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BILL MONROE: Our guest today on Meet the Press is Guillermo Ungo, President of the Democratic Revolutionary Front of El Salvador. Mr. Ungo's organization, an umbrella group based in Mexico, speaks for the left-wing guerrilla forces now fighting the government in El Salvador. Ten years ago, Mr. Ungo ran for Vice President of El Salvador on a ticket with Napoleon Duarte as presidential candidate. The two men, but the military blocked them from taking office.

Mr. Duarte, of course, is now President of El Salvador, allied with the military. And Mr. Ungo is leading the struggle against the Duarte government.

Mr. Ungo, why should Americans expect that if your side wins in El Salvador, democracy and genuine elections would result, considering that your people will not participate in the March 28th elections, considering that in nearby Nicaragua your Sandinista friends are putting off elections, and considering that the leadership of your guerrilla forces is heavily Communist?

GUILLERMO UNGO: Well, we've had a struggle for the last 50 years for democracy, for free elections. We have been denied that right through fraud, through persecution, through jail. So we have had endurance and going through elections every two years. My party has participated in elections since 1958 until 1977. In 1978 we pulled out from elections with the Christian Democratic Party that's now the government.

So I would say we have had more endurance than any other democratic party, than any other people in America and in Europe believing in elections, and we're fighting for that.

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Secondly, we're a very pluralistic coalition of different political forces. I am not a Communist. I don't intend to become a Communist. In El Salvador, everybody's considered to be an extremist. And that is why there is so much killing going on. Even the American journalists are considered to be extremists because they are telling the truth, and the truth is subversive in El Salvador.

So, we have clearly stated that we believe in elections and we want elections, but real, free elections. And that just can be offered through a democratic broad-based government, which we are calling for through negotiations.

MONROE: Well, Mr. Ungo, there are charges that you and others who do have democratic credentials are nevertheless just front men. And the fear is that if your side wins, the Communist guerrilla leaders, who are mostly Communists, not people like you, would control things and set up a government that would be less than democratic.

UNGO: Well, that has been always a fear that has been used to have military dictatorships in Latin America. That was the excuse Somoza had, the excuse Pinochet has in Chile.

We are a broad coalition and we still want to have a more pluralistic understanding with other sectors. So, that can be taken care of through negotiations, to give guarantees for a broad-based government where the guerrilla movement within the Democratic Front are not controlling the government, but not to be controlled by the high command of the army that doesn't believe in democracy, but just believe in having a war against the people, when everybody is subversive. Archbishop Romero that was assassinated because of that.

MONROE: Thank you, Mr. Ungo.

Our reporters on Meet the Press today are Robin Lloyd of NBC News, John P. Wallach of Hearst Newspapers, and regular panelist Marvin Kalb of NBC News.

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MONROE: We'll continue the questions for Guillermo Ungo with Robin Lloyd.

ROBIN LLOYD: Mr. Ungo, the man who is generally considered to be the top guerrilla commander, the military man in El Salvador, a man by the name of Caetano Carpio (?), recently told NBC News, in an interview -- he said that Fidel Castro had personally wished him well in the struggle. He said that he admired the Cuban revolution greatly.

Pro-Cuban remarks like these, what do they mean in terms of the long-term political intentions of the Salvadoran left? Are we seeing indications that the military commanders of the guerrillas, indeed, want another Cuba?

UNGO: It's very clear that we don't want another Cuba, and that's not possible to have it, even for people that like Castro. And also, to like Castro doesn't mean to follow Castro. President Lopez Portillo has called himself a friend of Castro, and also called himself a friend of the United States.

The international situation is very clear. And that's why we, the democratic political parties, the democratic leaders, played an important role. We are not in Eastern Europe. We are in Latin America and a real neighbor of the United States. We cannot develop our country after a civil war without having good relations with the United States.

We also have many friends, and very good friends, in the Western Hemisphere. So I could say Mitterand is my friend and I admire him.

