

TAPE-52397

56 MINUTES ROUGH CUT

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Reagan: The people of El Salvador, we heard, weren't ready for democracy. The only choice was between the left wing guerrillas and the violent right...

Sobriano: The point is that today still more Salvadorans live, survive, from working a piece of land. If they don't have that piece of land, well, they don't live. They don't survive...

News Report: As before in Viet Nam, an American president has picked an obscure, sorry backwater of the world and staked America's prestige and credibility here in an effort to contain communist imperialism. In this case, the Cubans...

Haig: Cuban activity has reached a peak that is no longer acceptable in this hemisphere, whether it be in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, or any other of our sovereign republics...

News: In fact, the U.S. provides more aid to El Salvador per capita than any other country except Israel...

News: Once again, an anguished little place that most Americans neither knew nor cared about has been turned into a test of wills between east and west. Washington has declared it will not accept defeat in a no-win situation.

Duarte: There is no repression in this country. There is a problem of abuse of authority...which is not the same.

Reagan: I don't think that you can um, turn away from some country because here and there they do not totally agree with our concept of human rights.

News: The poor have been disenchanted or simply frightened by all the violence, Voices for human rights have been stilled. El Salvador's outspoken archbishop was assassinated, four American missionaries, all women, were murdered. Right-wing death squads and government security forces are suspected in those killings.

Re? -
(crowd shout) ↓

← (re?)

Walker: I do not think there is a persecution or repression being directed at people in religious orders or in religious leaderships of this country.

replace?

Sobrino: [The first time you get a phone call, an anonymous letter, telling you you are going to get killed, well you get a little bit nervous. That's obvious, understandable.] But then, little by little you get used to it. As simple as that...

Baro: The whole American project in this country is based on a wrong diagnosis of our problems. [The Salvadoran conflict is rooted in a traditional situation of terrible maldistribution of wealth...] *re?*

White: There's no way you can win that revolution militarily unless you make a decision to wipe out 25% of the population... *re?*

Bush: The question is why are we supporting El Salvador? We are supporting El Salvador because it had certifiably free elections. Persident Cristiani is trying to do a job for democracy...

News: white house, where support is still strong for the El Salvador government.

Narrator: Father Jon Sobrino lived and worked in a community of Jesuit priests who taught at the University of Central America.

Sobrino: Lately I think a lot about the ten commandments, the ten commandments, and I have asked myself and this might sound a little bit tragic, what is the commandment which is most violated and basically, leaving aside the sixth commandment, so the human area of sex. I think people first of all, violate the seventh commandment. People, especially countries, societies, the seventh commandment. Take it away what doesn't belong to them. Five centuries ago that happened in a very clear way, the Europeans, the Spaniards, they took away from Latin America what didn't belong to them. That is a violation of the seventh commandment. Then at times, at times, in order to make it possible they violated the fifth commandment, where we give death to others. And what always happens when those two commandments have been violated is the violation of the eighth commandment - lying.

Kopple- In El Salvador, one of the most brutal and violent days in ten years of war.

Brokaw: Six Jesuit priests brutally murdered. The killings came as the army and leftist rebels battled for control of the capital in some of the fiercest fighting the ten year civil war. During the night gunmen invaded their dormitory, clubbed them, dragged them out to a lawn and shot them.

Walker: "We do not know who committed this heinous crime. Unfortunately the history of atrocious death in El Salvador has come from the extremes of both right and left."

Sobrinio: In 1980 our house was dynamited twice, heavily, and machine gunned. In those years we had to make a decision. Are we going to stay here in this country or leave. So we, I and the rest of us decided to stay in this country. We accepted the possibility that something would happen to us.

Narrator: Shortly before the final offensive, Jon Sobrinio left the Jesuits home at the University to attend a conference in Thailand.

Sobrinio: When I was in Thailand as I said and I got the news that Father Ellacuria had been killed, I was shocked. But it was not a surprise, you know. Then when my friend from London who called me said not only Ellacuria but Segundo Montez and I wanted the list to stop but it didn't and then, Armando Lopez, Lopez y Lopez, Juan Ramón Moreno, then the two women, well, it was a terrible shock.

