relatively little about these same processes in authoritarian states, which tend to be much less homogeneous than core democracies (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1999; Meyer 2002; Wickham 2002; McAdam 2003).

Scholars taking up the challenge to apply the political process model in nondemocratic contexts find support for the framework with core political opportunities associated with changes in protest levels and outcomes (Cook 1996; Hipsher 1998; Bunce 1999). These important studies often emphasize authoritarian situations in which a polity experiences a period of liberalization and/or democratization (Osa 2001). Selecting cases that allow for variation in the nondemocratic context may yield different sources and patterns of contention. For example, what conditions are linked to the outbreak of protest waves in extremely repressive authoritarian settings where political opportunities are scarce?

The present article addresses such questions and contributes to social movement theory by analyzing the temporal sequencing of political opportunity, organizational infrastructure, and threat in shaping the *level* and *form* of collective action in a changing authoritarian context. Specifically, I analyze the onset of two protest waves in El Salvador between 1960 and 1981 (see figs. 1 and 2).² The study begins with the conceptual distinction between political opportunity and threat and is followed by a sequential theoretical model that outlines the shift from an opportunity environment to a threatening political environment.

DISTINGUISHING THREAT FROM POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

Tilly's (1978, pp. 133–38) and Goldstone and Tilly's (2001) mobilization models maintain that *two* general paths drive expanded collective action: (1) *political opportunity* and (2) *threat*. In recent years political opportunity variables have received much more attention than threat variables in the social movement literature (see McAdam [1982] 1999, pp. x–xi; Tarrow 2001, p. 12; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, pp. 42–43). In addition, in standard political process models threat (e.g., state repression) is often incorporated *within* the concept of political opportunity as the negative side of opportunity associated with declining protest (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). However, with the move to extend political process theory to au-

² I use the term “protest wave” interchangeably with “protest cycle” in this work. Protest waves or cycles are defined as periods of widespread protest activity across multiple social groups and often encompass much of the national territory (Tarrow 1989, pp. 48–49).

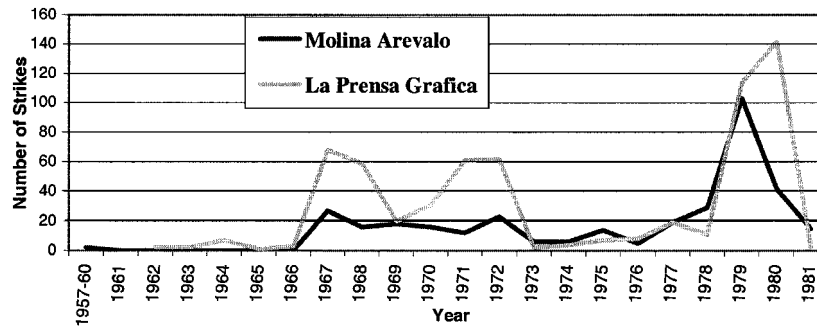


FIG. 1.—Reported strikes in El Salvador, 1957–81. (Sources: *La Prensa Gráfica* 1962–81; Molina Arévalo 1988.)

thoritarian contexts, we find that protest is not driven solely by responsive political institutions and relatively facilitative governments.

In order to analyze the roles of political opportunity and threat dimensions in contributing to increased contention we need to conceptually separate them and develop indicators of threat as political process scholars have previously done for political opportunity. Tilly (1978) defines *opportunity* as the likelihood that challengers will enhance their interests or extend existing benefits if they act collectively. In contrast, *threat* denotes the probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted if challenging groups fail to act collectively (Tilly 1978; Koopmans 1995; Jasper 1997; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Viewing opportunity and threat as ideal types, groups may either be driven by positive environmental cues and institutional incentives to push forward new demands and extend benefits (i.e., political opportunity) or be pressed into action in fear of losing current goods, rights, and safety (i.e., threat). In the following sections, a sequential theoretical framework is provided that conceptually links political opportunity and threat to the outbreak of protest waves in authoritarian settings.³

THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY ENVIRONMENT IN AUTHORITARIAN SETTINGS

The political opportunity model is largely a theory of protest driven by a relatively more responsive institutional setting and political context.

³ In the present article political opportunity and threat are treated as distinct (but sequentially related) political contexts in authoritarian settings. For an excellent theoretical discussion and formal model of a “mixed” political environment where various levels of political opportunity and threat occur simultaneously, see Goldstone and Tilly (2001).

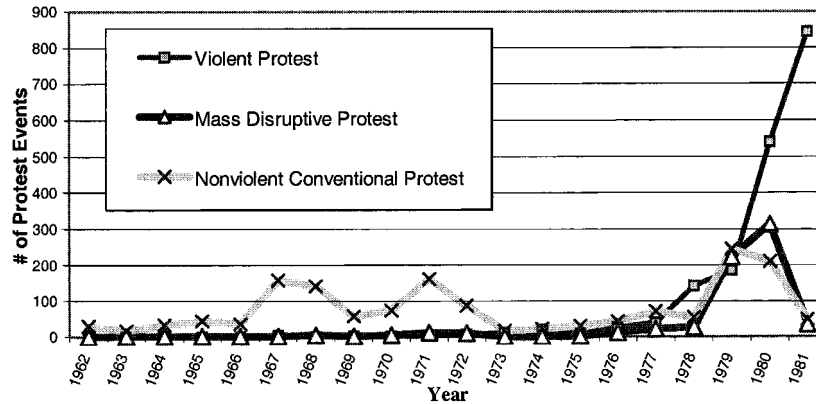


FIG. 2.—Forms of protest in El Salvador, 1962–81. Nonviolent conventional protests were defined as street marches, strikes, public gatherings, demonstrations, petitions, spray-painting political graffiti, handing out political literature, hunger strikes, and public statements. Mass disruptive protests were coded as occupations of buildings and land, constructing barricades, cutting off power, sit-ins, and disseminating political propaganda via homemade explosives (*las bombas de propaganda*). Violent protests include armed attacks, bombings, kidnappings, arson, sabotage, armed occupations of radio stations and towns, and robberies by political groups. (Source: *La Prensa Gráfica* 1962–81)

That is, the political environment opens in a manner conducive to the pressing of demands by multiple groups (Tarrow 1989; Koopmans 1993; Mueller 1999; Beissinger 2001). In Tilly's (1978) initial conceptualization of opportunity, groups have a greater probability of realizing their interests or gaining new advantages if they decide to act collectively. The state and state managers are probably the most important actors in organizing this changing political environment (Jenkins 1995; Goodwin 1997).

While political opportunities increase the likelihood for movement emergence in democratic settings, in nondemocratic contexts they *first* encourage the formation of challenger organizations. To realize an escalation in protest requires a certain level of such organizational resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977) and cognitive attributions that assess and interpret the political environment (Snow et al. 1986; McAdam 1999). Without organizational structures collective action will likely be short-lived (Oberschall 1973). Organizational resources include sympathetic institutions, associational networks, and civic organizations (McCarthy 1996). These informal and formal organizational elements constitute an *organizational infrastructure* for multiple groups to link previously unconnected collectivities, exchange resources and information, and launch protest campaigns resulting in a protest wave or cycle (Walton and Seddon 1994; Gould 1995; Minkoff 1997; McAdam 1999).

Although various challenger organizations and their building blocks of

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associational networks and sympathetic institutions serve as important covariates in explaining protest dynamics in democratic settings, their mere existence must be accounted for in authoritarian contexts where basic civil liberties and rights of free association have been historically restricted (Wickham 2002). Two political opportunity dimensions salient in overcoming these restrictions and encouraging challenger organizational formation include (1) *institutional access* and (2) *competitive elections* (Tarrow 1989, 1994; Jenkins 1995; Markoff 1996; Linz and Stepan 1996). Below, these two political opportunity dimensions are analyzed in relation to the emergence of an organizational infrastructure in authoritarian settings.

Institutional Access

New laws, state agencies, resource commitments, and symbolic gestures emitted by liberalizing states to civil society act as positive forces for disempowered groups (Almeida and Stearns 1998; Amenta and Young 1999). When new laws are passed and written down, they provide an increasingly stable, predictable, and consistent system of political incentives for challengers to form organizations (Stinchcombe 1965; Weber 1968; McCarthy 1996; Wiktorowicz 2001). Also, officially registering and legalizing nongovernmental entities (e.g., political parties, labor unions, professional and civic associations, rural cooperatives) in authoritarian contexts provide a state-sanctioned and legitimated organizational form (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) in which to support collective claim making. A more competitive electoral system ensures the reliability of this widening institutional access for organization building.

Competitive Elections

One of the most important ways in which authoritarian states vary resides in the relative openness of the electoral process (Cook 1996; Markoff 1996; Linz and Stepan 1996). Democratization efforts allowing increasingly *competitive elections* in authoritarian regimes supply previously excluded groups with an arena in which to begin organizing drives. These nationally generalized conditions of permitting relatively open elections contribute to the formation of organizations and associations by protecting multiple challengers (Tilly 1978).

By convoking multiparty elections, the ruling political party's legitimacy becomes linked to the election process and outcome. As a result, severe repression of emerging civic organizations can place state legitimacy and future electoral competitiveness in question. The state's new incentive to restrain from repressive acts gives challengers the opportunity

to access organizational resources and sympathetic institutions to found and maintain new organizations around specific issues affecting their constituencies. Excluded groups calculate that they have a greater chance of successfully organizing and exerting political pressure without being physically threatened or extinguished.

Once opposition parties secure some representation in a democratizing polity, they have an interest in forming alliances with challenging groups and organizations outside to increase their own electoral power (Przeworski 1991; Markoff 1996). Electoral opposition parties may encourage and view emerging challenger organizations as a vital component of their own constituency. With allies in the polity, challengers increase the likelihood that their investments in organizing result in new advantages and organizational survival. Boosting challenger organizing efforts include such opposition party actions as supporting and financing civic organizations, and securing a hearing/parliamentary debate for demands and more neutral state arbitration for conflicts with the private sector. Challenger organizations under these conditions want to reform the state, get new policies, expand existing benefits, or change public attitudes (Tilly 1978; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Goldstone 1998). In accord with this liberalizing trend in state practices and the larger political environment, more nonviolent and civil forms of protest are predicted since institutional channels of conflict resolution are more available and legitimated (Goodwin 1997; Goldstone 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY "HOLDOVERS"

A period of expanded political opportunity in authoritarian contexts also permits the survival of an organizational infrastructure after the political opportunities responsible for its emergence diminish. In other words, political opportunity periods deposit lasting organizational remnants or "holdovers" that persist in the political environment (Taylor 1989; Meyer and Whittier 1994; Minkoff 1997). Indeed, the maintenance and survival of challenger organizations may be the most important outcome of a political opportunity-generated protest wave in authoritarian contexts. Such enduring organizations provide a fungible resource infrastructure from which protest waves may emerge in much different political environments. One such political context is that of threat, whereby a set of *negative* environmental conditions pushes groups into collective claim making.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITION FROM OPPORTUNITY TO THREAT

A political environment that transitions from political opportunity to threat will likely initially throw the entire social movement sector off guard. After years of investing time and resources in organizational founding, membership recruitment, and strategies consonant with a liberalizing authoritarian state, challengers facing a transition to a threatening environment find that the old ways of organizing and seeking political influence are inadequate. These challenger sunk costs will likely cause organizational inertia and a lag effect in responding and adapting to a more repressive political environment (Stinchcombe 1965; Hannan and Freeman 1989).

However, if the political environment continues to transition in a consistent direction over time (i.e., a more threatening trajectory), challengers are once again signaled by the state to change their organizing structures and strategies. For example, petitioning a national parliament that assumed power via electoral fraud or engaging in orderly street marches while security forces repeatedly disperse them with live ammunition motivates well-organized and resourceful challengers to radicalize their organizational structures and strategies. Having access to a preexisting organizational infrastructure allows challengers to adopt new organizational forms and practices (i.e., growth in radical organizations and disruptive protest) *over time* in response to a threatening environment.

With an organizational infrastructure already in place, challengers more easily employ bloc recruitment, while “the presence of numerous organizations ensures a pre-established communications network, resources already partially mobilized, the presence of individuals with leadership skills, and a tradition of participation among members of the collectivity” (Oberschall 1973, p. 125). Without the previous buildup of an organizational infrastructure or political opportunity “holdovers,” threat-induced collective action will likely be weak to nonexistent.

