

Intelligence Information Report



WARNING NOTICE
SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED

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DIRECTORATE OF OPERATIONS

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DATE DISTR. 4 September 1974

COUNTRY El Salvador

DOI

SUBJECT ~~X~~ Composition and Purposes of the Newly-Created Unified Popular Action Front

ACQ

SOURCE

COMMUNIST PARTY
EL SALVADOR

[Redacted]

1. [Redacted] Comment: Since June 1974 a new student/worker/peasant organization called the Unified Popular Action Front (FAPU) has sponsored various marches and demonstrations protesting the spiraling cost of living in El Salvador. This report [Redacted] provides background information on the origin, the composition and the purposes of FAPU.)

2. In May 1974 Father Jose Innocencio ~~X~~ Alas, his brother, Father Higinio ~~X~~ Alas, and other Catholic priests serving in the area of Suchitoto, Cuscatlan department, approached leaders of the Communist-controlled General Association of University Students (AGEUS) at the University of El Salvador (UES) to propose the formation of a student/peasant front. The spokesman, Father Jose Innocencio Alas, explained that the purpose would be to put pressure on the government and the legislative assembly to take steps to ease increasing prices of basic commodities for Salvadoran lower classes. He said the priests and a few students had held two or three meetings to begin organizing a peasant movement in Suchitoto and that they now wished to organize a joint front with AGEUS and the student sector.

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Prior to this visit by the Catholic priests, Political Committee members of the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES) had already held discussions with AGEUS leaders on the problem of how to combat the rising cost of living. PCES leaders had concluded that they must initiate steps to form a united front among popular groups such as peasant and labor organizations. Thus, with the blessing of the PCES, AGEUS leaders accepted

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Father Alas' proposal and made the following additional suggestions that the objectives be amplified, that the organizational base of the front be broadened to include other affected groups, and that a coordinating committee of two delegates from each organization be formed to plan and coordinate the activities of the front. Subsequently, the independent National Association of Salvadoran Educators (ANDES), the Association of Secondary Students (AES), the Federation of Salvadoran Christian Peasants (FECCAS), the Communist-controlled Association of Peasants and Farm Workers of El Salvador (ATACES), and the PCES-controlled labor unions FUSS and FESTIAVSCES accepted invitations to join the front. A coordinating committee was formed with two representatives from each organization and the name of the Unified Popular Action Front was adopted.

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4. Coaching AGEUS leaders from behind, PCES functionaries informed them that the Party's objectives regarding FAPU would be to infiltrate it and develop indirect control over FAPU plans and activities.

5. In July, ANDES withdrew from the front because it was coming too much under the control of the PCES. Comment:

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A. Itaya Montes, Secretary General of ANDES, pulled out of FAPU not only because of the heavy Communist influence but also because discussions were being held among some FAPU leaders on raiding granaries and other basic food warehouses. ANDES did not wish to be associated with any illegal or violent activities.)

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6. The immediate objectives FAPU hopes to achieve through demonstrations and other pressure tactics include the passage of laws for controlling prices and providing for a general wage increase as well as periodic wage adjustments; the nationalization of basic food production; and worker participation in the government's decisions affecting the labor class. The longer range goals regarding FAPU itself are to become an effective national liberation front in opposition to the present government with representation from a major portion of the Salvadoran middle and lower classes.

7. Comment: FAPU's success will hinge on the development of a cohesive organization and on its ability to show some evidence to the masses that it can successfully represent their interests; and this will require the active participation of farm and industrial workers. So far, however, FAPU has shown little evidence of being able to achieve the ambitious goals set down by the coordinating council. Most major labor leaders in El Salvador have insisted on keeping their activities within the bounds of what can be considered labor affairs and are reluctant to become involved with FAPU because of the political overtones in FAPU's propaganda. In short, FAPU leaders have as yet been unable to inspire the confidence of their own organizations, much less attract other sectors of the population.)

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8. Comment: FAPU organized marches and demonstrations in various cities and rural areas of El Salvador during June, July and August 1974. By and large these meetings were only moderately successful.

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[redacted] While the demonstrations have been generally peaceful, government security forces have been watching FAPU carefully and should the front show signs of gaining widespread popular support, the government probably would not hesitate to take steps to curb FAPU's progress. The local press reported that on 20 August a warrant was issued for the arrest of FAPU leaders Jose Inocencio Alas and Higinio Alas for "inciting to rebellion" against the constituted authorities and for "crimes against the security of the State." According to press accounts, the complaint was made by the mayor of Suchitoto, and according to some observers it was the result of a personal vendetta between a power-hungry mayor and the Alas brothers whose campaign to improve the lot of the masses has been at least partially directed at the mayor. These two men, referred to by the mayor as "priests of the third world" have long been active organizers of peasant causes and have been described as "leftist agitators" by Salvadoran Government security services.)

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9. [redacted] Dissem: Embassy, Defense Attache at San Salvador.

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