So, that's an explanation on the different and pluralistic solidarity we are receiving throughout all the world. And that we want and we can do only a national change, an independent revolution, and a very pluralistic one. So that's why we are calling for negotiations, because we don't want to have an alternative based only on the Democratic Revolutionary Front, only on the guerrilla groups, on the democratic groups that belong to the front, but also democratic political, economic and social sectors that don't belong to the front. Because that's the only way you can push forward our country.

LLOYD: I think what concerns a lot of American people, and certainly concerns the Reagan Administration, however, is that El Salvador would become another Cuba, that there would be a lot of Cuban advisers -- if you were to come into power, there would be a lot of Cuban advisers, both military and technical, that would be brought into El Salvador. Certainly, one can say that has happened in Nicaragua. There are some 500 Soviet Bloc advisers there and several thousand Cubans.

Would you do the same in El Salvador?

UNGO: Well, I have my doubts about Nicaragua. I think in Nicaragua has some sort of pluralism they didn't have during Somoza.

But anyway, we don't plan to copy the Nicaraguan model. We are more pluralistic forces involved in this struggle. That is not only military struggle, but it's political, it's international. And we have many friends and many governments and poli-

tical forces that are supporting a peaceful settlement. And we are in sort of compromise, and they are also a sort of guaranty for a nonaligned position with us, and also to have good relations with U.S. government, mainly because we are very much obliged to the American people. They are showing a lot of human concern regarding El Salvador and what's going on in the massacres that have meant more than 3000 -- 30,000 people killed, which in American terms will mean 1,400,000 people killed in the United States. And we have half a million harmless people displaced and refugees, which in American terms will mean more than 23 million harmless people. And the American government is helping for that.

JOHN WALLACH: Dr. Ungo, if the elections on March 28th are so bad as you say they are, why are they receiving support from the Archbishop of El Salvador, from the Council of Bishops, from a dozen nations, including Great Britain, the Organization of American States? If I can quote to you from what the Council of Bishops said -- and they have not enthusiastically backed these elections, but they've said that they will at least move the country from a de facto government to a legal government, a change which is basic for the development of the country.

Why do you oppose that constructive step?

UNGO: Well, first of all, because we are out of the elections. We would be killed. Huh? We were in the hit list published by the army, which is an institution of the government. I don't want to have the same fate that the former president of the front has, to be assassinated after being tortured.

All these people that are running elections are the far right that doesn't believe in democracy. And so, elections are just for them. And the Bishop has said different things.

WALLACE: But, Dr. Ungo, if I may interrupt. The Washington Post, which is hardly a right-wing newspaper, said yesterday that nothing says more of the apparent appeal of the elections to the common people than the ferocity of the left's attempt to spoil them by burning voting documents and threatening voters with death.

Is your organization threatening voters and democratic mayor, Christian Democratic mayors with death?

UNGO: No. The official position that we have is that we don't want to go on in this war. So we want peace, and that's why we call for negotiations.

The Salvadorian government and the American government want to go on this war, disguised by elections. That is going to be window-dressing to keep on intensifying the war. So the

war goes on. But we are not fighting elections, because the people doesn't have any concern or relations after 50 years of having experienced rigged elections and persecution and go to vote out of fear, out of threats. Because if they don't vote, they may be jailed, they may be persecuted.

So we are not officially going against the elections, because it's not a dinner for us.

MARVIN KALB: Mr. Ungo, you have said twice on this program that you would like negotiation. Why don't you have negotiations with the people who are now in charge in El Salvador?

UNGO: Well, we have called for that. And not only us...

KALB: You have called for negotiations with President Duarte and the junta?

UNGO: We made a peace proposal in the United Nations General Assembly calling for negotiations, to have talks with civilian and military members of government, as they choose. And also, even presidents, like the President of Panama, offer himself as a mediator to look for a negotiated settlement. The only three factors are against negotiations: the American government, the Salvadorian far right, and the high command of the army.