THE THREATENING POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

We can partition threat into more precise dimensions. Three principal threats that apply to authoritarian states in the global periphery include (1) *state-attributed economic problems*, (2) *erosion of rights*, and (3) *state repression* (Tilly 1978; Walton and Seddon 1994; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Goodwin 2001; Almeida 2002). These forms of threat in most times and places increase the costs of collective action and deter protest (Tilly 1978; Jasper 1997). However, if the recipients of these threats are well-organized, resourceful groups with an elaborate organizational infrastructure, greater levels of collective action and resistance are expected (Jenkins 1983; Gould

1991; Walton and Seddon 1994; McAdam 2003). Challenger organizations boost confidence, exchange information and resources, link disconnected groups, and provide a collective vehicle to resist unwanted changes via popular contention. Thus, organizational infrastructures surviving past a period of political opportunity in which they were founded perform a key task in determining if threats will deter or escalate collective dissent.

State-Attributed Economic Problems

As the resource mobilization perspective suggests, economic grievances alone are usually not sufficient to explain escalating levels of contention since they are ubiquitous while protest is not (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkins 1983). Nonetheless, when *organized* groups convincingly attribute to specific agents the responsibility for a decline in their economic conditions they may initiate campaigns to resist unwanted changes (e.g., middle-class organizations in Argentina—*los ahorristas*—protesting throughout 2002 against the loss of their savings accounts because of state-initiated bank freezes and currency devaluations). The administrative expansion of the nation-state as regulator of economic life and vital resources makes it a common target for redress of economic problems (Tilly 1984; Walton and Seddon 1994; Goodwin 1997). Two specific state-attributed economic problems in the global periphery include land access (Wickham-Crowley 1992) and basic price increases (Goldstone 1986 and 2001).

When state-sponsored agro-export policies expel peasants from subsistence plots and fail to institute highly publicized agrarian reform or when basic prices rise abruptly, incentives increase for networked and resourceful groups to resist. For example, state-initiated structural adjustment programs and price increases are likely to trigger severe protests in developing countries with dense urban populations and high rates of labor unionization (Walton and Ragin 1990; Walton and Shefner 1994; Auyero 2002). In sum, state-attributed economic problems experienced directly in the immediate lives of resourceful groups may be a threat incentive to join in resistant collective action.⁴ Even though state-attributed economic problems increase the probability of heightened protest among organized groups, the form of protest will likely only become more radicalized and violent when combined with an erosion of rights and escalating state repression.

⁴ Tilly (1978) originally gives the examples of rural resistance to tax collection and land dispossession as episodes of threat-induced collective action (i.e., state-attributed economic problems). In more recent works, analysts have focused more on the threat of state repression (Goldstone and Tilly 2001).

Erosion of Rights

After a period of extending civil rights, taking away voting and a sense of citizenship blocks the conventional means to individual political participation (Useem 1985; Olzak, Beasley, and Olivier 2003). Alternative, nonconventional political strategies and organizations appear much more attractive under these circumstances (Amenta and Young 1999). In particular, when competitive national elections are nullified, canceled, and/or perceived as fraudulent and meaningless, the state announces the closure of the polity on a national scale and calls into question its legitimacy. This sends a strong message to challenger organizations that the state as an audience and arbiter to reform-type demands is greatly restricted (if not outright hostile). Over time, challengers will likely use their in-place organizational infrastructure to form extraparliamentary and revolutionary organizations and attempt more disruptive and violent strategies to exercise political influence. Unresponsive state managers that are perceived to be no longer publicly accountable drive this radicalization in the form of protest, when petitioning authorities through routine conflict resolution channels appears futile (White 1989; Goodwin 1997; Jenkins and Bond 2001).

State Repression

State repression may also be a critical component in igniting further protest. A number of empirical studies outside of advanced industrialized democracies have shown positive effects of state repression on aggregate and group-specific protest activities (Olivier 1991; Khawaja 1993; Francisco 1995; Rasler 1996; Loveman 1998; Schock 1999; Moore 2000; Beisinger 2001). State repression may generate moral shocks and suddenly imposed grievances for both the general public and activist groups (White 1989; Loveman 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Wood 2003). Coercive state behavior breaks publicly held norms of expected state-civil society relations—especially when the repressive acts are way out of proportion to the type of demands and claims protesters pursue (Goldstone 1998).

Activists can use state repressive acts as empirical verifications of the unworthiness of state managers to rule as well as for motivational appeals within organizations and interorganizational units to participate in future protest actions. These organizational settings provide solidary incentives, normative pressures, and shared activist identities to engage in high-risk protest (Loveman 1998; Snow and McAdam 2000; Petersen 2001).⁵ In

⁵ The sense of harm, though, has upper boundaries on escalating protest. At some

addition, repressive acts grant occasions for emotionally charged focal events, such as funeral processions and homage ceremonies for fallen victims of state violence, to rally challengers.⁶ State repression, as erosion of rights, also pushes well-networked challengers into more radical forms of organization and dissent as repeated outrageous acts of state violence convince challengers that a fundamental reorganization of the state and society is a desirable goal (Brockett 1993; Goodwin 1997; Goldstone 1998).

THEORETICAL SUMMARY: TWO PATHS TO PROTEST WAVES

Figure 3 summarizes the temporal relationships conditioning alternate pathways to protest waves in authoritarian contexts. The schematic model should be viewed as a probabilistic causal chain (Ganz 2000; Tilly 2002) that sequentially links political opportunity, organizational infrastructure, and threats to the outbreak of protest waves. An authoritarian regime that liberalizes with institutional access and competitive elections (i.e., time 1) brings about the development of an organizational infrastructure (i.e., formation and legalization of civic organizations, cooperatives, and unions). As challengers interpret the relatively positive cues emitted from the opening political environment, they use their newly formed organizational infrastructure and launch protest campaigns leading to the outbreak of a protest wave. Under these conditions, multiple groups press the state for new advantages and benefits, using more orderly and non-violent tactics.

When political opportunities contract and the protest wave descends, an organizational infrastructure is left in place (i.e., opportunity “hold-overs”). If, following the political opportunity-induced protest episode, challengers receive consistent environmental feedback indicating that the political climate has shifted to one potentially more injurious if they fail to mobilize (i.e., loss of goods, rights, and safety in time 2), they are motivated to adapt their organizational infrastructure to the threatening environment over time and create more radical organizations. Once the organizational infrastructure is radicalized, another protest wave is trig-

point protest will likely appear too dangerous as the state’s repressive actions turn outrage into fear (Brockett 1993). Much of the large-sample, cross-national literature on state repression and political violence finds evidence for a curvilinear relationship with semirepressive regimes generating the highest levels of political discontent (Muller 1985; Muller and Seligson 1987; Boswell and Dixon 1990; Muller and Weede 1994).

⁶ The three largest protest campaigns in Argentina in 2002 took place in Buenos Aires on June 27, July 3, and December 20 to publicly denounce the police killings on June 26 of two unemployed protesters (*los piqueteros*) (Fernández Moores 2002) and commemorate the one-year anniversary of the 28 antiausterity protesters killed in late December 2001.

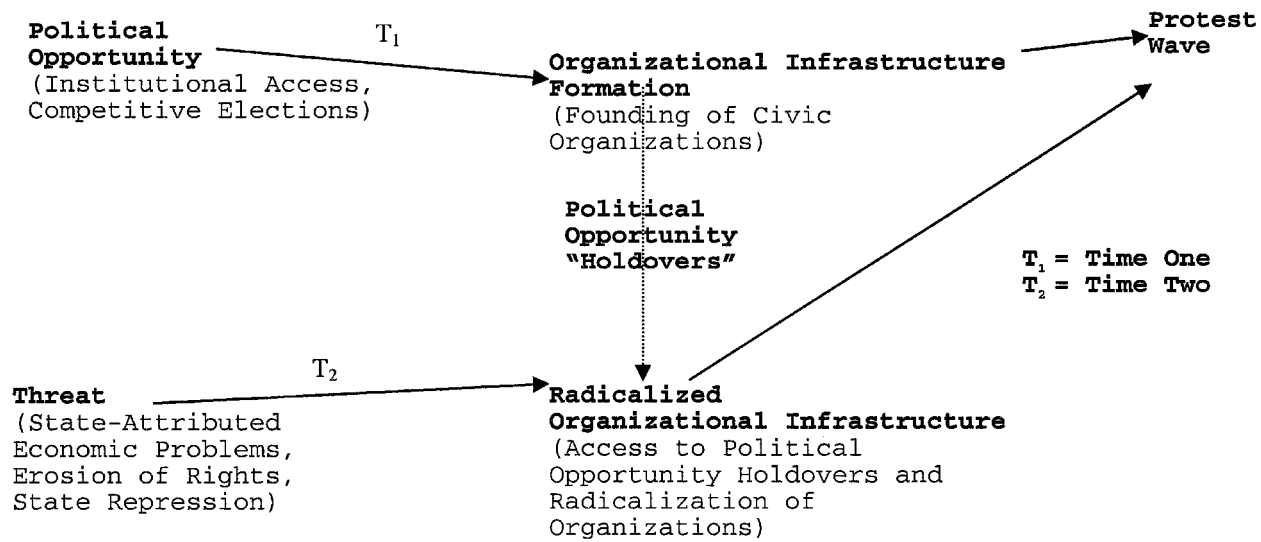


FIG. 3.—Pathways to protest wave outbreaks in authoritarian settings

gered by repeated threat incentives. Radical challenger organizations employ more disruptive and violent forms of protest as institutional channels to defend rights erode and state repression decreases the national government's credibility.

DATA AND METHODS

This study employs a dynamic political process method that tracks changes over time (Gamson and Meyer 1996) in El Salvador's political environment to explain variations in the *level* and *form* of protest activity. The analysis centers on the sequential relationship between political opportunity, organizational infrastructure, and threat in generating the outbreak of protest waves. The case draws on protest events collected and coded from the daily El Salvadoran newspaper *La Prensa Gráfica* between 1962 and 1981.⁷ The number of protest events identified and coded over the 20-year period (January 1, 1962–December 31, 1981) totaled 4,151. Protest events were defined as collective challenges of three or more people making claims on political or economic elites (Rucht and Ohlemacher 1992; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1996). Protests were coded into 25 different forms, ranging from petitions and street marches to factory occupations and armed attacks. Other properties of the protest events were also coded, including use of conventional nonviolence, disruption and violence by protesters, and presence and type of challenger organization(s) in protest events.

TWO PROTEST WAVES COMPARED

El Salvador, 1932 to mid-1960s

Between 1932 and the mid-1960s El Salvador's political system was restricted to conservative military governance (Guidos Véjar 1980; Baloyra 1982; Wood 2000; Mahoney 2001). The military regime originated in 1932 in the context of a peasant uprising in the western coffee-growing departments. The security forces swiftly suppressed the revolt and carried out in retribution a massacre of a reported 8,000–30,000 peasants in a three-week period (Anderson 1970; Zamosc 1989; Pérez Brignoli 1995; Paige 1997). Following the massacre, from the 1930s to the mid-1960s, there were only sporadic outbreaks of urban unrest. Though at times large enough to bring down the existing government and usher in a new

⁷ When *La Prensa Gráfica* was unavailable or additional information was needed about a particular event, a Salvadoran newspaper—*Diario Latino*, *El Diario de Hoy*, *El Mundo*, or *El Tiempo*—was used.

military regime (e.g., 1944 and 1960; Turcios 1993), popular contention never lasted for more than a few months. Restrictions on union organization, noncompetitive elections, general fear in the countryside, and a series of quasimartial laws and state repressive actions (e.g., 1944–48, 1952–56, 1960, and 1961) prevented the formation of durable civic organizations (Larín 1972). For example, the urban labor movement failed on several occasions to form an enduring labor federation after the 1932 crackdown (Larín 1972).⁸ The political climate, though, changed in the mid-1960s, becoming favorable to the emergence of an organizational infrastructure capable of sustaining multiple social movements.

Political Opportunities in El Salvador, 1960–72

Institutional access.—The Salvadoran military regime that emerged in the early 1960s was under enormous international and domestic pressure to implement moderately reformist measures. Its liberalizing efforts could most clearly be observed in the institutional access it provided to three key sectors of civil society: (1) the labor sector, (2) the educational sector, and (3) the church sector. The national government promoted a number of unprecedented initiatives in the sphere of state-labor relations. The state provided greater autonomy and investment in the educational sector by expanding the public education system and legalizing school teachers' associations. In the church sector, the state actively supported the formation of cooperative associations allowing entry to the Catholic Church in the countryside. This increasing institutional access (along with multiparty elections) encouraged a dramatic upsurge in the formation of civic organizations in all three social sectors.