Narrator: When the Jesuits were murdered on November 16, 1989, the United States had been sending \$500 a year for over ten years to the government of El Salvador, so that they could fight against what was called a violent communist rebel uprising.

Moakley - I'm strictly a bread and butter democrat, domestic type. A foreign affair to me was going to East Boston and getting an Italian sandwich, so I didn't know too much about El Salvador.

Narrator: Congressman Moakley would soon find himself in the middle of political relations between the U.S. and El Salvador.

McGovern: Its a terrible thing to say, but you know, because really you know the killing of a priest is no more outrageous than the killing of a peasant. But when people here in the United States, the idea of killing a holy man, you know, its just, you know, people can't fathom it. It was like a wake up call here in Congress. A lot of people were saying " Jesus, I thought we were through with El Salvador" and then all of the sudden on the front pages of all of the papers, these pictures of six priests that had been shot repeatedly and all of the sudden it was back.

Brokaw: In Washington the leading democratic senators called for a suspension of American aid to El Salvador.

McGovern: Speaker Tom Foley called .. and said geees I want to do something and I want to put together a special task force to monitor the Salvadoran governments investigation and I want you to head it.

Moakley: I said Mr. Speaker if you put an ad on the bulletin board looking for people to serve on the committee you would probably have 434 out of 435 and my name wouldn't be on it. And he said I know it that's why I want you to head it. I said all right. So Jim and I sat down, we went over some papers, we talked with the lawyers that were interested in the El Salvador situation and all the time the State Dept. was not giving us papers, didn't have it, didn't know anything about it.

McGovern: We had a list of about twenty questions that we wanted answered. We submitted them in December and when we were going down to El Salvador in February we were taking like thirteen congressmen with us and the State Dept. wanted to put people on the plane. Its fine, so the day before we leave, we still haven't gotten the answers to the questions. So Moakley calls up he says to the Secretary of State, he says okay, how many guys do you have coming on this trip with us? He says we have six coming on this trip. Moakley says you got zero coming with us on this trip now. None of you are going to be on the plane. I will stand on the plane and throw those guys off if they come and show up tomorrow to get on this plane to go to El Salvador, he says unless, unless they come armed with the answers to my questions.

Moakley: He says you haven't been cooperative at all, I says I asked for all of these papers and I got nothing, so you people aren't coming with us.

McGovern: The Assistant Secretary says, that's just not fair, we haven't got the time. He says, look, you've had two and one half months to answer those questions. They are very simple questions, you should be able to give us the answers, if you can't, those bastards can't come with us.

McGovern: Getting just the most basic information was like pulling teeth, it was incredible, and we were the task force that was appointed by the Speaker of the House to follow all of this, I mean, it wasn't like we were the Kumbaya Human Rights Group from you know, Ann Arbor Michigan, we were the Congress.

McGovern: The tension that you felt when you get off the plane. Its a very impressive place. We went to visit the site where the Jesuits were killed you know, you can hear about these things but somehow its different from when you are there, you know, when you are standing in the spot where it happened.

Moakley: We talked with the military, some of the military people in El Salvador...

McGovern: They didn't know quite what to make of Joe Moakley. I mean Joe Moakley is a tough South Boston politician, I mean a former boxer. He is very loud and boisterous.

Moakley: Hi, how are you? How are you doing?

McGovern: ...Not at all skilled in the art of diplomacy, he is just very rough around the edges. He says when we went down to El Salvador, we looked like the masons on vacation, we stood out like a sore thumb. He is also very direct.

Moakley: We talked with the military, some of the military people in El Salvador and I just couldn't believe what they were telling me. And I'm no expert in foreign affairs, but they just didn't make sense. So, we met with the generals and they all got together and they said we are very religious men and they all joined hands and looked up for divine intervention, the lights went out and I said "Why don't you hold hands again maybe the lights will go back on?"

*replace
Moakley →
off of phase*

McGovern: They are all like, geez, you don't talk to me that way, I'm the vice minister of defense or I'm the army chief of staff, or I'm the minister of defense.

