



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of
the National Academy of Public Administration,
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series: Policing
Interview no.: M11

Interviewee: Flor Hunt
Interviewer: Knut Walter
Date of Interview: 3 July 2008
Location: San Salvador
El Salvador

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HUNT: I always like to begin these interviews, conversations, by learning more about the interviewee's personal background. Can you please give me your full name and describe the position you hold now?

WALTER: *All right, my name is Knut Walter, I am currently President of the Accreditation Commission in El Salvador.*

HUNT: Can you tell me about some of the jobs you've held here in El Salvador before you worked with the Accreditation Commission?

WALTER: *Well, in the '70s, and '80s and early '90s I was a teacher at the catholic university, the UCA, Universidad Centroamericana. I worked there for 23 years off and on. I took some years off to do graduate work in the United States. Then in 1993 I left the university and did some work in writing history text books for the Ministry of Education, and I spent a couple of years in New York City with the Social Science Research Council in their Latin America program.*

Subsequently I came back to El Salvador and did some consulting. In 2000 I went to Guatemala to direct a graduate program in the social sciences that was based at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO, Latin American University of Social Sciences).

I came back to El Salvador in 2005 and have been working with the Accreditation Commission since then.

HUNT: Wonderful, thank you. Can you tell us a little bit about the research that you've done on military transitions and maybe more specifically on the transition here in El Salvador?

WALTER: *Well, I've written a book [Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy] with Philip Williams at the University of Florida on the historical background and the peace process in El Salvador. I also wrote a smaller book for FLACSO specifically on the peace process, focusing on the role of the army. I've also written some smaller things here and there on the transition, on the challenges facing the new political order that has been set up in El Salvador.*

HUNT: As I mentioned before some of the questions that we have are more of a specific nature as to what the reform process entailed, but maybe we can start with a description of what the transition was like, what some of the reform initiatives were and how—?

WALTER: *Well, El Salvador had a very long history of direct military rule. The regime has been called authoritarian, it has been called a dictatorship, but basically the characteristics of the regime are best described by calling it a military government that was in power from 1931 until 1992, if you consider that the war encompassed the 1980s: although there were civilian presidents in office, they still gave the army a very preeminent role in the running of the country. So 60-odd years of uninterrupted military rule is a very heavy, very big burden that the country had to get rid of and replace with something that hadn't really been practiced for a long time, which was democratic government.*

The country had no tradition or a very limited tradition of political give and take within a fairly unrestricted context. There were political parties from the 19—well, even before, the military always had their own party, which competed in the

elections, and the opposition was gradually allowed a greater voice beginning in the mid 1960s. So it was not really zero to begin with. But there were very, very clear limits on how far an opposition movement could go. There was always fraud at the ballot box and there were legal restrictions on the participation of certain groups and certain parties.

So democracy in general I think is a very new experience for a country like El Salvador. Thus the challenges that we face today have to do with not only the organization of parties that express certain points of view, that express a certain political agenda, they also have to do with the autonomy of the electoral authorities, they have to do with the conditions that enable people to go to the ballot box and express their preferences freely. It has to do with campaign reform. There are a number of issues which I guess all democracies face to one extent or another but in this country they have all been piling up into the—I think we still have a tremendous challenge before us to try to improve the quality of democracy and make people—increase the levels of commitment to a democratic form of government. It is always possible to backslide.

I don't see anything right now that would suggest that we are in a—that democracy is in crisis in El Salvador, but you never know. It happened back in the early 30s. There was a functional democracy in the 1930s in El Salvador, in the 1920s, excuse me, with severe limitations of course but it was very easily overthrown and a military government took its place.

HUNT: Can you talk a little bit about the peace accords and what some of the institutional reforms that they brought about were and sort of how that process occurred?