Labor sector access.—To better regulate the industrialization process, the Salvadoran state revised and instituted a number of labor laws in the early 1960s that acted as a catalyst for the mobilization of urban labor organizations. In 1962 the liberalizing Rivera military regime allowed governmental and semigovernmental employees the right to form associations with state recognition (Molina Arévalo 1988; Arriola Palomares and Candray Alvarado 1994). In 1963, Rivera enacted a labor code. Unprecedented for modern El Salvador, a set of legalized labor standards was put into place in which worker grievances could be settled (Arriola Palomares and Candray Alvarado 1994). The labor code recognized the right to form labor federations and confederations as well as a jurisdictional body (ministry of labor and labor courts) in which to place claims

⁸ The Salvadoran labor and legal historian Augusto Larín (1972, p. 18) states that between 1932 and 1944 (during the General Martínez dictatorship) even mentioning the words “labor union” could be considered a public offense.

for adjudication. These opening gestures in the sphere of state-labor relations reactivated a number of clandestine and semilegal union confederations (CGTS, CGS; see app. table A1 for full names and translations of acronyms) and were responsible for the foundation of several new labor federations and unions organizations (e.g., FUSS, STISSS, STUS, SETA, FESTIAVTCES, UNOC, FESINCONTRANS). Table 1 summarizes the principal legislative actions in the early 1960s opening the way for urban labor organization.

The Law of Collective Labor Conflicts, passed in 1961, created the potential that the state would become a more neutral arbiter in disputes with private employers. The right of public employees to unionize also mobilized thousands of teachers, social security institute workers, state-industry and administration workers, and university workers to form union organizations and associations in the mid to late 1960s. Legislation authorizing the right of urban workers to strike was ratified in the 1962 constitution as well as in the labor code of 1963. This legally sanctioned an important pressure tactic for urban workers. With these state actions, the size of the union sector grew considerably in the 1960s. In 1960 there were 64 unions with 21,000 affiliates and by 1971 there were 127 unions with 64,186 members (Menjívar 1982; Molina Arévalo 1988).

Educational sector access.—A major institution in Salvadoran society historically supporting oppositional activity is the National University of El Salvador (UES) (Parkman 1988; Grenier 1999). In 1950 the national government implemented a university autonomy law that was not activated until the elections of the 1960s (Webre 1979; security forces invaded and occupied the university in 1952 and 1960). In the 1960s, the central government permitted self-management of the university with little interference (Grenier 1999). As part of the state's liberalization drive in the 1960s, it greatly increased funding for postsecondary education. In 1960, the national government budget for higher education was \$800,000 and it grew to over \$6.5 million by 1970 (U.S. AID 1973). The proportion of the total education budget allocated to universities also grew significantly in these same years, from 7% to 22% (U.S. AID 1973).

In the context of these new state resource commitments to higher education, university student enrollment expanded markedly. Between 1955 and 1968, the university student population more than quadrupled, from 1,393 to 6,500 students (Wickham Crowley 1989; Valle 1993). The UES also relocated its academic schools previously dispersed throughout the capital to a centralized location in a northern San Salvador suburb (Ciudad Universitaria). The physical size of the new main campus tripled between 1963 and 1968 (Valle 1993).

In addition, new UES campuses opened in Santa Ana in 1965 and San Miguel in 1969—the second and third largest cities in the nation. In 1965

TABLE 1
NATIONAL LABOR LEGISLATION PROMOTING INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS

Law or Legal Action	Year of Enactment
Labor Tribunal Law	1960
Law of Collective Labor Conflicts	1961
Revision of Retirement and Pensions Law ...	1961
Legalization of Public Employees to Form Unions/Associations	1962
Right of Urban Workers to Strike	1962, 1963
Right of Unions to Form Federations and Confederations	1963

SOURCE.—Molina Arévalo (1988).

the Jesuit-run Catholic university (Universidad Centroamericana José Siméon Cañas) was founded in the capital as a public corporation and reached an enrollment of more than 1,300 students by 1970 (Beirne 1996). Instead of counting the number of potentially mobilizable university students in the hundreds on a small, single decentralized campus, as in the pre-1960s, students now numbered in the thousands in four centralized universities in the three largest cities. This development created favorable ecological conditions for the building of university-based organizations (Zhao 1998).

The government also nearly tripled its investment in primary and secondary public education between 1960 and 1970, from a budget of \$9.14 million to a budget of \$26.58 million (U.S. AID 1973). In this same period, the number of enrolled junior high and high school students more than doubled (U.S. AID 1973). During this rapid educational expansion, the state tolerated the formation of public sector teachers' associations, whose leadership had in part been exiled after a 1961 military coup.

Church sector access.—Beyond the new urban labor laws and educational expansion, institutional access spread to the countryside via the Catholic Church. In the 1960s, the central government started to encourage the formation of rural cooperative associations, giving increased jurisdiction and resources for this purpose to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Regional Colonization Institute (Guerra Calderon 1976). At the same time, the state permitted the Catholic Church to initiate cooperatives in rural zones with small landholders and poor peasants. The government granted legal recognition to the Catholic Church Cooperative program in 1967 (FUNPROCOOP) and formed its own cooperative institute in 1969 (INSAFOCOOP; Guerra Calderon 1976). Though modest in intentions, the cooperative programs, according to one participant observer, “broke the ice of fear, distrust, and passivity” that had existed between the peas-

antry and the state since the 1932 massacre (Guerra Calderon 1976, p. 231).

In 1961, the church formed the Inter-Diocesan Social Secretariat (ISS), which was funded by the central government from 1962 to 1967 (Vega 1994). The ISS sponsored rural cooperatives for small landowning and landless peasants under the FUNPROCOOP program (Guerra Calderon 1976). Church-sponsored cooperatives spread rapidly, starting in 1963 with 98 members in 2 cooperatives and reaching 37 cooperatives in 1969 with 10,500 members; by 1971 there were 54 cooperatives (Guerra Calderon 1976). In these cooperatives, peasants learned valuable farming and leadership skills, while at the same time they received training in community organizing and civil rights (Vega 1994). The church also used the legal protection of the cooperative program as a springboard to organize peasant leagues, Christian base communities, and peasant training centers. The opening electoral system added another layer of pressure on the state to sustain institutional access in the labor, educational, and church sectors.

Competitive elections.—In 1963, following 32 years of one-party military rule, the Salvadoran government changed the electoral system to proportional representation—partly as a result of Colonel Rivera's embarrassment at running unopposed in the 1962 presidential elections as well as pressure brought to bear by the newly formed Partido Demócrata Cristiana (Christian Democratic Party, or PDC, founded in 1960). The new proportional system allotted a fixed number of national deputies (the equivalent of U.S. House and Senate seats) in El Salvador's unicameral legislative assembly to each of the 14 departments (the equivalent of U.S. states) based on its population size. This dramatically transformed the system of political competition for nearly a decade.

The 1964 parliamentary elections staged the first test for the new system of proportional representation. The oppositional PDC performed strongly, winning 14 seats in the unicameral legislature and taking the mayorship in the nation's capital, San Salvador. Table 2 illustrates the increasing electoral strength of opposition parties (especially the Christian Democrats) in the parliamentary elections between 1950 and 1970. At the local level the opposition parties made inroads as well. In 1968, the Christian Democrats won the mayoral races in the three largest cities. The opening of the electoral system was a trend that continued until the presidential and legislative assembly elections in the first quarter of 1972 (Gordon 1989). It marked a sharp break from the personalist military rule of General Martínez (1931–44) and the one-party rule of the PRUD and PCN military governments up to 1964—a period Rubén Zamora (1998, p. 26) calls *monopartidismo* (“one partyism”).

Under the new context of competitive elections, opposition parties en-

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TABLE 2
POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATION IN SALVADORAN NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY, 1950–70 (BY ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF DEPUTIES)

DEPUTY'S PARTY	YEAR										
	1950	1952	1954	1956	1958	1960	1961	1964	1966	1968	1970
PRUD/PCN* ...	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	32	31	27	34
PDC†								14	15	19	16
PAR								6	4		
PPS									1	4	1
PREN									1		
MNR										2	
UDN											1
Total	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	52	52	52	52

SOURCES.—McDonald (1969) and Webre (1979).

* The military party.

† Christian Democrats.

couraged the formation of challenger organizations as supportive constituencies outside the polity. The opposition parties such as the PDC, PAR, and MNR often used their new power in the parliament to call hearings and investigations supporting challenger organization demands (e.g., labor codes, promotional systems, university budgets, retirement packages, rural unionization, and land reform) and they served as advocates for worker and teacher organizations during these groups' strike campaigns. In September 1964, newly elected oppositional politicians began to lobby for a national teachers' pension plan as part of a larger debate on a retirement system for government employees (Ruiz Abarca 1967). This action assisted in the foundation of the public school teachers' union (ANDES-21 de Junio) by unifying teachers around the content of the retirement plan.

During the mid-1960s, the Christian Democratic Party played a leading role with the church in founding or greatly expanding Catholic-based organizations such as the Catholic university (Whitfield 1994), a labor union (UNOC), a peasant federation (FECCAS), youth organizations in the city and countryside (JEC, JOC, and JAC), neighborhood action associations, and university student organizations (ACUS and FRUSC). Emerging challenger organizations also benefited from the relative respite in state repression, owing to the necessity for the official government party to remain competitive in elections and protect its public image.

In sum, the liberalization of the military regime ushered in two key political opportunities in the form of *institutional access* and *competitive elections*, which provided incentives and a protective cover allowing the labor, educational, and church sectors to establish civic organizations. In the late 1960s, excluded social sectors that had suffered from ongoing

repressive state actions over the previous 30 years found that they could sustain themselves via the legalization of their organizations and support from newly elected oppositional political parties.

Birth of an Organizational Infrastructure

By the end of the 1960s, regime liberalization motivated political activists to form a wide variety of civic organizations in workplaces, schools, and churches to press for political and economic reform. These nascent challenger organizations learned to develop long-term and reciprocal network relationships with one another (Powell 1990). The increase in organizational foundation and interorganizational relationships constituted an organizational infrastructure in the labor, educational, and church sectors.

Labor sector organizations.—Both the progovernment labor confederation (CGS) and the smaller communist-influenced labor confederation (CGTS) were formed in the late 1950s and secured legal recognition by the mid-1960s. In 1965, the fledgling CGTS merged with seven independent unions to form the Federación Unitaria Sindical de El Salvador (FUSS). The CGTS was a semiclandestine labor organization since its emergence in 1957 and frequently persecuted by security forces. In the fall of 1965, in an unprecedented move, the liberalizing military government gave legal recognition to the FUSS, which led or was involved in most of the major urban strikes between 1967 and 1972. In 1965 FUSS had only 14 affiliated unions, but by 1971 it had 24 with more than 9,500 members (Menjívar 1982; Carpio 1982). The FUSS leadership sensed that the opening electoral process offered a favorable occasion to test how far it could push demands for its affiliates in the urban working class. Indeed, within FUSS a subunit was organized called Comité Obrero de Acción Política (COAP). The purpose of COAP was to infiltrate proregime unions, direct protest activities, and campaign for opposition candidates in the 1966, 1967, and 1968 parliamentary and presidential elections (Menjívar 1982).

In 1968 FUSS also encouraged the development of a second militant trade union organization: the Federation of Workers in Food, Clothing, Textile, and Related Industries (FESTIAVTCES). By 1971, FUSS and FESTIAVTCES together controlled 41 unions. In the early 1970s, they mobilized rural workers in favor of unionization and founded a peasant organization (ATACES). Using stipulations in the 1963 labor code, other public sector employees in this period established unions such as the national university workers (STUS) in 1966 (Valle 1993) and, in 1968, the Water and Aqueduct Service Employees (SETA), Municipal Employees (AGEPYM), Social Security Workers (STISSS), and Electrical Workers (STIES), and in 1972 the Hydroelectric Commission Workers (STECCEL)

(Richter 1980; Bollinger 1987). The legal recognition alone of these newly created unions by the state was a major victory. Ten years prior, left-of-center unions had had virtually no legal standing while many labor leaders were in exile (Webre 1979).

Educational sector organizations.—In the university sector, the main student organization, the Asociación General de Estudiantes Universitarios Salvadoreños (AGEUS), increased its ranks with the government's university expansion program. Groups within AGEUS showed signs of political differentiation with the formation of such organizations as the communist-influenced Frente Estudiantil Universitario Revolucionarios (FEUR), Catholic students in the Federación Revolucionaria de Universitarios Social Cristianos (FRUSC) and Acción Católica Universitaria Salvadoreña (ACUS), and the social democratic Frente Socialista Democrata (FSD). These organizations established subunits in each of the seven academic colleges of the national university (Valle 1993). By the end of the 1960s even high school students formed organizations such as El Consejo General de Bienestar Estudiantil (CGBE) and La Asociación de los Estudiantes de Secundaria (AES).