So the public, international public opinion, even the Vatican, has been calling for negotiations...

KALB: I just want to understand if you are prepared to sit down right now with the military and civilian junta in El Salvador.

UNGO: Certainly.

KALB: Yes.

You are not, however, prepared to participate in the elections. You are, in fact, doing your best to block the elections.

UNGO: This cannot be called elections. We want to have elections in El Salvador. We have had the endurance to go to elections every two years, being persecuted, exciled, cheated, and all of that, when everybody told one that you were -- one was a fool, going through that rigged game.

So, what we want is guarantees for a democratic government that will...

KALB: Who would provide those guarantees?

UNGO: ...elections [unintelligible] to respect the results of elections. Because we have had elections in Uruguay. Huh? There have been elections in Bolivia. And the army doesn't respect the results.

It's not only to have free elections. Right now there are no conditions for free elections, unless the conditions to fulfill the results of the elections.

KALB: But who would guaranty the election process, as you see it?

UNGO: Just the democratic broad-based government.

KALB: That would include all of the people who are currently either members of the El Salvador Communist Party or Marxist-Leninists. Do you feel that there is anything in the tradition of Leninism that allows for a free election?

UNGO: Well, we believe in democracy.

KALB: But do you feel that the people who are now part of the united, unified revolutionary directorate, who run the military arm, that those people, the five leaders, all of whom are Marxist-Leninists, believe in a free election, what you're talking about?

UNGO: Just because they have to fulfill the requirements of the people. You have Communist Parties in France and in Italy and in all of Western Europe.

KALB: But they're not in charge. They're not in charge.

UNGO: But they're important parties.

KALB: Yes, they are.

UNGO: They're important parties. If you believe in democracy, you have to believe the government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

KALB: I'm just trying to find out, sir, what gives you the sense of confidence that people who come out of a Leninist tradition, where in the history of that tradition have they allowed for free elections, as you have defined them yourself?

UNGO: Because it's a public compromise, because the people have fought for that from 50 years, and because the international situation -- huh? -- oblige to go for a government that

is a broad-based government, that is a nonaligned government; And because they need us and we are a guaranty, in that sense, because we belong to the democratic sector and we have received the solidarity all over Europe, all over Latin America, the democratic and political forces. And there is no other chance of survival in El Salvador but having a democratic government.

MONROE: Mr. Ungo, I'd like to ask you about your old comrade Napoleon Duarte. He ran for president 10 years ago. You ran on the same ticket with him for vice president. You were political comrades.

The former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, Mr. White, under the Carter Administration, and a critic of Reagan policy, says that you have been factually wrong and morally unfair in calling President Duarte a facade for repression. He says that Duarte and some of his colleagues are authentic democrats committed to a new deal for your country.

How would you respond?

UNGO: Well, history has several lessons in this sense. Marshal Petain was a war hero in France during the First World War. And he was not a gangster. He was not a bad man. But after Second World War, he was a traitor.

MONROE: Would you concede that Mr. Duarte probably is convinced that what he is doing now is for the good of El Salvador and will eventually lead to a democratic government?

UNGO: I don't think he's so much convinced now as one year before.

LLOYD: One of the things that I think would help clarify some of the points we've been mentioning is exactly how much power you have within the leftist coalition. There are some who would say that you are being used by the left simply to convince liberal Western European governments that the Salvadoran left should be supported.

Can you comment on that?

UNGO: Well, I can talk freely about this and can comply what I am talking about. I am talking about negotiations. I am talking about dialogue. And in the government, just the other way around is going on. Duarte cannot talk with us because the army doesn't let him. They kick him out if he does. He doesn't speak the language that he was speaking two years ago. They made a deal with the army saying that the only chance to keep on the [unintelligible] was to have a broad-based government. And they have been [unintelligible] the people, even the democratic military people, like Colonel Majano (?), and all the

people follow -- all the Majano followers.