WALTER: *The peace process and negotiations to achieve a political settlement to the conflict began in fact very shortly after the military conflict began. That is, the first attempts to talk and discuss a possible political solution began in 1982. They were very—they were not fruitful at all. The conflict was eventually resolved when a set of conditions came together in 1988, '89, '90, that had to do with the international context, it had to do with internal conditions too in the country, within El Salvador. That finally convinced almost everybody that there was a need to negotiate an end to the war.*

When this happened, when there was an agreement that yes, the war had to be ended by political means and this was possible, then the process actually began and moved ahead very quickly. The question that one asks is why didn't this happen ten years before? Why did we have to wait ten years for this to happen? Well, before that everybody expected that there would be a victor, a military victor to the conflict. By 1990 it was clear that the war could drag on, it could go on forever I suppose, but it wasn't the right approach any more, nobody believed that really anymore.

So the peace process moved ahead very quickly and the peace agreements were signed in January of 1992. If you look at the agreement, I cannot say right now how many pages are turned over to the army, but the percentage, the weight of the military component in the peace accord is very substantial and it has to do basically with removing the army from politics and converting it into a professional military force whose obligation is basically to protect national sovereignty, the borders and the territory and all that. Because prior to 1992, prior to the peace accords, the army's main role was security, actually. The army existed to run the police force because it also had—The military establishment, should we say, was divided into two. There was a Ministry of Defense but there

was also a Vice Ministry of Public Security. That, the role of the Public Security forces was the sort of day-to-day responsibility of the army. That's what the army did. It didn't fight wars except for the little war with Honduras in 1969. It really didn't have—there was no military threat to El Salvador, that was, in fact, until the 1980s. There was no guerrilla insurgency either. So the army existed to run the security forces, which were divided into the National Guard, the National Police, the Treasury Police and that was it: three different branches of the security forces.

The National Police was basically the urban police force, the National Guard was the rural police force and the Treasury Police was involved basically with bootlegging, that type of thing, had more to do with fiscal matters. I think this all of this has been very well described in Gino Costa's book [La Creación de Una Policía Civil] on the National Police. Have you seen that one?

HUNT: I was just given that book and I plan on reading it when I have the opportunity.

WALTER: *I think it is the most serious and most comprehensive study and I totally agree with Costa that the army's reason for being was essentially public security. Now, as an agency involved in public security I think the army's role was actually quite poor in the sense that the criminality in the country, long before the war began, was quite high. I mean, in the 1960s, as I recall, El Salvador already had the highest homicide rate in Latin America. This—you can check the statistics from the Pan American Health Organization. Homicide rates are not the only indicator of violence or criminality of course, but they are perhaps the most accurate because homicides generally are reported, other kinds of criminal activity may go unregistered.*

So the levels of violence in El Salvador, at least the levels of homicidal violence, were very high. How do you explain this. Well, I can think of a number of explanations but I don't think—there's no need to go into that now. The fact is that during the war, of course, violence sort of went through the roof. With the end of the conflict in 1992 everybody expected there would be a reprieve from this very, very high level of violence and destruction. For a moment there was. But the fact is the transition from the old police force which was, I think very ineffective, to a new police force which everybody had high expectations about wasn't going to be that easy. The transition, well it took about two years for the old police force to sort of disappear from the picture and the new police to take its place.

The new police were, the design of the new police force was actually quite good. I mean, the level of instruction of the police officers would have to be higher, they would have to have a high school degree. There would be a training school, there would be a police academy. There would be a core curriculum that emphasized security and human rights. In other words I think that the recipe was moving along in the right way.

HUNT: Who came up with that recipe? Whose idea was it to implement the reforms in the way that they were implemented?

WALTER: *The United Nations was present. Some of the countries that were involved in supporting the UN were present, like Sweden, Spain. I think the US also sent instructors to the new police academy. The idea was that the police would—the new police force would be in synch with the new democratic order that was being created. You couldn't have a police force that acted arbitrarily and illegally. You needed a police force that that would follow procedures, that would detain people*

under the right legal procedures, a police force that would resolve and clear up criminal activities. The idea was that the new police force would be clean, it would be efficient in contrast to the previous police force that was made up of, I think, very often it was made up of ex-army recruits, people who didn't really have, who weren't trained as police officers, they were basically former soldiers who acted as such, just wearing a police uniform.