One of the most important challenger organizations to form in the 1960s was the public school teachers' union, La Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños (ANDES-21 de Junio). ANDES began internally organizing in 1964 and made a public presence in 1965, when an estimated 11,000 teachers marched (dressed in their finest attire) through San Salvador to the presidential palace demanding their own teacher-specific retirement system and exclusion from the government's general program for state employees. Symbolically planned, the mass street march occurred a day before the traditional teacher's day, June 22, and hence, the teachers named their new organization ANDES-21 de Junio. Two years later (in June 1967), ANDES-21 received legal recognition from the national government. The formation and self-entitlement of ANDES-21 signified a move toward greater autonomy for public education workers.

The new teachers' organization had the support of more than 80% of the 10,000–14,000 teachers working in El Salvador at the time. ANDES-21 organized nationally, with regional organizations in each of El Salvador's 14 departments. The association evidenced a strong break with the past; previous military governments had carried on a paternalistic relationship with public educators, busing them en masse into the capital for progovernment parades and election rallies (Anaya Montes 1972; Bevan 1981). ANDES-21 also organized the first national high school student organizations between 1968 and 1971 (CGBE and AES).

Church sector organizations.—The Catholic Church was motivated to form organizations via the government's rural cooperative program and its close relations with the newly elected Christian Democratic Party

(PDC) in parliament and city governments. In 1964 the Catholic Church and the PDC reactivated the Catholic UNOC and founded a federation of peasant leagues (FECCAS) that would become a focal organization for widespread rural protest in the 1970s. FECCAS held a series of annual peasant conferences beginning in 1965. During these gatherings, FECCAS publicly pressured the state for land reform and the right to form rural unions (Guerra Calderon 1976). FECCAS grew to about a thousand members by 1970.

The Archdiocese of San Salvador in collaboration with the Christian Democratic Party created the organization Centro de Estudios Sociales y Promoción Popular (CESPROP; 1967–72), which trained youth groups to work in urban shantytowns and in the countryside (with FECCAS). CESPROP also published a number of reports supporting social reforms such as land redistribution and peasant unionization. Using the new access points in the countryside, priests and pastoral teams arrived in rural communities where they organized peasants in Las Comunidades Cristianas de Base (CCBs). The CCBs performed traditional religious practices (e.g., singing, praying, and reading scripture) with *active* peasant participation. In these small and intimate organizational settings (of 10 to 30 people) new interpretations of biblical passages emerged that provided the moral and spiritual bases to seek greater social and economic parity in the everyday lives of El Salvador's urban and rural poor (Wood 2003). In 1970 the Archdiocese of San Salvador sponsored the Semana Pastoral (Pastoral Week) where it committed itself to forming Christian base communities nationally, meeting periodically to coordinate these efforts, and to publishing newsletters sharing CCB experiences around the country.

A related organizational product of the new commitment of the Catholic Church to the rural poor was the formation between 1968 and 1972 of seven major peasant-training centers (Vega 1994). An estimated 15,000 peasants received technical and religious training (theology of the new social doctrine) in the centers (Montgomery 1982). By the late 1960s and early to mid 1970s, as an outgrowth of the church cooperatives, peasant leagues, CCBs, and rural training centers, peasants were beginning to organize around land and unionization issues.

Political Opportunity Deposits Enduring Organizational Infrastructure

By the late 1960s, under the encouragement of widening institutional access and protection of the liberalizing electoral system, challengers used sympathetic institutions and organizations in the labor, educational, and church sectors to create an unprecedented network of civic organizations and associations. This organizational infrastructure was accessible to

groups (especially unionized workers, teachers, students, and a growing number of church-organized peasants) to draw upon and initiate social movement protest campaigns. The newly established organizational infrastructure permitted by expanded political opportunity culminated in the outbreak of a protest wave between 1967 and 1972—the longest period of sustained contention since the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Political Opportunity–Driven Protest Wave, 1967–72

Between 1967 and 1972 popular contention increased, as witnessed by the total number of strikes and protest events, which eventuated in a full-blown protest wave (see figs. 1 and 2). The most important outcome of this protest wave was that multiple challenger organizations and groups learned how to maintain the organizational infrastructure permitted by expanding political opportunity. Another feature of the 1967–72 protest wave was its orderly and nonviolent character (see fig. 2). Popular contention focused on pushing the state to pass new reforms or alter existing policies. Between 1965 and 1971 nearly one out of every five protest events targeted the legislative assembly, which challenger organizations viewed as legitimate and autonomous enough to receive movement demands and at times pass favorable legislation.

The 1967–72 protest wave began with a series of bus drivers' strikes and teacher mobilizing efforts from 1965 to 1967 (organized by FUSS and ANDES-21). A string of urban labor strikes in the first third of 1967 shook San Salvador, Santa Ana, and Zacatecoluca, terminating with a progressive general strike in April involving 35,000 workers (Carpio 1980). The general labor strike enlisted the public support of student and peasant organizations. In late 1967 and early 1968, ANDES-21 unleashed a major public school teachers' strike targeting the Ministry of Education and Legislative Assembly to consider a teacher-proposed retirement program. The 58-day teachers' strike included several mass marches of over 20,000 protesters (some reaching over 80,000); a month-long occupation of the patio in front of the National Library, where the Ministry of Education offices were housed; and several solidarity strikes by FUSS-affiliated unions. This particular campaign was reportedly the largest protest mobilization to date in modern El Salvador (Monteforte Toledo 1972).

There was a lull in contentious activity during the second half of 1969, which was linked to hostilities between El Salvador and Honduras. Major challenger organizations such as FUSS and AGEUS temporarily placed their resources into supporting the government's war mobilization efforts. Labor activities and gains occurred in 1969, nevertheless, as Richter (1980, p. 123) reports from research using FUSS primary documents: "During the first eight months of 1969 there were thirteen major strikes in El

Salvador and several related job actions, of which eight were won outright by the workers—a fact that indicates a continued escalation of the level of trade-union struggle and organization.”

During the summer of 1971, ANDES-21 initiated another major two-month-long teachers' strike, demanding a modernized salary scale corresponding to rank and seniority—which again included numerous mass marches and the pacific occupation of the Palacio Nacional during parliamentary debate on the salary legislation. The 1971 teachers' strike tapped into the organizational infrastructure support of Catholic labor unions, public sector unions, high school and university student associations, oppositional political parties, and even the incipient peasant movement (Anaya Montes 1972). The university community raised \$5,200 for the teachers and donated their printing services to publish ANDES-21 pamphlets and newspapers (Anaya Montes 1972), while thousands of church-organized peasants in Suchitoto protested and secured the release of arrested teachers held in the local jail (Pearce 1986).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in addition to protests by urban workers and teachers, student organizations began to sustain protest (as opposed to intermittent outbursts) as part of a larger protest wave. First, university student organizations supported the major strikes of ANDES-21 in the form of solidarity strikes, marches, and fundraising drives. Anaya Montes (1972) reports that up to 80% of UES students were actively supporting the ANDES-21 strike in the summer of 1971. UES student organizations launched their own strikes and building occupations between 1970 and 1972, in protest over how general education requirements (*areas comunes*) were implemented. Even the traditional student *bufo* marches (costume parades lampooning government officials; Dunkerly 1982) were now taking place on the streets outside of the newly created UES campuses in the cities of Santa Ana and San Miguel, providing stinging political satire well beyond the capital.

The long dormant peasantry benefited from widening political opportunity created by attempts of the church, labor unions, and opposition political parties to press the liberalizing state to extend the right to unionize to rural workers (Larín 1972). Most importantly, peasants profited from the Catholic Church's rural cooperative program and from the foundation of the Christian Federation of Peasants (FECCAS) in 1964. In turn, FECCAS-affiliated peasants publicly supported the 1967 general labor strike and the ANDES-21 teachers' strikes (Guerra Calderon 1976; Cardenal 1987).

The protest wave rapidly descended in 1972 after mass protests against the electoral fraud of presidential and parliamentary elections. The failure of these mass-based nonviolent protests to prevent electoral fraud threw the entire organizational infrastructure off balance in terms of developing

a viable strategy to exercise political influence in a transitioning political environment. As political opportunities contracted with electoral obstruction and narrowing institutional access in the early to mid 1970s, there were markedly fewer inducements to initiate social movement activity. However, the organizational infrastructure founded in the labor, educational, and church-based sectors persisted, creating the potential for subsequent rounds of mobilization if pushed by new incentives from the state.

Environmental Transition from Opportunity to Threat

The period from mid-1972 to 1981 was one in which the threats of state-attributed economic problems, erosion of rights, and state repression increasingly characterized El Salvador's political environment. Beginning in 1972, the key political opportunities driving the 1960s' wave of protest, institutional access and the practice of competitive elections, narrowed. This contraction in political opportunity effectively ended the 1967–72 wave of protest and dampened the level of contentious activity between mid-1972 and 1976 (see figs. 1 and 2). In place of political opportunity, rising threats began to push challengers to radicalize their organizational infrastructure. By 1977, the combination of mounting threats with the dominance of revolutionary organizations in the social movement sector contributed to a much more disruptive and violent cycle of protest.

Declining Political Opportunities, 1972–81

Institutional access.—Between 1972 and 1977 the Salvadoran regime narrowed the institutional access that it opened to challenger organizations in the labor, education, and church sectors in the 1960s. By the mid-1970s, only labor, peasant, and civic organizations closely aligned with the ruling military party (PCN) enjoyed institutional access or received support from state agencies. State controlled peasant groups and construction unions held the largest demonstrations and strikes in the period between 1973 and 1976 (Lungo 1987). The ruling military party tried to form a corporatist base while excluding organizations that had participated in the 1967–72 protest wave, such as the independent students' and teachers' associations and the center-left unions. By 1977, with the state's inability to implement a moderate land reform proposal and the ascendancy of General Humberto Romero (formerly the minister of defense and public security) to the presidency, the attempt at narrow corporatism had failed and the official military party focused much more on state repression than on co-optation or restricted institutional access (Guidos Véjar 1979; Stanley 1996). Institutional access also became more meaningless with the closing of multiparty elections.

Competitive elections.—In late 1971, the three left-of-center opposition parties (UDN, MNR, and PDC) united forces in an electoral coalition (Unión Nacional Opositora, or UNO) for the upcoming presidential elections in February 1972. The 1972 elections were of colossal political importance because it was a scheduled year in which presidential, legislative, and local elections all took place within three weeks of each other. Preoccupied with a potential UNO electoral victory, the ruling military party returned to using the Comisión Central de las Elecciones (CCE)—in which it had appointed all three directors—the national police, and the National Guard to obstruct electoral participation, imitating the military regimes before the mid-1960s. In February 1972 the opposition coalition reportedly won the presidential elections, but, according to a detailed study by the newly created Catholic University, the ruling military party (PCN) committed electoral obstruction and refused to investigate the opposition's allegations of fraud (Hernandez Pico et al. 1973).⁹

On March 12, 1972, during parliamentary elections, 74,000 voters defaced their ballots in San Salvador in protest of the CCE decision to disqualify UNO candidates running for the legislature in the departments of San Salvador, Sonsonate, San Miguel, San Vicente, and La Unión (Hernandez Pico et al. 1973; *El Diario de Hoy*, March 15, 1972, pp. 2, 55). The opposition used a technical loophole in the electoral code that stated if a majority of null ballots were cast, the election would be voided. However, the CCE refused to decertify the parliamentary elections and the PCN gained a large parliamentary majority through electoral obstruction. In a three-week period (February 20–March 12, 1972) the Salvadoran state effectively erased more than eight years of unprecedented political liberalization via competitive elections. By implementing a number of electoral manipulations, the state initiated the gradual closure of the political system at the national level by impeding both the presidential and parliamentary elections.

After the fraudulent 1972 presidential and assembly elections, UNO remained in the parliament as a marginalized legal opposition. UNO had 8 deputies between 1972 and 1974. In the 1974 parliamentary elections UNO gained 15 assembly seats, though the official results were never publicly released (Webre 1979) and widespread fraud was reported during balloting (Dunkerly 1982). UNO boycotted the 1976 elections after the CCE once again attempted to block the registration of its candidates in the largest cities. Between 1972 and 1978 the official military party employed a variety of tactics to prevent opposition parties from either gaining

⁹ At least three massive public demonstrations and a general strike attempt were held in late February 1972 to protest the electoral fraud. These would be the largest acts of civil disobedience until the late 1970s.

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a parliamentary majority or winning the executive. These tactics included using the electoral commission to change vote totals and decertify opposition party candidates, ballot stuffing at the local level, and extralegal intimidation of opposition members. The reduction in electoral competitiveness was also closely associated with an erosion of rights and increasing levels of state repression during this period. The orderly forms of protest, such as strikes, marches, and massive public rallies, that characterized the 1967–72 protest wave proved ineffective in confronting the regime as it deliberalized. This changed the dynamic of popular movement–state interaction for the remainder of the decade, as the political environment shifted from opportunity to threat.