McGovern: He said, "Here you can talk to me that way, I don't care, if you think my comments to you are bad and insulting, you should come to one of my town meetings, I mean this is nothing compared to what my constituents say to me, so lets just be honest. I mean, tell me what you think, tell me the truth.

re: soldiers marching

McGovern: We had a meeting one night with some mid level officers. We had a secret meeting. They said to Moakley, they said, why are you making such a fuss over this? Why this case. You, the United States government, and they meant the Embassy, you didn't write these briefs, you thought the Jesuits were subversives, you never said anything nice about them, you went out of your way to tell everyone that they were, that their political views were to the left, you know, you went out of your way to try to align them with the enemy. I mean you, the United States government did that, you know, they're killed, what's the big deal?"

Narration - The Salvadoran army occupied many areas in the countryside, forcing thousands to leave their villages, those who stayed were subjected to bombings and search and destroy missions conducted by the army.

Margarita: As many as 15,000 soldiers would invade. Every living thing would die. Animals, people, everything....

Margarita: We'd flee into the mountains, at that time my children were very young, we were in the mountains hungry and wouldn't return until night. In those days we didn't go far, just around here, but there was a time when we had to leave because things were getting worse. Then there was the bombing which was heavy because the planes often dropped up to five hundred pound bombs, and later when the situation became harder, we had to run farther. The most we ever had was eight or fifteen days without the army coming. There were elderly people who said, well I don't owe anything to anybody, I'm staying here, I can't go.

They would stay in their houses and what happened was we would find them in little pieces and there were women with lots of small children, perhaps pregnant women and they would say what would I

do out there with my children, I'm staying. And they were lined up and machine gunned to death. Or sprayed with a liquid and burned alive. Or they would cut open the pregnant women and take out the baby.

*replace
soldiers
marching*

Narrator: The civil war not only divided El Salvador, it caused deep divisions in Washington as Congress debated the wisdom of supporting El Salvador's right wing government.

Abrams: Well, everyone knew there were massive human rights abuses in El Salvador. The democrats who voted for that money. Jimmy Carter when he gave them that money at the end of his presidency. Everyone knew that there were massive amounts of human rights violations. Now why do you give people military aid if they are engaging in human rights violations, you do it in part because you think that there is a national security argument here, that is that we need to stop an FMLN victory. You do it in part because you believe that engagement will bring the level of violence down fast. Now I think that we proved that later is true because if you look at the level of human rights violations the day President Carter decided to go ahead and give them military aid to the day Reagan left office, its a fairly steady slope down.

Walker: I've often said that in El Salvador, when you hear something has happened your first reaction is, oh the obvious has happened, you know, the Jesuits were killed, it must have been the army or the right. And you're no sooner, you know, settling into that analysis when the next person comes in the room and says, no, it wasn't the right who did it, it was the left. They were trying to blame the right. And you no sooner settle into that, you know that's a possibility, when someone comes in and gives you a third variation. And within days, within hours, you are so engulfed in rumors, theories, analysis, that it becomes very, very difficult to untangle the whole thing.

McGovern: Our first meeting with the ambassador, ambassador Walker in Washington, and with the whole team of State Dept. officials, they were coming to see Mokley for the first time. And they came in with the charts and with all kinds of maps and pictures and all kinds of props. And the bottom line was according to them was that it was very possible that the rebels had killed the priests, you know, and you can't prove it, but the rebels have a tendency to dress up in military uniforms and you know think about it, this would have been a great thing for them to do because it would make the

army look bad and that's what they wanted, and you know, on and on and on. You know, Mokley sat there like, you gotta be crazy.

You have to understand, the University of Central America where its located, the intelligence agency is like across the street, all the military families live nearby. That area was heavily guarded during the night the Jesuits were killed. There were literally hundreds and hundreds of soldiers in that area and the people who killed the Jesuits went to the university, they had to go through some roadblocks and so the people who let them through had to know what was going on.

McGovern: They go to the university, hundreds of bullets are shot off, they shoot up a flare in the sky and nobody sees it? Nobody can tell us that they saw that? Nobody heard the bullets? Its impossible. When we sat down with the members of the high command and they basically told us that they were deaf dumb and blind the night of the murder and then nobody in the military saw anything, you know and they went through this whole story about how they can't believe any of them were involved. You know, Moakley very directly said to them, "You're lying to me", you can't bullshit and old bullshitter, general".