That is why the way that the police reacted to expressions of public discontent in El Salvador before 1992 or 1993, was always quite drastic. I mean I can recall in the 1950s and the 1960s, the few moments when there were political expressions of dissatisfaction, marches, demonstrations, that kind of thing, they were always broken up with bullets. There was never any use of tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets, it was always lead. And it was not lead to frighten people away, it was lead to kill or to maim. The police responded in military terms to situations that required a police response, not an army response. That was one of the things that I think had to be overcome.

I think it has happened. I mean there have been cases of excessive violence since 1992, but by and large I think that the police have improved their performance notably. I mean there are cases now where demonstrators go out into the street and it's the police that walk along with them to sort of keep things in place.

HUNT: Was there opposition to this amalgamation of police services or was that something that had widespread support?

WALTER: *Sure, I mean the army was opposed to it by and large. There were some officers who thought it was time that this happened. Even in 1960, October or November of 1960, there was a military coup that deposed the serving President who was a colonel in the army. This President had become excessively repressive. He had invaded the national university and beat up students. So a group of officers within the army overthrew him in late 1960. This, the new government, the junta that was created that had three civilians and two army officers on it proposed three objectives: One, to hold elections eventually to try to resolve the political crisis. Two, to undertake a number of very basic reforms in the operation of the government, and three, to separate the security forces from the army. In other words, in 1960 there was already among some army officers and civilians an awareness that it was not possible really to change the political system if you kept the police forces within the control of the army.*

The army of course—then another group of officers overthrew this one three months later and the whole thing went back to the old ways. But the idea that there was a need to change at least the police force I think was always present. It wasn't until, of course, 1992, that it was finally agreed upon that the army would withdraw from that field.

HUNT: As part of the peace accords the new Salvadoran police, La Policía Nacional Civil, had as its mandate mandatory blending of ex- [Indecipherable 18:54] fighters, of former officers and those who had been part of the police force. Can you talk a little bit about how that agreement came about if you know?

WALTER: *I think that the guerrilla leadership recognized that they couldn't just disband their guerrilla forces. There had to be some explanation. First of all there had to be an explanation as to why the war was ending because many guerrillas I think were still convinced, as many officers and soldiers in the army might also have been convinced, that there would be a military victory for one or the other. So the*

negotiated settlement I think left many people with a sort of bitter taste in their mouth. Why is this happening? We could still fight.

But the fact is that peace had to be negotiated. So the guerrilla commanders made a point of telling their fighters that they would have jobs as police officers which was, let's say, the job which was closest to what they knew how to do, assuming that what police do is shoot people. There was a misunderstanding about the creation of the new police force, the requirements would be a bit more strict. But nonetheless there were quotas assigned. The agreement was, I think, that 20% of the recruits would be from the guerrilla forces, 20% from the old police force and 60% would have no previous guerrilla or army police force affiliation.

The impression, I don't know if these proportions were complied with, I don't know. I do think that eventually the majority of people that came in, more than the amount prescribed in the agreement, were in fact people with no previous affiliation, which is probably all for the best. In any case, the requirements that the new police force set for its new officers were probably higher than those that guerrilla fighters or police officers or the old police force could achieve, could reach.

HUNT: Do you think that this agreement of quotas was successful? Do you think that there are some legacies that came from it that are negative or maybe some that are positive that you could talk about?

WALTER: *I think that the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN, Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation) has complained on and off that its combatants and its leaders were not duly represented in the new police force. The new police force was slanted towards people who identified more with the government or with the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA, Nationalist Republican Alliance) Party or what have you. That's the impression I get. But again, I don't know of any study that has been done to suggest that there has been a slant, a sesgo, yes a slant—.*

HUNT: An inclination?