Political Opportunity Organizations in a Transitioning Environment

Despite the contraction in political opportunities that attended the narrowing of institutional access and fraudulent elections, the organizational infrastructure established in the late 1960s endured in the shifting political environment of the early to mid-1970s. The key social sectors benefiting from political opportunity in labor, education, and church-sponsored circles were largely able to keep their organizations and ongoing relationships intact regardless of fewer incentives to engage in orderly protest for new benefits and advantages. These political opportunity holdovers provided the building blocks for the more radical and revolutionary organizational infrastructure emerging in the mid to late 1970s. Observing the evolution of each of the three key social sectors from the early to mid 1970s demonstrates their organizational persistence.

Labor sector organizations.—By the mid-1970s, the traditional progovernment trade union federation (CGS) lost support as multiple unions broke off, forming federations and confederations with a more radical leadership such as FENASTRAS and CUTS (Arriola Palomares and Candray Alvarado 1994). By 1976 the CGS accounted for only 19% of unionized workers, down from 42% in 1971 (Dunkerley 1982). El Salvadoran Ministry of Labor data demonstrate that by the mid-1970s the majority of union membership was affiliated with autonomous, left-of-center unions (Anner 1996). Many of the unions that joined in radical political contention in the late 1970s were first legalized in the 1960s and came from strategic economic and governmental sectors that benefited from their power to disrupt public services and economic activity such as the nation's ports, electricity, water, transportation, judicial, and educational systems (Montgomery 1982). Beginning in 1976, the three largest revolutionary organizations created clandestine labor-organizing committees within the existing union infrastructure to coordinate disruptive labor actions (which often included wildcat strikes and factory occupa-

tions) across different work sites (Molina Arévalo 1988; Guidos Véjar 1990).

Educational sector organizations.—As political opportunities contracted, public school teachers' associations and high school- and university-based organizations endured. ANDES-21 officially counted a national dues-paying membership of 4,000 in 1974 and 5,500 in 1975 (ANDES-21 1974; Makofsky 1978). By the late 1970s, ANDES-21 had the organizational capacity to mobilize 15,000–18,000 teachers nationally for work stoppages and strikes. Growth in university enrollment continued through the 1970s. Indeed, El Salvador university enrollment rates were the second highest in Latin America between 1965 and 1975 (Wickham-Crowley 1989). By 1979, the university student population soared to 26,000 (where as recently as 1960 only 2,200 university students were enrolled) (Ministerio de Economía 1981). However, the government violated the autonomy it had allowed in the 1960s by occupying the university on three separate occasions (1972, 1976, and 1980) and imposing its own governance structure in 1973 (CAPUES). Nonetheless, Salvadoran universities persisted as a central source of challenger organizational recruitment throughout the 1970s, with all five competing mass revolutionary organizations counting at least one university (and high school) student protest organization in its ranks.

Church sector organizations.—The Catholic Church had created a successful template for organizing the rural sector in the late 1960s and early 1970s under the protection of the state-sanctioned peasant cooperative program and support from the Christian Democratic Party. Peasant training centers, cooperatives, retreat bases, workshops, and monthly newsletters all demonstrated the ongoing commitment of the Catholic Church to the rural poor.

Already, in the late 1960s and early 1970s in regions around Suchitoto, Aguilares, Ilopango, Ciudad Arce, Quezaltepeque, San Salvador, San Antonio Abad, Ayutuxtepeque, Mejicanos, Zacamil, Guazapa, Cojutepeque, Los Ranchos, La Palma, Chalatenango, Tecoluca, and Gotera, religious experiments were under way in the form of the CCBs (Rivera Damas 1977). This work was carried out in rural parishes (and in some urban shantytowns), beginning during the period of expanded political opportunity. It built on the church's preexisting cooperative program (FUNPROCOOP), which grew to 15,000 members in 1976 (*Justicia y Paz*, October 1976). It was further promoted by the 1970 Semana Pastoral, whereby the church encouraged the formation of CCBs to promote the principles stipulated in Vatican II (1962–65) and the 1968 Medellín bishops' conference—the Latin American church's official call to actively “accompany” the region's poor in their pursuit of social and economic justice (Cáceres Prendes 1989; Smith 1991).

Vega (1994) reports an estimated 50,000–60,000 Salvadorans participating in hundreds of CCBs by the mid-1970s, and the monthly newsletter for rural CCBs, *Justicia y Paz*, circulating between 6,000 and 8,000 copies of each issue in the period from 1972 to 1979. The monthly newsletter highlighted the state's responsibility regarding inflation, land access, and political persecution in a format in which semiliterate peasants could easily identify (e.g., use of the peasant vernacular, peasant narration, discussion questions, and humor with cartoon caricatures; see app. B for an example of a 1974 issue of *Justicia y Paz* attributing responsibility for carrying out land reform and maintaining viable prices to the state). The seven church-based peasant training centers founded around the country between 1968 and 1972 also continued teaching organizational and leadership skills until they were shut down by state repression in 1980 (Peterson 1997).

Many of El Salvador's top peasant organization leaders and recruiters in the 1970s, such as Apolinario Serrano of the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (FECCAS) and Justo Mejía of the Union of Rural Workers (UTC), began their political careers as Christian base community and cooperative leaders in the late 1960s (Rivera Damas 1977; Alvarado López and Cruz Olmedo 1978; Cabarrús 1983; Pearce 1986; Cardenal 1987). In short, the early organizational work of the Catholic Church (and the Christian Democratic Party) in promoting rural cooperatives, peasant organizations, Christian base communities, youth groups, peasant training centers, and community organizing in the late 1960s and early 1970s endured into a vast recruitment pool for more radical and revolutionary organizations in the late 1970s (though this was certainly not the intention of the original founders).

The organizational infrastructure was thus firmly established even after political opportunities had faded. This increased the probability of subsequent rounds of mobilization motivated by new environmental stimuli such as state-attributed threats. These kinds of negative environmental incentives occurred with greater frequency by the mid-1970s. Threat-induced mobilization, though, was a time-dependent process as challengers reinterpreted their environment and radicalized preexisting organizational structures and strategies.

Threats, 1972–81

The mid-1970s witnessed the return of higher levels of threat in the Salvadoran political environment. By 1974, the world economic slowdown and rising international petroleum prices initiated high rates of consumer inflation, exacerbating land access tensions in the countryside. The closing of competitive elections improved the likelihood that the Salvadoran state

would return to an institutional legacy of denying basic civil rights and applying repression to real and suspected opponents of its authoritarian rule. At first, the entire organizational infrastructure was knocked off balance in trying to respond to a changing and contradictory political environment (e.g., elections with fraud). Over time, though, as the state moved onto a consistent trajectory of increasing threats, challengers radicalized their leftover organizational infrastructure.

Already, in 1976, one could observe in speeches, street demonstrations, and written propaganda by oppositional organizations the litany of references to skyrocketing inflation, the electoral frauds of 1972 and 1974, and rural state massacres in Chinamequita (April–May 1974), La Cayetana (November 1974), Tres Calles (June 1975), Hacienda Santa Barbara (October 1975), and the killing of university students in the capital (July 1975). Thus, increasing threats were not just objective changes in the political environment but were also actively interpreted and attributed to the state by regime challengers (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

A political pamphlet distributed in January 1976 from one of the largest mass-based extraparliamentary organizations (FAPU) synthesizes the perception of mounting threats:

The Unified Popular Action Front (F.A.P.U.), since its formation in June 1974, has been proposing to the Salvadoran people the necessity to sustain an energetic and combative struggle against the high cost of living in the economic sphere and against the Molina military dictatorship's fascist escalation in the political sphere; these are the tasks of the moment, the immediate struggles. . . . We are all witnesses to the relentless increase in the cost of basic necessities (food, clothing, shoes, medicine, etc.) as we are witnesses to the increasing shameless repression that the government unleashes against the population; it's enough to remember the peasant massacres in Chinamequita, La Cayetana, Tres Calles, etc; the savage slaughter of students on July 30, 1975; the assassination and capture of many union leaders that in one form or another contribute to the Salvadoran working-class struggle. These two social processes (the economic crisis and the increase in antipopular repression) are marked within a process of fascist escalation that since 1972 has been developing in the womb of our society. (FAPU 1976, p. 1; author's translation)

The above litany of economic and repressive threats attributed to the state, as acting against the labor, educational, and church-organized peasant sectors, slowly radicalized the challenger organizational infrastructure created in the 1960s as such processes intensified and repeated themselves on an expanding scale. By 1977, challengers radicalized the leftover organizational infrastructure to the point that the increasingly threatening environment fueled more disruptive and violent forms of contention. Underlying this new round of mobilization stood the specific threat incentives

of state-attributed economic problems, the erosion of rights, and state repression.

State-attributed economic problems.—By 1974, the global economic recession plagued El Salvador with high imported fuel prices and inflationary pressures. Table 3 shows the consumer price index for the years between 1958 and 1979. Real wages also declined for manufacturing workers in the 1970s as unemployment increased, intensifying the effects of consumer inflation (Dunkerley 1982; Argueta Antillón 1983; Booth 1991; Kirby 1992; Smith 1996). In contrast, during the 1960s, El Salvador had experienced the lowest consumer inflation rates in Latin America (Sheahan 1990). Already, by 1974, pressuring the government to implement price controls on basic consumer goods was a major demand of regime challengers (Cabarrús 1983). In 1975, the leading Catholic figure in the country, Archbishop Monsignor Luis Chávez y González, released his Fiftieth Pastoral Letter (“La Inflación en El Salvador ante la Conciencia Cristiana”), urging the government to take measures to reduce inflation on basic consumer items and land rents (Alas 1982; Vega 1997; see app. B).

Besides price increases, land access was another state-attributed economic problem becoming more acute with over 40% of rural families classified as landless in 1975 and up to 65% in 1980 (Kirby 1992; Williams 1986)—up from 12% in 1962 (Cabarrús 1983) and less than 8.6% in 1950 (Castellanos 2001). The land situation was compounded in the early 1970s by the forced repatriation of 130,000 Salvadoran peasants from Honduras as a result of the Soccer War (Durham 1979).¹⁰ Nearly 60% of the population lived in rural areas at the time. Land access increasingly became a state-attributed problem for peasants in the 1970s because of failed government attempts to implement an agrarian reform on two separate and highly publicized occasions in January of 1970 and the summer of 1976 (Vega 1994). Ethnographic fieldwork in church-organized rural zones in the 1970s (e.g., northern San Salvador, Cuscatlán, San Vicente, and Chalatenango) consistently reports land access and inflation as central peasant grievances (Rodríguez 1976; Durham 1979; Samaniego 1980; Cabarrús 1983; Pearce 1986; Cardenal 1987; Paige 1996; Hammond 1998; see app. B). In brief, consumer price increases and land access acted as major state-attributed economic problems pushing well-networked urban and rural groups into sustained collective action by the mid-1970s. Often, land access issues were the source of rural unrest that led to the first

¹⁰ The Soccer War was a five-day military conflict between El Salvador and Honduras in July 1969 that resulted in 3,000–4,000 deaths; the hostilities were in part related to Salvadoran immigration to Honduras and inequities within the Central American Common Market.

TABLE 3
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX IN EL SALVADOR, 1958-79

Year	General Index	Food	Housing	Clothing	Other Consumer Goods
1958 ...	107.7	108.7	119.1	83.9	112.3
1962 ...	104.1	105.3	98.9	88.7	117.9
1966 ...	106.8	107.6	102.6	91.7	120.5
1972 ...	116.3	124	107.8	85.4	125
1973 ...	123.7	133.3	115.9	87.9	129.7
1974 ...	144.6	156.4	137.7	95.9	153
1975 ...	172.2	188.5	163.5	123.7	167.5
1976 ...	184.4	201.6	177.8	138.1	172.2
1977 ...	206.1	219.1	205	150.5	210.5
1978 ...	233.5	242.5	251.8	163.8	240.9
1979 ...	280	287.3	294.9	229.9	285.8

SOURCE.—López (1983, p. 165).

NOTE.—Based on June 1954 standard of living for urban workers (1954 = 100).

government massacres in the mid-1970s, such as in the community of La Cayetana, San Vicente Department.

Erosion of rights.—Citizenship rights eroded throughout the 1970s. Table 4 illustrates the eroding electoral process between 1972 and 1978. In contrast to the late 1960s and early 1970s, challenger organizations had little protection from inside the polity to defend their interests. In addition, the state intermittently implemented a series of quasi-martial laws throughout the 1970s (e.g., spring 1972, part of 1977, all of 1978, early 1979, and the second half of 1980). These declarations of special states of emergency denied a number of constitutional rights such as public assembly, the right to associate, right to habeas corpus, and public dissent. In effect, the state outlawed many of the orderly forms of protest used in the 1967-72 protest wave, providing a disincentive for their continued use.

