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El Salvador: Living with effects of bad policy

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NCR Today

Jim Hodge and Linda Cooper's reporting for *NCR* goes back to at least the mid-1980s. The vast majority of their work for us has been focused on Central America, and they bring that long-view perspective that makes their reporting authoritative.

Today's story is classic example of what they do so well: El Salvador struggles to come to terms with violent past. It is more than appropriate that we posted this story on the 34th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

The surrogate battles of the Cold War era have ended, but the effects linger on throughout Central America. Hodge and Cooper poke and prod us when we otherwise might forget that today's troubles are rooted in the current policies and past actions of U.S. government.

Many who have followed the story of Central America in *NCR* over the years will be heartened by the election of Salvador Sánchez Cerén to the presidency of the El Salvador. But that cheer will be tempered by the uncertainty that remains.

Just how much success Sánchez Cerén will bring is anyone's guess. At this point there are more questions than answers:

- Will the rightist the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) continue fear-mongering about a leftist government, or respond to Sánchez Cerén's call for unity and a more equitable and inclusive society?
- Will opponents fight his plan to join Venezuela's Petrocaribe oil bloc in order to obtain cheap fuel and use the savings to finance social programs?
- Will the U.S. (again) meddle in El Salvador's affairs?

- Will the Salvadoran Supreme Court help the country come to grips with its brutal past and bring to justice war criminals who have enjoyed 20 years of impunity?
- Will El Salvador's Catholic church live up to Archbishop Romero's vision for the country and the church?

The election of Sánchez Cerén, however close, shows that a majority of Salvadorans embrace his call for national unity over his opponent's ARENA's Norman Quijano, polarizing rhetoric. A majority seems to believe, as Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from the Birmingham jail, that "justice long delayed is justice denied."

To find answers to these questions, keep watching the *NCR* website for Hodge and Cooper's reporting. They keep us all informed.

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