WALTER: *Yes, an inclination towards one side and less to the other.*

HUNT: One of the things that many countries facing an end of an armed conflict go through is the process of depoliticization of the police forces. Can you talk a little bit about how that process was carried out here?

WALTER: *The training academy, the police academy from what I know was able to recruit instructors who came from a number of institutions, from a variety of sectors in the political spectrum. I think the police academy has performed quite well. Police officers are generally knowledgeable about their functions and they're getting paid better. I think that in general the recruitment of new officers, police officers has been done reasonably well. There are cases of course, there have been cases, some of them quite publicized, of corruption within the police force. There were cases of police officers who were involved in kidnap rings, that were involved in corruption in many respects. But I think in comparison to the past the difference is quite obvious.*

HUNT: Speaking more broadly about the reform process in general and moving away from a military government and into a democracy where these institutions have had to be rebuilt, what do you think are some of the more sequential steps that

reformers need to take when they're trying to reform institutions at the end of an armed conflict?

WALTER: *Well I think that a lot has to do with the new political system which is envisioned. In this case of El Salvador, I don't know if democracy was the preferred outcome as such. The guerrillas obviously would have wanted a popular revolution and a popular government, democratic, in quotes, not liberal but probably a one-party system or a popular democracy if we can call it that. And perhaps people on the right who had to swallow it also were very—who resisted until the end the incorporation of the left. You must remember that in 1932 the left, that is the social democratic, the Marxist, the Communist, even the liberal left if we can call it that, were excluded from the political system by law and by decree and by the practice of the military in government.*

So in 1992 what you have is a circle which has come—we've come full circle from the total exclusion of the left to the acceptance of the left as a political force. This was, I think, the most significant political change in 1992. In addition, of course, to the withdrawal of the army from political activities, from political function.

HUNT: Can you talk a little bit—?

WALTER: *So I think when a country is involved in a peace process it has to think about well what political system are we thinking of establishing afterwards? To what extent is it feasible to think about a political system in these terms? What kind of institutions do you need to guarantee that this political system and the rights that go with it can be addressed and can be defended effectively. At this point, in the case of El Salvador it was absolutely essential, and I think it still is to some extent, that there be a foreign presence that can say, all right, look, you need—we're going to be the referee here. You need to work along these lines and we're going to make sure that you do.*

In a sense El Salvador was intervened by the UN for I would say easily two, maybe three years, in the sense that the UN was a foreign presence that determined whether things were being done correctly or not and it told the government so and it told the opposition so. This was essentially. Without that it wouldn't have been possible, I don't think.

HUNT: On the more practical level, what do you think were some of the most important steps that were taken to guarantee that those reforms and that transition was really successful?

WALTER: *I think the establishment of certain institutions like the human rights, the Human Rights Ombudsman (Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos) were important. The creation of the police academy I think was key in this respect. The creation of the academy and selection procedures to identify and hire police officers. The monies, resources that were allocated to public security were—they're still not adequate probably but they were substantially more than in the past. And the, what is absolutely key I think is the reduction of those institutions that were involved in the war itself, the army and the guerrillas. In the case of El Salvador the guerrillas turned over all their weapons. Some people think they didn't but I think that they basically turned them all over. And the army was whittled down considerably and its budget was reduced. At this point, at this moment in the year 2008, El Salvador's military budget is the lowest in terms of its proportion of the total budget I think since independence probably in 200-odd years, 180 years ago. I think today the budget is less than 5% of total budgetary*

expenditures and that is astonishing. It should be even less I suppose because in fact the army today has—Well, if you look at what needs do we have, what are the needs for an army today?

The borders have been essentially defined. The border with Honduras, it was a headache all the time. That has been defined. There should be no more quarrels about where the border lies. Secondly, the cold war is over. The army's reason for being in part was to defend the country from the enemies in the cold war. Thirdly, the public security has been transferred to a non-military police force. Fourthly, what is the fourth one? There were four I think. I think that if you look at the reasons for having an army today, they're terribly limited, if at all, if there are any at all. Costa Rica did away with its army in 1948. The army is still kept in place as it is in Nicaragua and Honduras and Guatemala as the state's last resort in case of a general insurrection of the people or of a very severe crisis which the police can't handle when you bring out the army and you start shooting people. But that, we hope, is not going to happen.