Between mid-1972 and 1981 there was an erosion in the state's commitment to binding consultation with civil society. By mid-1976 Salvadoran citizens no longer elected their own representatives in the legislative and executive branches. This shift in state practices encouraged previously organized challengers to radicalize their organizational forms as institutionalized channels to press demands closed. Indeed, many of El Salvador's senior revolutionary leaders in the 1970s and 1980s date their incorporation into more radical organizations to the 1972 fraudulent elections (see McClintock 1998 for multiple cases). In turn, the national government now demonstrated much less restraint in implementing repression against its opponents.

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TABLE 4
EROSION OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS, 1972–78

Election	Outcome
1972 presidential elections	Government fraud. Military party (PCN) remains in power.
1972 parliamentary elections	Electoral Commission refuses to certify opposition candidates in San Salvador, San Miguel, Sonsonate, and Usulután. Opposition parties in San Salvador have supporters deface ballots, resulting in a majority of null votes. Electoral Commission refuses to acknowledge a majority of null votes and hold new elections as called for in its own electoral code. Government allows UNO 8 seats in 52-member parliament.
1974 parliamentary elections	Reported government fraud. No official/public release of vote count. Government allows 15 opposition seats in parliament.
1976 parliamentary elections	Opposition parties boycott elections after Electoral Commission impedes the registration of two-thirds of their candidates. For the first time since 1964, the parliament returns to one-party rule, with all 52 seats taken by the official military party.
1977 presidential elections	Reported government fraud. Legal opposition sent into exile after elections, government massacre of opposition supporters in San Salvador.
1978 parliamentary elections	Opposition boycotts elections. Official military party retains all 52 parliamentary seats.

State repression.—By the mid-1970s a shift took place in state–civil society relations. The government became more repressive, harassing, exiling, and even killing leaders of the electoral opposition and firing live ammunition at demonstrators during relatively peaceful urban and rural protests.¹¹ The rising number of massacres in the mid-1970s clearly in-

¹¹ In 1972 martial law was declared from March 25 until April 10 and then extended until June 2, in response to a failed coup attempt. During the first three weeks of the martial law period, at least 22 civilians were killed (most of whom were associated in some way to the electoral opposition) by agents linked to the state (Morales Velado et al. 1988). On July 19, 1972, the military occupied the national university (UES) on all three campuses, which resulted in 800 student and faculty arrests and the banishment of the administration (including the rector) into exile in Nicaragua. The UES was shut down for over an entire year until September 1973 (after which the government installed intimidating security agents inside; the students called them “verdes” for their olive militarylike uniforms). In September 1972, the government sent 21 union and opposition party members into exile (Morales Velado et al. 1988). Then again, in

dicated a greater willingness by military state managers in the employment of repression against organized challengers.

UNO opposition deputies attempted to initiate parliamentary investigations of both the La Cayetana peasant massacre in 1974 and a university student massacre in 1975. The military party-controlled legislative assembly rebuffed their efforts on two separate occasions. State repression continued to escalate in the late 1970s. A pattern of “disappearing” (forced abduction in which the subsequent whereabouts of the victims are unknown to relatives) suspected political activists emerged after 1975. By 1979 Salvadoran security forces and associated paramilitary groups were responsible for dozens of political deaths per month. During 1980 and 1981, when state repression peaked, security forces and paramilitaries reportedly killed an average of nearly 1,000 civilians per month. Human rights data available on arrests, torture, and other forms of state-sponsored abuse also show a marked annual increase between 1973 and 1981 (see fig. 4).

There was a gradual ratcheting up of state repression throughout the 1970s. Reformist political parties and challenger organizations were the first targets of repression, and the state intermittently exiled, killed, or “disappeared” some of their members. By the late 1970s, repression was becoming much more intensive and continuous. Across segments of the labor, educational, and church-organized sectors, activists (suspected and real) were increasingly detained, tortured, killed, and/or disappeared (Stanley 1996). Human rights abuse records indicate that it was precisely these three organized sectors (i.e., unionized workers; students and ANDES-affiliated teachers; and church-organized peasants and religious workers) that bore the brunt of state repression in terms of their overrepresentation among the occupational statuses of the victims listed (Socorro Jurídico Cristiano 1981; Delgado Tobar and Peña Rosales 1989). Since the state opted for a gradual escalation of repression approach over

January 1973, 18 more dissidents were exiled. Increasingly, by the middle of the 1970s state repression was targeted not only against UNO supporters, unions, the UES, and other urban sectors but also against the Catholic Church and the church-organized peasantry. On April 30, 1974, the security forces killed at least four people protesting electoral fraud in the rural town of Chimanequita, La Paz. On November 29, 1974, six peasants were massacred in La Cayetana, San Vicente, by the National Guard. During the operation an additional 25 peasants were arrested, out of which 13 “disappeared.” On June 2, 1975, 40 soldiers and members of the paramilitary patrol ORDEN reportedly killed four peasants in Tres Calles, Usulután. On July 30, 1975, the National Guard killed as many as 37 UES students during a peaceful march in San Salvador. On September 26, 1975, a UDN member of parliament (and FUSC labor leader) was murdered by a death squad. In October 1975, the National Guard fired on striking farmworkers on Santa Barbara Estate in Chalatenango, killing at least two peasants, disappearing four, and injuring many others (Latin American Bureau 1977; Socorro Jurídico Cristiano 1981).

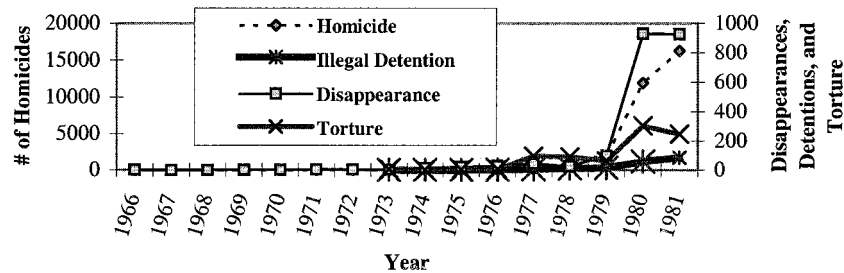


FIG. 4.—Reported number of political disappearances and homicides by government and paramilitary groups 1966–81, and reported illegal detentions and tortures, 1973–81. (Data are drawn from Socorro Jurídico Cristiano 1981, 1984; Morales Velado et al. 1988; *La Prensa Gráfica*; IDHUCA 1997; Ball 2000; Latin American Bureau 1977; Anaya Montes 1972.)

the decade, it failed to dismantle the organizational infrastructure founded in the liberalizing 1960s and rapidly radicalizing in the 1970s.

From Opportunity Organizations to a Radicalized Organizational Infrastructure

The key supporting institutions and challenger organizations in the labor, educational, and church sectors that cohered into an organizational infrastructure in the liberalizing 1960s persisted in the transitioning political environment in the mid-1970s. While the government sporadically attempted to disband or impede the continuance of challenger organizations (by such threatening actions as occupying the national university and intimidating urban unions and church-organized peasant communities), the process of widening political opportunity in the 1960s made it difficult to control the rich array of organizations now available to challenging groups. Indeed, efforts by the state to dismantle the organizational infrastructure led more often to radicalizing it. The radicalization of organizations was a time-dependent process as the state responded to orderly protest against various threats by ignoring challengers or repressing them. In turn, the labor movement, educational sector, and church-based groups used their organizations and established relationships to sustain the radicalizing organizational infrastructure. Hence, the revolutionary organizations emerging in the mid-1970s were clearly stamped by the political opportunity organizations created in the late 1960s (see table 5).

Table 5 lists the largest and most important extraparliamentary and revolutionary organizations to emerge in El Salvador in the mid-1970s. The table demonstrates a clear dynamic in which organizations, leaders and participants from the 1967–72 protest wave founded more radical and revolutionary organizations in the 1970s. Once established, the new

TABLE 5
POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR RADICALIZATION INTO EL SALVADOR'S REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE, 1972-81

1967-72 POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY ORGANIZATIONS			
RADICAL ORGANIZATION AND YEAR FORMED	Labor-Sector Opportunity Organizations	Educational-Sector Opportunity Organizations	Church-Sector Opportunity Organizations
Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL) (1970-72)	Formed by leaders of FUSS (which launched strike wave of 1967)	Some ANDES-21 leaders align with the FPL in mid-1970s; University students from the UES form initial cells of FPL	Early members also come out of high school and university Catholic organizations (JEC and FRUSC)
People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) (1972)		UES students form initial cells	Some early members also partici- pated in high school and uni- versity Catholic organizations (JEC and FRUSC) and Chris- tian Democratic youth movement
Unified Popular Action Front (FAPU) (1974)	FUSS and FESTIAVTCES par- ticipate in the founding of FAPU, later strengthened by al- liance with FENASTRAS (a large break-off labor federation from Catholic UNOC and pro- government CGS)	ANDES-21, Catholic University students and UES students par- ticipate in the founding of FAPU	Initially founded by Christian base communities in Suchitoto and by FECCAS
Union of Rural Workers (UTC) (1974)			Early members come from Catho- lic Cooperative Movement

National Resistance (RN) (1975)	Break-off of ERP-UES students	Some members of Catholic Youth Organizations (JEC)
Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) (1975)	Founded by ANDES-21, Catholic University students, UES students, high school students	Members of FECCAS, Christian base community priests, and church/Christian Democrat-organized slum dwellers participate in founding
Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC) (1976)	UES students (leaders in 1970 <i>areas comunes</i> student strike, ANDES-21 leaders)	Some early leaders work in Christian Democratic community action program
Popular Leagues "28th of February" (LP-28) (1977)	Formed largely by UES students	Some participation of Christian base communities connected to peasant training center in eastern El Salvador.
Popular Liberation Movement (MLP) (1979)	Formed by 1960s leaders of teachers' union ANDES-21 and former rector of National University in the 1960s	

SOURCES.—Alas (1982); Henriquez (1988); Cienfuegos (1993); Harnecker (1993); Ueltzen (1994); McClintock (1998); Binford (1999).

radical organizations secured continued support from the preexisting organizational infrastructure (i.e., political opportunity organizations) in terms of resources, bloc and individual recruitment, and protection. The labor, educational, and church-based sectors each contributed organizational resources and/or cadre to the radicalizing organizational infrastructure of the mid to late 1970s.

Three of the most prominent and high-ranking FUSS labor leaders who directed the 1967 progressive general strike founded the radical revolutionary organization Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) in the early 1970s. Arguably, the most important revolutionary leader in the 1970s and trade union leader in the 1960s, Salvador Cayetano Carpio, describes labor activists abandoning the FUSS leadership in the early 1970s in order to construct the FPL:

The most clear-sighted people, who at that moment understood the needs of the revolutionary struggle in our country, had to withdraw from the organizations to which they had virtually devoted their lives, with a great deal of pain but with great realism in taking the step. . . . To do so it was necessary to leave posts of great responsibility and honor in those other organizations. Several of our members who later joined the Farabundo Martí People's Liberation Forces as founding members were esteemed leaders of the workers' movement. For instance, José Dimas Alas was the secretary general of the Labor Unity Federation [FUSS] and one of its founders; Comrade Ernesto Morales was the youth secretary of the same Federation: and there were others who were also labor leaders who had to leave the traditional organizations to be able to develop in the new revolutionary school. (Tricontinental Society 1980, p. 25)

The revolutionary leaders sustained their new radical organizations by recruiting from the national university, teachers' union, and church-organized student and peasant sectors (Harnecker 1993). The public school teachers' association (ANDES-21) united other social sectors, including peasants, shantytown dwellers, and students, into common radical organizations such as the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR). ANDES-21 leaders from the 1960s also played a major role in the formation of the mass revolutionary organization MLP (Alas 1982). University of El Salvador student leaders from the 1970 Areas Comunes strike committee were central actors in founding the revolutionary organizations ERP, RN, and PRTC (McClintock 1998).