Moakley: The thing that was so unfair, I mean, you go in and take these priests out of bed with the housekeeper and the daughter in the middle of the night, whose only defense was a pair of rosary beads or a bible or something and then to spray them with these machine guns so that their brains get blown out and are splattered all over the walls. In fact, when they first found them they thought that someone had actually dug their brains out and threw them against the wall, I mean that's the kind of power these guns had. And these were leaders, these were teachers, I mean, noted teachers, for anybody just to snuff them out because they felt that they were giving aid to the rebels and they were going to teach them a lesson was just a bad, bad move.

Brackley: These men, the Jesuits who were killed were involved in University work, you know. It sounds harmless enough. One was the President of the university, another started a polling instutute, one was head of the psychology department, was involved in a lot of research, pastoral work, another was the sociology department head, a couple were on the board of directors at the university, but the most prminent of them especially, spoke out in public, on television,

radio, in their publications in a country where lies predominate, where lies reign. During the war, when few people could speak out, and even fewer with more credibility, these pole were able to speak out. And insisted on speaking out, and speaking out the truth. And that's really why they were killed.

Zamora: I met Ellacuria when he was a young person, still not a priest and I was a teenager, I was something like seventeen years old, studying for the priesthood, and he came to teach us literature in the seminary. That's why I met him at that time, and I never forget that he was the first person in my life who told me that I had to research, not just to read and repeat, you have to research, you have to create. He told me that, he taught me that.

Brackley: I remember they were killed on Thursday and on Monday, the thought came to me, they're going to want people to replace these Jesuits. And I began to feel as though I was seeing a fast ball come right down the middle. I didn't have time to do all my discernment and ... and..or regret it for the rest of your life, so I wrote the letter.

Brackley: At first it was very scary, because you are afraid to drop the torch of the martyrs. You know, you are supposed to pick this torch up that they drop and run with it and you feel completely inadequate. And it was humbling, but I kind of enjoy what I'm doing here because it gives me a chance to be around the life and death struggle that is really the daily bread of most people. Trying to keep alive is what most people do most of the time and in El Salvador, that is a hard thing to forget.

The people live as appendages to coffee groves, they have no land. During coffee season, everyone goes out to harvest coffee. Children wake up and go off with their mothers, fathers, uncles, brothers and sisters, into the coffee groves. Our family will cooperate, trying to fill up those twenty-five pound bags that are called arrogas. And they might get five and one half colones maybe 65 cents for filling up a 25 pound bag. And on a good day, they could fill up eight or ten of those bags. That would be an extraordinary amount of money for someone in Jayaca. What would that be? Oh it might be ten dollars. This is the one time in the year when they are guaranteed an income, most people. Now the problem is that this coffee season might only last for 6 or 8 weeks and then the rest of the year is just a scramble.

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White: Historically El Salvador has been controlled by a few hundred people really that, where all of the wealth, 85 - 90% of the wealth is concentrated in their hands.

Cortina: When I first came to El Salvador many years ago, I was surprised by the poverty and the wealth. I wasn't used to such a wealth and I wasn't used to such a poverty. So that was really what struck me.

Narrator: Father Jon di Cortina worked closely with the murdered priests for over 15 years....

Cortina: And the second point that struck me was how much people used weapons, guns.

White: The army became a garrison force at the service of this oligarchy, used to break strikes, to convince campesinos through force that organizing for higher wages or for better working conditions was absolutely forbidden.

Moakley: I was the first congressman I believe to go up to Santa Marta which is the rebel stronghold and we went up in a truck and every once in awhile the weeds on the side of the road would part and someone would step up with some kind of an automatic rifle, and that would bother me, as no two people wore the same uniform, they all looked kind of ragtag, so I said I hope they are talking to one another. And we got there and there was a village that was almost no men there. You'd see these beautiful women with 5 or 6 kids and all of the kids were so beautiful and they were playing in the dirt with pigs and chickens and whatever, knowing that life expectancy is probably 15 or 16.