So I think there is an existential problem here for the army. There is a group of course in Iraq today and this is built up as one of the reasons for the army's continued existence. But 300 soldiers in Iraq is not a big thing, no big deal.

HUNT: I have more of a theoretical question that is going to deviate a little bit from what we have been talking about. But one of the reasons that you have this kind of police reform after a conflict is to limit the ability of the police to be coercive, to be repressive, to curb the level of brutality. But one of the things that we've seen is a rise in crime and violence as a result of the democratic transition. One of the reactions to that in El Salvador and many other places has been this concept of the *mano dura* (*firm hand*), of the need for—

WALTER: *Zero tolerance.*

HUNT: Sort of taking back some of that space created in civil society and really feeling that the police need to be able to be more forceful in their fight against crime. Can you talk about that a little bit?

WALTER: *Well, we always get back to this question of the chicken or the egg. What is producing the levels of violence that we have today? What produced them in the past? I think we need to study and it is something which has been going through my head at least. We need to understand how it was in the past and how the state reacted to those conditions of extreme violence or significant violence in the 1950s, '60s, '70s and how it is addressed today. People I think still remember, there is an erroneous belief that in the past things were better and they were better in the past because these problems were addressed forcefully. People still believe that we need (Maximiliano Hernández) Martínez, the dictator of the '30s and early '40s, because they said that he was extremely strict and that he kept people in place and so on and so on. I'm not so sure that that was the case.*

*But in any case, this idea that you can force people to comply and you can force people to behave correctly is still very engrained. It is of course an easy solution. You just have to go out there and beat people up and they will start to behave properly. But the fact is that if in the 1950s and '60s, the levels of homicide, at least homicides were very high. I would suspect that other forms of crime and violence were also high, theft, cattle rustling and so on and so on. I think history will tell us that *mano dura* is not the answer. There are more structural, more society problems that have to be addressed before.*

For example, why were the homicide rates so high in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s? Why? Well some people say alcohol, that most killings involved drunkenness. Yes, but why did people go at each other. There's more to it than that. Some people suggested undefined properly rates were a problem. Since most of the homicides were in rural areas, there must be something in the rural areas which induced people to take justice into their own hands and proceed to address the grievances personally.

There was an issue of maybe ethnicity, some people suggest, and the availability of weapons in general. The campesinos then, and still today, generally have a machete with them. A machete is a sword. When visitors come to the country from countries in Europe for example, they're horrified to see people running around with these huge knives. In England I understand, the maximum length of a blade is five fingers which is basically the depth at which your heart is. You cannot walk around the street with a blade which is bigger than five fingers because that is considered a weapon. But here a machete can be so long, and it is also a tool for working. People use them to work. But it is also a weapon to defend and to attack.

So this issue of societal causes for violence still has to be studied. Today, after twelve years of war, of mass dislocations of population, of tremendous family stress—stressors placed on the family, immigration, it is obvious that a significant portion of the population is going to find itself in a situation which is extremely—that makes them extremely vulnerable, and a situation which is very strange, very foreign, very unknown. Behavior is going to be definitely influenced by this. People are still debating whether Maras (gangs) are criminals, whether they're just quote unquote gangs, and which can be—this problem can be addressed in a different way than via repression or mano dura.

And there is another thing, of course, which is still extremely, in my opinion is a tremendous problem and that is the levels of effectiveness of police investigations. Murders today in El Salvador, murders and crime in general, go unsolved. So we have a very high homicide rate today. Over a weekend it is not unusual to have ten, twelve people killed. If you multiple 52 times 10, that's 520 over the weekends only and over the weekdays I think there are still over 2500, maybe 3000 homicides a year.