From the church-organized sector, Christian base community members and priests initiated the formation of the mass-based extraparliamentary organization the Unified Popular Action Front (FAPU) in 1974 and participated in the forming of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc in 1975. Both of these mass radical organizations were officially inaugurated in churches (Montgomery 1982; Pearce 1986). The Catholic-based student organiza-

Opportunity Organizations

tions (JEC, FRUSC, and PDC youth) that formed in the 1960s also contributed to the ERP, RN, and FPL some of their early and/or founding revolutionaries (Henriquez 1988; Harnecker 1993). The church's organizing efforts were so successful that the secular Marxist-Leninist revolutionary organization, the (FPL), bent ideological protocol and distributed a special pamphlet in 1974 inviting the Christian community to join the revolutionary struggle. Without this modification, revolutionary leaders confessed it would have been "impossible" to align with parts of the church-organized peasant sector (Harnecker 1993, p. 128).¹²

One movement leader, active in both the BPR and the UTC, illustrates through his personal account the role of the 1960s organizational infrastructure in subsequent radical organizational participation in the mid-1970s. He first describes the sequence of opportunity organizations that he and fellow peasants passed through in the Chalatenango region before they joined the revolutionary movement in the 1970s:

I arrived to the [revolutionary] movement through two paths . . . one path, because I was an activist in the Christian Democratic Party since I was very young, and, later, by the cooperative movement sponsored by the Church in which I also participated. Through this route I began to link myself with peasant organizations. This was also the history for the majority of us. Many of us came from the ranks of the Christian Democratic Party, we were people that had lost all hope in finding an alternative solution through this political party; we were people that had developed our human and social consciousness through the Christian movement. (Harnecker 1993, pp. 153–54; see also McClintock 1998, p. 258)

This same activist then discusses why preorganized groups left over from the 1967–72 organizational infrastructure were targeted for partial appropriation by more radical organizations in the mid-1970s:

We had the ability to sense that we should not try and work with whatever social sector, but only the most receptive ones. We did not search out or collaborate with workers in general, nor with peasants in general, but we had already begun working openly with ANDES, the teachers' organization, that was the most combative organization in the early 1970s. Their experience demonstrated to us that we could expand the movement and that is what happened. ANDES played, in fact, an extremely important role in the organization of peasants and high school students, the students were another very receptive sector. . . . The same thing occurred in the countryside. The situation was explosive because of the crisis it was ex-

¹² Henriquez (1988) further suggests that radical organizations such as the BPR would not likely have been able to penetrate urban shantytown communities (*los tugurios*) in the mid-1970s without the preestablished organizational work of the Catholic Church and Christian Democratic Party in these same areas in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

periencing in terms of the scarcity of land in which to work, credit and material for production, commercialization of production, and low salary levels during the harvesting season. In the countryside there were a lot of expressions of spontaneous mass rebellion. We were convinced that the peasantry was another sector ripe for organization, for mobilization. The university sector was another receptive group. . . . In reference to the work with the peasantry, our [revolutionary] organization began to influence the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (FECCAS) directed in this period by the Christian Democrats and the Catholic Church. (Harnecker 1993, pp. 125–26; see also Grenier 1999, pp. 45, 137, and 178 n. 28)

The early revolutionaries realized the stakes of operating in a high-risk/threat environment and substantially cut their organizing costs by searching out the specific social sectors *already* organized (i.e., the most “receptive” or “ripe” sectors) from the 1967–72 protest wave, as opposed to trying to collaborate with “whatever social sector” or with workers and peasants “in general.” The ability of revolutionary challengers to partially appropriate the leftover organizational infrastructure is due to the fact that they came out of it themselves and continued ongoing interorganizational relationships (Grenier 1999). Indeed, by the mid-1970s, many leaders and organizers maintained multiple overlapping memberships in trade union, student, or peasant organizations while simultaneously participating in more clandestine revolutionary organizations (see Harnecker 1993 for multiple accounts).

Threats penetrated the labor, educational, and church-based sectors to such a degree by the mid-1970s that key radical organizations formed and/or named themselves in direct response to specific threatening events. Four out of the nine principal radical/revolutionary organizations listed in table 5 mark their origins to specific threats. The first mass-based radical organization, FAPU, was formed in June 1974 to struggle against the threats of price increases, state repression, and fraudulent elections (Alas 1982; Montgomery 1982; Cardenal 1987).¹³ FAPU was a coalition of labor, education, and church-based organizations founded during the institutional opening in the 1960s; it included the teachers’ union ANDES-21, the labor federations FUSS and FESTIAVTCES, Christian base communities (CCBs) from Suchitoto, the church- and PDC-organized peasant league FECCAS, along with young clerics and university students. A similar coalition of opportunity holdover organizations formed the largest extraparliamentary organization in August 1975—the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR)—in response to a government massacre of university

¹³ One of FAPU’s first campaigns was to press the state to develop an anti-inflationary policy (Cabarrús 1983). Consumer goods prices rose rapidly between 1974 and 1977 for such basic items as cooking oil, rice, red beans, cheese, and bus fares (Ministerio de Economía 1978).

students on July 30, 1975. By the late 1970s, FAPU and BPR served as focal organizational units in which thousands of workers, students, teachers, and church-organized peasants could unite by linking their respective subunit challenger organizations under a single organizational umbrella.

At the end of 1974, a major radical peasant organization was formed out of the church-based cooperative movement in San Vicente and Chalatenango within weeks of the La Cayetana massacre—the Union of Rural Workers (UTC) (Pearce 1986; Berryman 1987). Another radical organization, the Popular Leagues “28th of February” (LP-28), named itself in homage to the victims of a state massacre of a massive nonviolent demonstration in downtown San Salvador protesting government fraud on February 28, following the 1977 presidential elections (between 50 and 100 people were killed). LP-28 and BPR also titled many of their affiliated subunit organizations after the exact dates of repressive events (e.g., military occupation of the university and 1975 student massacre) or after the names of fellow members killed by the security forces; these served as rallying cries for future mobilization and organizational recruitment.

In contrast to the reformist late 1960s, challenger interpretations of the political environment that emerged by the mid-1970s were much more antisystemic. The Salvadoran state was no longer viewed as a *relatively* legitimate jurisdictional body in which to present claims for new advantages and benefits. Rather, the state was now viewed by opponents as economically harmful, exclusive, and repressive. Military state managers were seen as unworthy of ruling and serving only the narrow interests of the agro-export elite, as evidenced by their inability to implement land reform (Stanley 1996; Griffith and González 2002), reduce inflation, convoke competitive elections, or tolerate public dissent.¹⁴ These emerging perceptions generated much more radical organizing strategies whereby coercive actions and tactics (e.g., building, factory, and land occupations and barricade construction) were encouraged to seek political influence in the increasingly threatening political environment.

By 1977, the challenger organizational infrastructure had been radicalized, as measured by the higher ratio of revolutionary organizations to reformist organizations present in protest events (see fig. 5). The dominance of revolutionary organizations in the social movement sector provided a “tipping point” (Petersen 2001) where increasing threats triggered a much more disruptive and violent protest wave between 1977 and 1981.

¹⁴ After 1976, the credibility of the regime had fallen to such a low level that virtually no protests targeted the legislative branch of government, as opposed to about 20% of protests during the 1967–72 protest wave. In a public opinion survey of 335 Salvadoran citizens in the mid-1980s, only 8% of respondents believed that General Romero came to power in 1977 through free elections (Morales Velado et al. 1988).

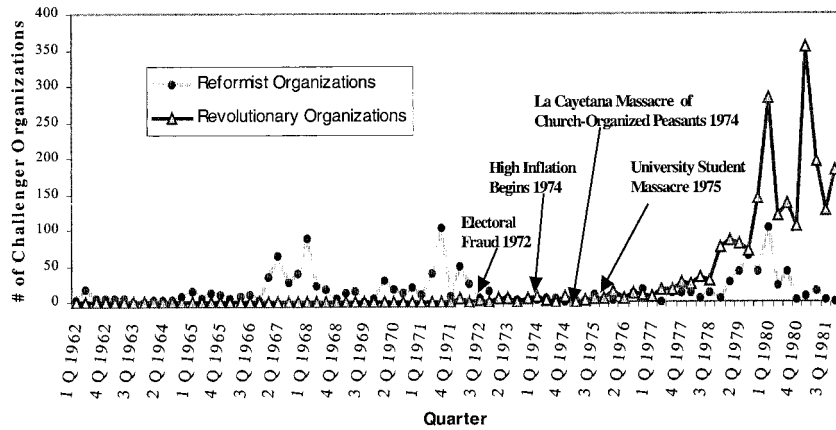


FIG. 5.—Quarterly presence of reformist and revolutionary challenger organizations in protest events, 1962–81. Reformist organizations were coded as those organizations that had reformist goals (i.e., group-specific policy changes) and did not make claims for the overthrow of the state. Revolutionary organizations were coded as all organizations that were explicitly revolutionary and/or extraparliamentary with the replacement of the government as a central goal (i.e., the revolutionary organizations listed in table 5, their affiliates, and guerrilla organizations). (Source: *La Prensa Gráfica* 1962–81)

Threat-Induced Protest Wave, 1977–81

Regime challengers modified their organizational infrastructure in this period by changing their strategy from reformist organizations to radical and revolutionary organizations as the political system slowly shut down following the fraudulent 1972 presidential and parliamentary elections (see fig. 5). Several indicators of contentious activity, including total protests and strikes, show a marked decline between 1973 and 1976 (see figs. 1 and 2) as challengers reinterpreted the changing political environment and radicalized their organizational infrastructure. In 1977 a second protest wave ascended, reaching more than 1,000 protest events a year by 1980. This second protest cycle exhibited much more disruptive and violent properties, nearly overthrowing the regime between 1980 and 1981.

By 1977, revolutionary-based organizations acquired the capacity to mobilize frequent protest events in response to escalating threats. The most publicized and notorious acts of human rights violations and state repression—such as the July 30, 1975, student massacre, the February 28, 1977, massacre of UNO supporters protesting electoral fraud, and the assassination of Father Rutilio Grande in March 1977 (a popularly supported Jesuit organizing CCBs)—were each immediately followed by large demonstrations in repudiation and then commemorated annually with massive homage ceremonies. Other rights-violating and repressive acts, such as arrests of organizational leaders or the violent dispersion of street

demonstrations, led to more coercive tactics that included building occupations (especially churches, embassies, and government offices) to demand the release of political prisoners and the whereabouts of the “disappeared.” Revolutionary organizations also increasingly launched armed attacks on the state security forces.

Figure 2 demonstrates the widespread employment of mass disruptive protest and violence during the second wave (1977–81) of political contention. Between 1979 and 1980 there were 161 reported farm invasions by organized land-poor peasants. In 1979, nearly half (43%) of the 114 reported labor strikes (see fig. 1) also included factory occupations. At the peak of the strike wave in 1980, 50% of worker actions demanded higher wages to match exorbitant inflation rates while another 25% of labor strikes centered on issues of state repression (Delgado Tobar and Peña Rosales 1989). In contrast to the nonviolent and orderly 1967–72 protest wave, over 60% of reported protest events were violent between 1977 and 1981 (see fig. 2). Mass nonviolent and disruptive protests peaked in the first half of 1980. State repression reached such alarming levels in 1980 that the presence of reformist organizations and mass protest declined rapidly by the end of the year, while armed attacks by revolutionary organizations remained high throughout the early 1980s as the country spiraled into civil war.

Summary

El Salvador’s authoritarian political environment varied considerably in the mid to late 20th century. The protracted political opening in the 1960s characterized by institutional access and competitive elections benefited organizational entrepreneurs in the labor, educational, and church sectors. During the liberalization period the state and oppositional political parties actively encouraged the formation of a wide variety of civic organizations and associations. The result was an organizational infrastructure in which multiple challenger organizations loosely coalesced, developed ongoing relations, and pressed the state for new advantages and benefits. This process culminated in an orderly and nonviolent protest wave where challengers viewed the liberalizing state as a *relatively* legitimate jurisdictional body to which claims could be presented. The wave of demonstrations and strikes that rocked El Salvador between 1967 and 1972 was the longest sustained period of popular contention since the 1932 peasant uprising and state massacre.

The reform-oriented protest wave came to an end when the state held successive fraudulent presidential and parliamentary elections in 1972. Even with this closing in opportunities, the organizational infrastructure founded in the late 1960s endured in both the countryside and cities

through the 1970s. Few of the key organizations or associations created in the 1960s were effectively dismantled by the state (i.e., teachers' union, labor federations, universities, student groups, and Catholic Church organizational initiatives) until the height of state repression in 1980 and 1981. In brief, a sustained period of political opportunity deposited an organizational infrastructure that persisted after opportunities diminished.

From 1972 to 1981 the Salvadoran state gradually became more exclusive and repressive, which combined with state-attributed economic problems (price increases and land shortage) to create an increasingly threatening political environment. Responding to these increasing threats, challenger organizations left over from regime liberalization radicalized. The decision of military state managers to close down institutionalized channels of dissent, convoke repeated electoral frauds, and commit outrageous acts of state repression motivated regime challengers to adopt more coercive protest strategies. By 1977 revolutionary organizations had launched a much wider, disruptive, and violent protest wave eventuating in El Salvador's civil war in the 1980s.