So I think we are talking more politically and less ideologically. And the guerrilla movement is becoming more mature and following more the same line that we have. And which is the other side? It's going just the other way.

LLOYD: But you yourself have said that you are not a Communist. Yet, Caetano Carpio admits -- and he is unquestionably the top guerrilla leader in El Salvador fighting. He has said he is a Marxist and he has admitted great admiration for Fidel Castro.

What I want to know is exactly what kind of relationship you have with him, whether you have had long talks with him and you feel that you have a lot of influence with him.

UNGO: We have political relations. And the United States has political relations with China. And this is not new. The Christian Democrats [unintelligible] were in a coalition since 1972 with the Communists, because we all meet together in order to have a democratic -- a democratic opening in El Salvador, which we haven't had, at least for the last 50 years. It's a regime based on oppression, on [unintelligible], and in force.

WALLACH: Dr. Ungo, you say, "I am talking about negotiations. I am talking about dialogue." You say you're talking about elections. Are you not talking about reconstituting the armed forces, having a piece of the government before there are any elections? Your front doesn't even use the term elections. It used the term plebiscite. Isn't that what you're demanding, a piece of the action before there are any elections?

UNGO: We call it plebiscite, but we also talk about elections. We also talk about elections.

WALLACH: Once you are assured that you will have a place in the government.

UNGO: Certainly. And why not? Why the United States think that we won't have to negotiate at table what we cannot win? It's obviously that we represent an important part of the Salvadorian people.

WALLACH: Let me follow up, if I may. Dr. Ungo...

UNGO: We have a share in the government, anyway, through elections or through negotiations.

WALLACH: You say that your front is not threatening anyone with assassination, any leaders, any voters. I have in front of me a letter which was sent by the Popular Liberation

Front to eight Christian Democratic mayors who are helping to organize those elections in El Salvador. The letter says, "Our principal objective of writing you is to warn you that we shall be watching your performance and the position you occupy, and from it will depend whether you are judged and declared an enemy or following the just cause that we are expediting. It will be the people who at the proper time will give you what you deserve."

Dr. Ungo, is that not an assassination threat?

UNGO: It's a threat. But I don't believe it belongs to the FMLN or to the FPL.

WALLACH: It's signed by the Popular Liberation Force.

UNGO: Yes. Many, many of these threats were signed by guerrilla forces, and now we have used that Mayor Rolla (?), for example, belonging to the Army, was involved in the kidnappings of the millionaires. We have been accused to the tricks these kind of governments have played for many years in El Salvador.

KALB: President Reagan made a major speech this past week affecting the whole Caribbean Basin and Central America. You have already criticized the effort of the United States to try to put some emphasis upon economic development in that area. But if you are so concerned about the people in El Salvador, why don't you support an effort that tries to improve the lot of your people?

UNGO: Well, I made some criticism mainly on the military aid.

KALB: Do you support the economic aid?

UNGO: It's a waste of money. Just in capital flight in the last two years has been more than \$800 million. Just the drop in exports in the last two years has been \$400 million. So the American taxpayer is wasting his money in this case because it doesn't go to the real problem. It doesn't go to solve -- it doesn't go to achieve peace and stability. So that money goes to the drain.

KALB: Isn't it part of the effort of the front that you lead, to a degree, to create that kind of internal instability and chaos that would further the aims of what you call the revolution?

UNGO: We haven't caused it. We haven't caused it. We didn't cause this war, as the United States didn't cause the Second World War. It was the fascist regime that caused it.

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And we didn't cause this. It has been a system that has been exploiting the people and has to rely more and more on violence.

So, I don't see what's wrong to have a right of insurrection recognized in all constitutions. And now the people is exercising that, and only for survival reasons. If I were staying at home, I will -- what will happen to me? They will drag me out, as has been seen by so many journalists, and I will be killed, anyway, because I am a suspect.

MONROE: Thank you, Mr. Ungo, for being with us today on Meet the Press.