HUNT: When I spoke with the sub-director of the National Civil Police he told me that the violence rate here is somewhere around the 3000 mark or has been over the last couple of years.

WALTER: *That's very high. And how many of those cases are eventually, how many of those involved in assassinations are taken to court and condemned.*

HUNT: Sentenced?

WALTER: *That's the word, how many are sentenced. It is something like one or two percent, it's extremely small. So it is possible to think that the number of killers out there is actually quite small. There could be a hundred serial killers doing this and the Maras are not all that significant perhaps. It is probably—who are the killers? Are they assassins? Are they henchmen or are they gang members? We don't know because we don't know who the killers are.*

HUNT: Do you think the ineffectiveness of the police force in curbing the level of crime has to do with the way that it is structured and something intrinsic in its organization or do you think it is a lack of capacity?

WALTER: *I think it is a problem that has to do with the capacity to solve a crime. You have to improve the quality of individuals, what you call—detectives I guess, who are involved in solving crime. When a body is discovered, thrown in a river or an alley, maybe it is very difficult to determine what happened. But still, I think the level of sentencing in these cases is so low, I think it is indicative of a lack of capacity. So what do you need to do? I don't know. Obviously you've got to set up a more effective office or department or sector of the police force that is able to improve the level of investigations.*

HUNT: One of the results of high crime levels and creation of what many are calling a culture of insecurity has been the growth of the private security sector. I was wondering if you could talk about that a little bit.

WALTER: *Up until, as I recall it, at least up until 1980, before the war began, the only institutions here that had private security guards were, if I'm not mistaken, the banks. They had their own security officers. Many times these probably were ex-soldiers. They were people who came from the military or from the national police. In the rural areas, land owners on some occasions would contract with the Guardia Nacional to have a couple of guards stationed permanently on their properties. They would pay the Guardia for the service. But there were no private security firms. There were private arrangements between individuals and the public security forces. But there were really no private security firms. There were armed people, of course. A land owner might have a group of armed retainers, shall we say, as happened in old feudal times. These were people who were involved in security within the property.*

Private security firms began to emerge after the peace agreements as far as I can recall. They had to do with growing insecurity in the country, with the levels of insecurity and, I think, they also had to do with placing a lot of people involved in fighting during the war years in some kind of gainful employment. If you took how many people were in the army in 1992, 60,000 more or less. There were 12-15,000 guerrilla fighters. If you just threw these people out in the street it would be a problem. So it is possible that the private firms were set up, in part, to provide gainful improvement.

The army was reduced in size of course from 60,000 to I think it is now between 12 and 15,000, a very significant reduction. The police force was increased but today I think it stands somewhere between 18 and 20,000 police officers. But the private security firms maybe have over 100,000 people employed. It has gotten to the point now where any respectable business, I mean any shop, has somebody standing there with a shot gun. I sometimes wonder if perceptions are more determined, are more influential in determining the hiring of these private security guards than reality itself. I think it has become more of a status symbol than a real need sometimes.

HUNT: Do people see the proliferation of private security as a sign of the failure of the police force or do they not necessarily make that connection?

WALTER: *The fact is that the private security firms are involved primarily with protecting property, with protecting stationary property. Some security firms of course provide security for individuals. They move around, they're bodyguards essentially. They move with their client. But, by and large, these private security firms are involved in stationary work, protecting physical premises. So they really don't have, they will not have much of an impact on public security because they're not involved in providing security in public areas. In fact, they cannot, by*

law they can't arrest anybody. They can only protect a given property. So their role is very limited in terms of public security. So people I think just don't—they have no opinion about this. I'll give you an example.

When I was working in Guatemala I was walking to my office one day with my laptop which was a stupid thing to do. As I walked along a block in a residential area about 8 in the morning, there weren't many people on the street then, a fellow came around the corner and before I knew it I had a gun in my nose. The fellow said, "Give me your laptop." I was able to push him off and shout and scream and he ran away and nothing happened. But just two doors down there were two private security guards and they saw it all. When I went by I said, "Look, there's a thief there." They said, "Oh, yes, we saw it, we saw him." That's as far as it got. I said, "Aren't you going to do anything?" "No, we're here protecting this building."

