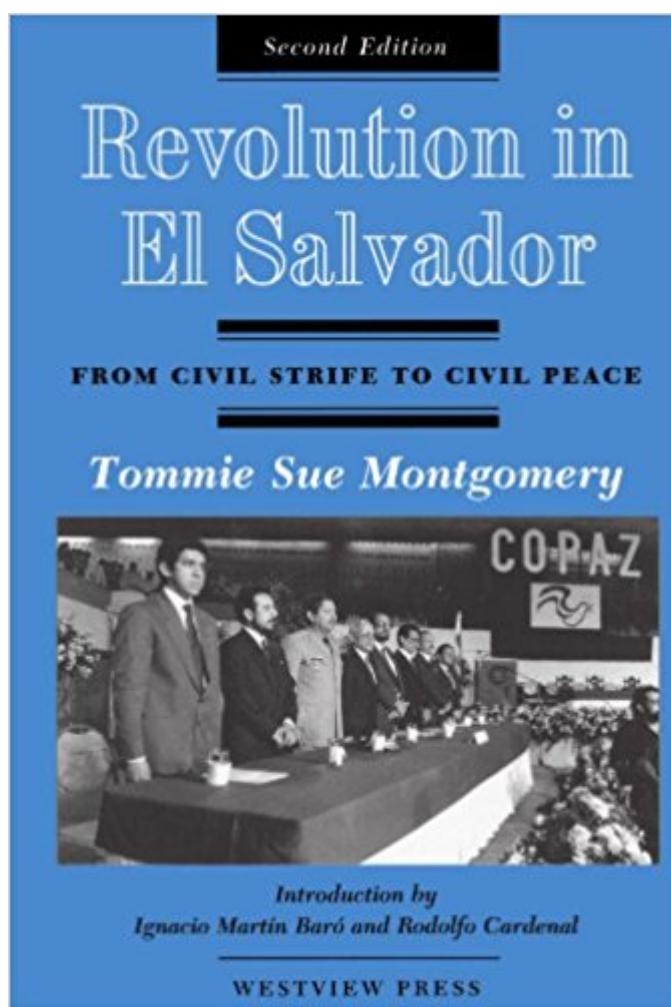


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Revolution In El Salvador: From Civil Strife To Civil Peace, Second Edition



Synopsis

Since the first edition of this book appeared in 1982, El Salvador has experienced the most radical social change in its history. Ten years of civil war, in which a tenacious and creative revolutionary movement battled a larger, better-equipped, U.S.-supported army to a standstill, have ended with twenty months of negotiations and a peace accord that promises to change the course of Salvadorean society and politics. This book traces the history of El Salvador, focusing on the two actors—the oligarchy and the armed forces—that shaped the Salvadorean economy and political system. Concentrating on the period since 1960, the author sheds new light on the U.S. role in the increasing militarization of the country and the origins of the oligarchy-army rupture in 1979. Separate chapters deal with the Catholic church and the revolutionary organizations, which challenged the status quo after 1968. In the new edition, Dr. Montgomery continues the story from 1982 to the present, offering a detailed account of the evolution of the war. She examines why Duarte's two inaugural promises, peace and economic prosperity, could not be fulfilled and analyzes the electoral victory of the oligarchy in 1989. The final chapters closely follow the peace negotiations, ending with an assessment of the peace accords and an evaluation of the future prospects for El Salvador. An Epilogue analyzes the 1994 elections. Dr. Montgomery's prognosis in the first edition—that no lasting, viable political solution was possible without the participation of the revolutionary organizations—has been borne out by events: Today the FMLN is a legal political party.

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Customer Reviews

In this new edition, Montgomery offers a detailed account of the evolution of the war, a clear analysis of why Duarte's promises for peace and prosperity could not be fulfilled, and an evaluation of the electoral victory of the oligarchy in 1989.

Tommie Sue Montgomery has taught at Dickinson College, Agnes Scott College, and Emory University. She is currently a senior research associate with the North-South Center at the University of Miami.

Good Read

Tommie Montgomery has done an excellent job collating the facts and factors of the "lost decade" of 1980s El Salvador - as well as adding a few others significantly downplayed in the corporate media. The most telling of these latter was the Christian Democrats' loss of power in the '89 elections to the rightist ARENA - due as much to the CD's own corruption as state terror against the Left. The "moderate center" proved as incapable as "the extremists" in living up to expectations. I can hear critics now bashing this book for its "bias toward the Left," but the truth is that anyone serious about democracy and human rights in a place like El Salvador of the 1970s was, by definition, a leftist subversive. The author does downplay the Cuban-Soviet connection, but this link went underground after 1981 and was never after as open and overt as US support for the Nicaraguan contras. Outside allies never created the conditions for revolution in El Salvador, any more than Western aid did for Kosovo; nor did outside forces give the struggle personal meaning for those fighting it. Ultimately, the FMLN could fight "the regime" to a standstill; but without foreign logistics, as in Kosovo or Libya - which the USSR and Cuba would not have conceived of supplying - there was no possibility of taking power. The book ends on a "happy" '90s, note, positing the alliance of popular democratic forces (the FMLN) with progressive capitalism (the US/IMF) against the traditional oligarchy. These "common interests" did not last long, however. The neo-liberal model emerging from the abandonment of the revolution/repression cycle ended the bloodshed, but at the expense of marginalizing the masses as effectively as the open repression of earlier generations. A good overview for those interested in the blood and thunder of the Reagan era's "low intensity conflict" and post-cold war "democratic transitions."

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