DISCUSSION

The case of El Salvador offers insight into a central theoretical puzzle in current research on protest waves and revolutions in authoritarian contexts that employ political process/opportunity models: How is large-scale rebellion possible in repressive regimes when the most often cited conditions in the political environment are the exact reverse of those associated with mass protest in democratic states? For instance, Goodwin (2001, p. 177) states, "Far from being a response to political openings, the revolutionary mobilization that occurred in Central America during the 1970s and 1980s was generally a response to political exclusion and violent repression—the *contraction* of political opportunities and the *closing down* of 'political space'" (emphasis in the original).

This investigation suggests that the explanation resides in a sequential model of political opportunity and threat. Such a framework highlights periods of political liberalization/political opportunity and organization building before a regime becomes exclusive and repressive. With the exception of an infusion of resources from elite allies, transnational networks, or foreign states, it would otherwise be extraordinarily difficult for regime challengers to establish organizational infrastructures capable of sustained resistance to authoritarian rule. Political opportunity periods not only encourage an escalation in orderly forms of protest activities in authoritarian settings, as shown in previous research, but also stimulate the formation of enduring civic organizations. These organizational infra-

structures persevere in the political environment long after the political reforms responsible for their establishment fade away.

Originally founded to act as collective vehicles to pursue group interests in a liberalizing authoritarian regime, these units and their memberships are likely to radically change goals, strategies, and alliances when the political environment no longer matches their organizational structures and endangers their survival. Increasing threats are one set of environmental incentives in which this organizational transformation/radicalization occurs. As a corollary, resistance to mounting threats is unlikely without the previous buildup and appropriation of an organizational infrastructure by regime challengers.

The present study maintains more precisely that the political opportunity features of regime liberalization periods (state-initiated practices of institutional access and competitive elections) selectively encourage the formation of civic organizations in particular social sectors. Future research may want to investigate additionally the role of persisting ideational elements created by prolonged periods of liberalization, such as notions of entitlements and emergent norms of state–civil society relations. These nonorganizational forces may also contribute to increased popular dissent when the state de-democratizes.

A related strategy in this line of study would be to recognize the leading social sectors participating in mass rebellion against a repressive regime. Once identified, the organizational genealogy should be traced for these sectors to determine the political context in which they first originated. For example, Chile's urban shantytown dwellers were a key sector demonstrating against the Pinochet military dictatorship in the mid-1980s, but their organizational founding dates back to the predictatorship period (1960–73), when there was support from the state and competing electoral political parties (Schneider 1995). The Front Islamic du Salut (FIS), which dominated extreme Algerian contention in the 1990s, evolved from a mass-based electoral party that was denied victory by the state in early 1992 (Martinez 2000). In other words, preceding liberalization periods appear to generate organizational building blocks for radical challenger groups operating in more authoritarian contexts. The case of El Salvador offers one striking example that revolutionary movements in repressive settings are organizationally constructed from earlier political opportunity periods.

Finally, this article proposes that social movement theories should give more attention to negative environmental incentives and threats—the underdeveloped side of political process models—as inducements to increase contentious activity (Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Van Dyke and Soule 2002) and/or radicalize organizations. However, caution is in order. First, this study suggests that when threats occur without a preexisting organizational infrastructure, they will likely deter challengers from sustained

contention (as in El Salvador between 1932 and the mid-1960s). Second, not all threats are equivalent. State-attributed economic problems may lead to increased contention for well-networked groups but probably will not create radical forms of conflict unless combined with an erosion of rights and/or state repression. These latter two threats are more often found in authoritarian states than in democratic ones, making the emergence of mass-based revolutionary movements much more likely in non-democratic settings (Goodwin 2001). Nonetheless, much more work needs to be done (in democratic and authoritarian contexts) on the role of political environments characterized by varying combinations of political opportunity and threat and how the nature and sequencing of those combinations produce particular forms of organization and contention.

APPENDIX A

TABLE A1
LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full Name
ACUS	Catholic University Action (Acción Católica Universitaria Salvadoreña)
AES	Association of Secondary Students (Asociación de los Estudiantes de Secundaria)
AGEPYM	General Association of Public and Municipal Employees (Asociación General de Empleados Públicos y Municipales)
AGEUS	General Association of Salvadoran University Students (Asociación General de Estudiantes Universitarios Salvadoreños)
ANDES-21	National Association of Salvadoran Educators (Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños)
ATACES	Salvadoran Association of Agricultural Workers and Peasants (Asociación de Trabajadores Agropecuarios y Campesinos de El Salvador)
BPR	Popular Revolutionary Bloc (Bloque Popular Revolucionario)
CAPUES	Provisional Administrative Council of the University (Consejo de Administración Provisional de la Universidad)
CCB	Christian Base Communities (Comunidades Cristianas de Base)
CCE	Central Elections Commission (Comisión Central de las Elecciones)
CESPROP	Social Studies and Popular Promotion Center (Centro de Estudios Sociales y Promoción Popular)
CGBE	General Council of Student Welfare (Consejo General de Bienestar Estudiantil)
CGS	General Confederation of Salvadoran Unions (Confederación General Salvadoreña)
CGTS	General Confederation of Salvadoran Workers (Confederación General de Trabajadores Salvadoreños)
COAP	Workers' Political Action Committee (Comité Obrero de Acción Política)
CUTS	Unitary Confederation of Salvadoran Workers (Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores Salvadoreños)
ERP	Revolutionary Army of the People (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo)
FAPU	United Popular Action Front (Frente de Acción Popular Unificada)
FECCAS	Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños)
FENASTRAS	National Union Federation of Unions of Salvadoran Workers (Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños)

TABLE A1 (Continued)

Acronym	Full Name
FESINCONTRANS ...	Federation of Construction, Transportation, and Allied Trade Unions (Federación de Sindicatos de Construcción, Transportes y Similares)
FESTIAVTCES	Federation of Workers in Food, Clothing, Textile, and Related Industries (Federación Sindical de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos, Vestidos y Similares de El Salvador)
FEUR	Revolutionary Front of University Students (Frente Estudiantil Universitario Revolucionarios)
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamic du Salut)
FPL	Popular Forces of Liberation (Fuerzas Populares de Liberación)
FRUSC	Federation of Revolutionary Social Christian University Students (Federación Revolucionaria de Universitarios Social Cristianos)
FSD	Democratic Socialist Front (Frente Socialista Demócrata)
FUNPROCOOP	Foundation for the Promotion of Cooperatives (Fundación Promotora de Cooperativas)
FUSS	Unitary Federation of Salvadoran Unions (Federación Unitaria Sindical Salvadoreña)
IDHUCA	Human Rights Institute—Catholic University (Instituto de Derechos Humanos—Universidad Centroamericana—“Jose Simeón Cañas”)
INSAFOCOOP	Salvadoran Institute to Promote Cooperatives (Instituto Salvadoreño de Fomento Cooperativo)
ISS	Inter-Diocesan Social Secretariat (Secretariado Social Interdiocesano)
JAC	Catholic Agrarian Youth (Juventud Agraria Católica)
JEC	Catholic Student Youth (Juventud Estudiantil Católica)
JOC	Catholic Working-Class Youth (Juventud Obrera Católica)
LP-28	Popular Leagues—28th of February (Ligas Populares—28 de Febrero)
MLP	Movement for Popular Liberation (Movimiento de Liberación Popular)
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario)
ORDEN	Nationalist Democratic Organization (Organización Democrática Nacionalista)
PAR	Party of Renovating Action (Partido de Acción Renovadora)
PCN	Party of National Conciliation (Partido de Conciliación Nacional)
PCS	Communist Party of El Salvador (Partido Comunista de El Salvador)
PDC	Christian Democratic Party (Partido Demócrata Cristiano)
PREN	Republican Party of National Evolution (Partido Republicano de Evolución Nacional)
PRTC	Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos)

Opportunity Organizations

TABLE A1 (*Continued*)

Acronym	Full Name
PRUD	Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unification (Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democrática)
RN	National Resistance (Resistencia Nacional)
SETA	Union of State Water and Aqueduct Workers (Sindicato de Empresa de Trabajadores de ANDA)
STECEL	Union of State Power Workers (Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa Comisión Ejecutiva Eléctrica de Río Lempa)
STIES	Electrical Workers Union (Sindicato de Trabajadores de Industria Eléctrica de El Salvador)
STISSS	Social Security Institute Workers Union (Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Salvadoreño de Seguro Social)
STUS	Union of Salvadoran University Workers (Sindicato de Trabajadores Universitarios Salvadoreños)
UCA	Catholic University (Universidad Centroamericana—José Siméon Cañas)
UCS	Communal Union of El Salvador (Unión Comunal Salvadoreña)
UDN	National Democratic Union (Unión Democrática Nacionalista)
UES	National University of El Salvador (Universidad de El Salvador)
UNO	National Opposition Union (Unión Nacional Opositora)
UNOC	National Union of Catholic Workers (Unión Nacional de Obreros Católicos)
UTC	Union of Rural Workers (Unión de Trabajadores del Campo)

APPENDIX B

Political Cartoons

The images in figure B1 are from *Justicia y Paz* (June 1974, vol. 3, no. 31, p. 11), the monthly newsletter for rural CCBs. At the time these cartoons appeared (1972–80), there were between 6,000 and 8,000 copies in circulation each month. The cartoons illustrate the attribution to the state of land access problems and basic consumer price increases. The English translations of the texts appear below.

La Vida en broma [Life as a joke]

Bureaucrat: You do not have any more appointments, Mr. Minister . . . only this peasant who is waiting for the passage of agrarian reform.

Minister: Fine, let him in now. [The minister waits, but the peasant does not rise to enter the office.]

Bureaucrat: These people are so stupid, they do not have any patience! The agrarian reform requires much study. [While saying this, the bu-

La vida en Broma

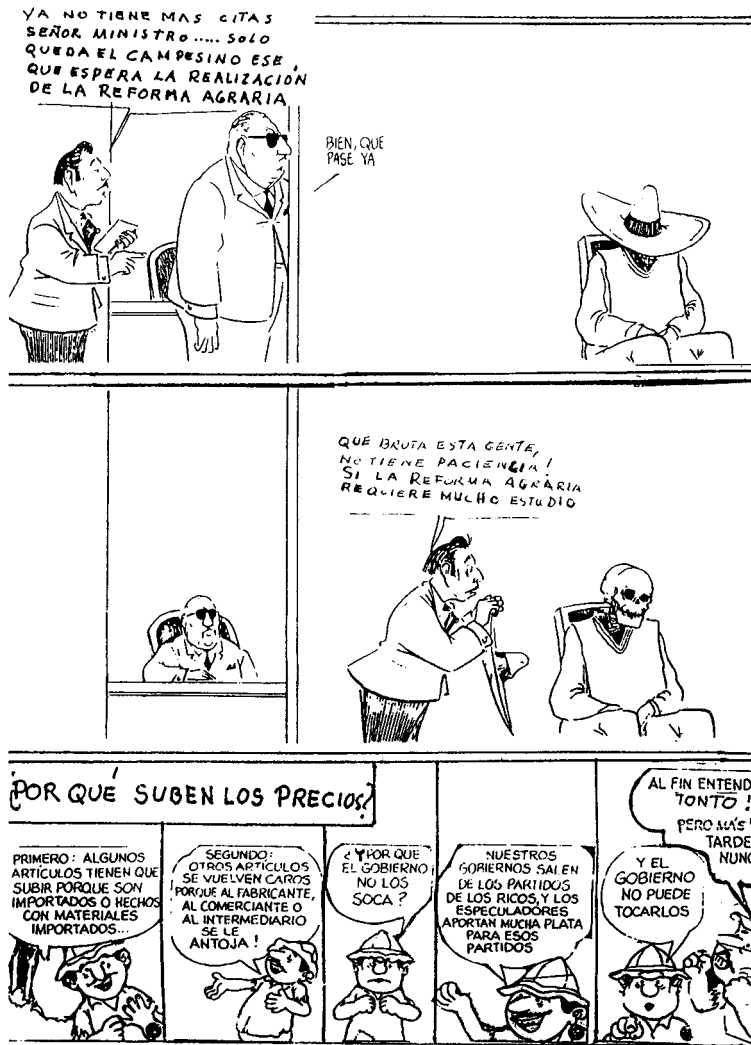


FIG. B1

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reacrat removes the sombrero of the peasant to reveal a desiccated skeleton.]

¿Porque suben los Precios? [Why are prices rising]

Man with moustache: First, some items have to rise in price because they are imported or made of imported materials.

Man with moustache: Second, other items become expensive because the manufacturer, the merchant, or the middleman charges whatever they want.

Clean-shaven man: And why doesn't the government tighten the screws on them?

Man with moustache: Our governments come from the political parties of the wealthy, and the speculators provide a lot of money for those parties.

Clean-shaven man: And the government is unable to touch them.

Man with moustache: Finally you understand, you dummy! But better late than never.

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