I suspect the fellow who tried to mug me was an employee also, he was, what do you call it, a [Indecipherable 46:02] trabajo of the two guards there. But anyway, this happens all the time. If you walk around San Salvador today, you will see very, I think very little police presence. You will see police cars and police trucks, but it is very unusual to see police officers walking their beat. That is one of the things that has been criticized, the fact that the police don't move and they don't mix with the people, they don't provide, if they can, on site protection in public areas. It would be good maybe if the police force were increased, if those 100,000 private guards, if the money spent on them were somehow channeled to the police force to make the police presence in public areas more visible.

Now, another question that I have is what do these private guards, these private security firms, actually pay their private officers. I think it must be very little. Some of these are really threadbare companies that provide services. The people aren't trained. I think it is out of control really.

HUNT: Well, I want to thank you for your time and your thoughts. We're running out of time here so I just have one more question if you will indulge me. If you had a chance to write a handbook for people who were working on transition in a challenging environment and were looking to build up their institutions, what are some of the topics that you would consider the most important to include?

WALTER: *A handbook for people involved in transitions. Well I would—first of all, I think the handbook should provide as deep as possible an understanding of the roots of the conflict itself. In other words, why did the conflict happen and how was it, how did it grow. Because that will enable the new political system, supposedly would enable the new political system to address some of those problems. If you don't understand why the war happened I don't think you really can address the issues which come after the war is over. They're not going to go away with the signing of a peace agreement; those issues are still very much there.*

Secondly, this manual, whatever, should include a substantial component that has to do with institution building. A new political order requires new political institutions. These institutions must be, well they must be designed as part of the new legal framework. These institutions must be effective, they must be properly funded. They should be, to the extent possible, they should be nonpartisan. That of course is probably asking for too much because political polarization is difficult to overcome in the years after a conflict like the one in El Salvador, for example. I think that here it is easily fifteen years after the conflict is over that we're seeing some measure of, how would I call this, depolarization of the political spectrum. People are coming to realize that look, we can agree on certain things, we don't

have to disagree on everything. We can agree on some things and on others we will continue to fight, we will continue to debate and discuss.

But I think that, in other words there must be a conviction that there will be years, it will take years before the military conflict is finally settled at the political level. It is not the peace agreement itself, that's just piece of paper really that sets out a roadmap. But to get there at last will take years. It will take maybe a generation that is 25, 30 years, when the old combatants are finally pushed out of the picture or just disappear.

A third thing, which is required of course, is the presence of the "international community." I think that is not a very happy phrase: international community. I think you should talk about specific instances like the UN, or the, whatever is the regional organization which best represents the interest of the players involved or the people involved in the conflict. The international community not only in terms of money but also in terms of a real presence if you want to make sure that the peace process is not side tracked, to make sure that it doesn't jump the rails in other words.

Fourthly, what else, there must be a willingness on the part of the key players to become more tolerant, to understand that if democracy is what we're finally looking for that we have to be perfectly willing to accept and stomach our opponents, even if we don't like them with the understanding that at some point if there is [Indecipherable], if there's what you call it—?

HUNT: Alternation?

WALTER: *Alternation in power that you have a chance to come back into office eventually. Yes, I think that when there are competing systems in conflict, when the proposals of one or another side in the political spectrum are diametrically opposite, then it is more difficult. But I think that in the case of El Salvador we are moving now towards agreement on certain things and others will be addressed via the political process. For example, the social and economic system, the radical Marxist approach I think is now, is weakened and the left is less dogmatic. The right, after twenty years in office, has become quite tired. The people in general I think now are calling for some kind of change, within the right or within the left I don't know, but we'll know next year.*

HUNT: Excellent, thank you very much.