Moakley: The year before some plague had come by and wiped out 12 or 13 youngsters and nobody knew what it was. Their health unit looked like a barn, I mean it was brick but it had very few supplies in it. You walk away with a lot of sorrow,. I mean its the same thing, you know meeting people who are fighting for their lives, and making all kinds of sacrifices in the name of democracy and fairness. Its very moving.

Cortina: I began working with peasants and with the poor people of this country and I am very glad that I have done that because they have shown me the essentials of what to be a Christian means. I

don't know whether I have evangelized these people, I know that they have evangelized me a lot.

White: Liberation theology you can sort of sum up in Pope Paul's(?) six words when he said that the poor of Latin America have a right not only to the fruits of the society by which he meant food, clothing, shelter, but also to participate in the direction of that society. So then when the bishops of El Salvador came back to El Salvador and began to preach not revolution, not class struggle, but dialogue, responsibility and some beginnings of a just society, the shock troops of that new wave in the church were the Jesuits.

Cortina: The churchbeing a communist. I mean we have been accused of being communists although here you cannot denounce injustice, you cannot denounce oppression, repression. And if you do that, you are taken away and they just kill you. Well in 75 somebody on television said that three people were going to be murdered, a sister, a nun, a politician and a priest, well the priest happened to be me, OK. It was the first time I was threatened to death. And then in 77, Father Rutilio Grande, Jesuit, a friend of mine was assassinated, of course that was a shock.

Man - When you come down to 1979, you basically only had two nationwide institutions, the church, the catholic church, and you had the military.

Salvadoran - Archbishop Romero in 79, he said in one of his homilies, broadcasted to the whole country, he said, I'm happy, brothers and sisters and all of us said, well the Archbishop is happy, why? I'm happy that in this country priests have been murdered. But he went on and gave the reason. If in this country, where archbishops and presidents of universities and leaders of labor unions, if all of those people were persecuted and even killed and then of course the peasants. If nothing would happen to us, then we are not Salvadorans.

Narrator: In 1980, after the assassination of Archbishop Romero, a coalition of 5 opposition political parties formed the FMLN, a rebel group that began armed resistance to the Salvadoran government. Although the FMLN had popular support within El Salvador, they also received public & private support from Nicaragua, the Soviet Union, Cuba, thhe United States, France, Germany, Mexico, among other countries.

Abrams: Revolutionary situations can be created by a certain amount of oppression and injustice, I think that's true. In the case of El Salvador for example. But the FMLN was not fighting at that point, in my view for a democratic more just El Salvador. They were fighting for a communist system. They said they were Marxists.

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Abrams: There was a desire on the part of some Salvadorans on the far left, the FMLN, with the help of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and ultimately, and very importantly, the Sandanistas after their victory in Nicaragua, a desire to overturn the system by force and to create a communist Castro-style system in El Salvador. We had a security objective in El Salvador, which was to prevent a communist victory there.

Narrator - In 1980, the United States began to send significant military and financial aid to the Salvadoran government to fight the FMLN rebels.

Rigoberto: At that time, the death squads were in the streets and whoever went outside would die.

Narrator: Rigoberto is a former combatant with the FMLN who left his family for months at a time to fight against the Salvadoran military.

Rigoberto: Then seeing that this was happening on a national level, if my family stayed with me they would die, then I decided to die for them.

Margarita: They decided to get us out to the refugee camps. My family was one of the first to go. Two families left, me and my five children and another woman and her five children. Thank god, god was always at one's side and god never forsakes you.

We the women talked about our husbands, what was happening with them, what had become of them. And I hadn't heard anything about my husband nor he of me.

Rigoberto: That's the struggle that the FMLN has been fighting, combating injustice, because we had nothing.

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Narrator - In 1989, the FMLN launched an all out final offensive on San Salvador and other mayor cities, hitting the country's military and financial centers of power.

Walker: The FMLN launched a very very violent final offensive trying to break the back of the government. Trying to win in one final swoop of military power what they had not been able to win in the previous nine years. 2,500 commandos, heavily armed stormed into San Salvador, the capital. It came as a shock, it came as a surprise. There was a certain amount of panic, there was a certain amount of disbelief, that this was happening. In those first couple of days of the offensive. After the first couple of days, the army collected itself and started defending the population centers, and there were several weeks of very, very violent fighting within San Salvador and within the political centers of the country.

