

Bacevich, A.J., James D. Hallums, Richard H. White and Thomas F. Young. *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*. (A special report of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in association with the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University). Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988.

Prior to 1980 El Salvador had the dubious distinction of being the country least-studied by American specialists on Latin America. Since the beginning of the US military intervention in El Salvador in 1980 the publishing situation, as far as American scholars are concerned, has changed dramatically; in the past decade there has been a veritable flood of publications about El Salvador. Most of these publications, however, have been of questionable quality; all too often they were little more than polemics for or against American military intervention in El Salvador. The work being reviewed here is therefore a refreshing "oasis of objectivity and incisiveness" amid this vast desert of polemics.

The authors of this study are four Lieutenant Colonels in the US Army. They wrote this monograph while they were National Security Fellows at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard in 1987-1988. In writing this monograph they had two purposes: First, to provide a general discussion of the policy of the US military toward small wars; and second, to provide a specific discussion of US military policy toward El Salvador.

In both its general and specific dimensions the manuscript must be rated as superb. With respect to the general problem of small wars, they give a lucid and careful examination of how the United States has responded to the small war problem in recent decades. They offer a strongly worded but fair-minded critique of this US response; noting such failings as the neglect of small wars in the service schools, and the fact that officers who specialize in the small wars area quickly find out that such expertise does little to advance their careers.

On the specific case of the United States and the war in El Salvador they provide an insightful analysis of the successes and failures of the US military in that war. On the "plus" side of the ledger they note that in the early 1980s the United States succeeded in building the Salvadoran military into a force that was capable of repelling the conventional offensives of the FMLN. (The failure of the FMLN's late 1989 offensive, which came a year and half after this monograph was published, shows the foresight of the authors in predicting that the FMLN's ability to engage in major offensives had been severely curtailed by the expansion of the El Salvadorean military in the early 1980s.)

The authors point out, however, that on the "minus" side of the ledger the expansion of the El Salvadorean military has not been without its costs. Specifically, by building the El Salvadorean military into a good-sized and well-equipped force, the US military has poorly prepared the El Salvadorean military to conduct a counter-insurgency campaign. Now, as noted above, it was quite true that in the early 1980s the Salvadoran armed forces required a conventional posture to beat back the large-scale rebel offensives; but it is also true that having built them into such a force, the US military seemed at a loss as to how to get the

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Salvadorans to conduct effective counter-insurgency operations once the war reverted to an insurgency phase in the mid-1980s.

The authors conclude by relating the general to the specific; they argue that the general American failure to prepare for and understand small wars accounts for the specific failure of the United States to do a better job of training and preparing the El Salvadorean military for counter-insurgency operations.

In sum, this monograph is not only the work of insightful and thoughtful US military officers; it is also a work of courage. No governmental or military establishment likes to be criticized, and the US military is no exception to the rule. The officers who wrote this monograph did their careers no good by writing it. However, if anything is to be done about America's current woeful lack of preparation for small wars then some officers are going to have to speak out. To put the matter in a theological context: The old Christian hymn "Once to Every Man and Nation" contains the line: "Truth forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne." If the US military establishment is to get the truths with respect to small wars "off the scaffold" then more officers are going to have to start speaking out as these officers did.

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Manwaring, Max, and Court Prisk. *El Salvador at War: An Oral History*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988.

This unabashedly partisan work is largely composed of interviews with United States military and diplomatic personnel and Salvadorean army officers. Some parts, however, have been previously published in such sources as *Current History* and *Foreign Policy*. A sprinkling of commentaries are by such opposition figures as Guillermo Manuel Ungo and the rebel commanders. It deals with the civil war in El Salvador from its inception in 1980 through 1986, under twenty-four chapter headings with such titles as: "The Converging Major Insurgent Actions," and "U.S. Support for El Salvador." There is a running commentary by the authors.

The tone of the book is set even in the dedication: "To those who read *Das Kapital* and raised the sound of warning. To those who read *Mein Kampf* and called a democratic world to arms . . ." And former US ambassador to El Salvador Edwin C. Corr assures us in the preface: "After you have read the ideas and thoughts of all the principals of all persuasions in this dynamic history I am confident you will concur that the United States is doing the job right in El Salvador." (xii). If this were the only book one read on El Salvador it would be small wonder that he would be right, as every conversation and narrative has been tailored to that purpose.

This book does not appear aimed at the general reader. There are many obscure references that are never explained and the authors' commentaries,