Walker: But the armed forces also learned that they were incapable of winning an ultimate victory. They learned that the FMLN was still there. They learned that the FMLN still had the resources and the talents necessary to keep the war going as long as they had to.

Walker: Within that context, of the offensive, the single most dramatic event, the single most noted event was obviously, the killing of the Jeuits and the aftermath of the killing and the Jesuits case, that almost consumed me and the embassy, and just about everybody else in the political spectrum in El Salvador for the next year or two.

McGovern: We never got the impression that the truth was the ultimate goal. It was always damage control, damage control, we have a military aid vote coming up, you know, damage control. How do we continue military aid, how do we avoid a debate, how do we keep everything under control.

Moakley: I began to develop a thing that the administration knew a hell of a lot more than they ever told us, congressional committee went down to El Salvador looking for some information and probably all we had to do was walk across the street to the State Dept. to get it.

Walker: I was up here talking to Moakley that afternoon and telling Chairman that we still didn't know who had done it. Could've been the right, could've been the left, could've been the military. And at that very moment, back in El Salvador, the casue was beaking wide

open with this major coming in and saying that a Salvadoran Colonel had revealed to him that Colonel Benevides had in fact said that he might be responsible for having killed the Jesuits, for the Jesuits being killed. And, um, that was sort of the beginning of the unraveling which pointed the finger at a unit of the military that, uh, had in fact killed the Jesuits.

replace soldiers in truck
Moakley: We finally, uh, got the uh, information that the Atlacatl Battalion, which was trained in the United States, was the crack battalion and then El Salvador was the outfit that did it.

McGovern: We had pieced together what we thought was the truth. And the truth was the-the- that in addition to the guys who pulled the trigger, that there was a meeting to plan the killings that was attended by, among others, the minister of defense, and the vice minister of defense, and that the order to actually, you know, the guy who was really instigating this was at the time, the head of the air force, General Bustillo. And there was a trial, you know, nine guys were indicted, but only two were convicted. It was a major step forward by Salvadoran justice terms. I mean, that never happened before. Uh, ya know, a colonel actually got convicted. And uh, so it was something. But, uh, it wasn't the whole truth.

Narrator: Nine low ranking Salvadoran soldiers and two low ranking officers were convicted of killing the Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter.

McGovern: The United States government basically was like, it's over. This is fabulous that we've had a trial, ya know, what a great day for justice in El Salvador. Isn't this fabulous. Let's just end it. You know, there was a massive cover-up in the army. No one thought it was important. To this day, to tell the truth about that case, or any other case. And so Moakley issued one final report basically saying, for the sake of history, for the sake of the truth, you know, the people of El Salvador deserve to know what's behind it, and these are them.

Walker: That process, that criticism, richly deserved by those who had been involved in the killing of the Jesuits, in my opinion, sort of softened up the armed forces and put them in a position where they had to go along with the peace negotiation.

Zamora: I think from the political point of view, I consider the 89 offensive of the FMLN sort of a turning point in the war because in the end the offensive became the particle demonstration of a situation that we thought would rise in this country around the middle of the last ... That means a situation which nobody was able to win by military means.

de Soto: This dual realization at that time led to the conclusion of both sides that they needed seriously to look into a negotiated settlement option.

Narrator: the united nations peace accords called for redefining the role of the military in El Salvador. Making it subordinate to the civilian government. The accords also called for the creation of a national civilian police force, and the establishment of an independent truth commission.

Quayle: We gather to celebrate peace and democracy in El Salvador.

Narration: In El Salvador's first steps towards peace, combatants from both sides had surrendered their weapons to the United Nations and began to rebuild their lives.

Margarita interpreter: One day Mother Dolores said to me "Margarita, she said, come here. Margarita you have a visitor, she said. I said, who is it Mother? Your husband, she said. I had on a hat, there I was in the kitchen in an apron. Mother I said, what do I do? She said, come on, your children are already with him. My whole body was trembling. Hurry girl, she said, he is waiting for you. I was very nervous, and I went out with her and saw my husband crying, hugging the children. It was such a blessing.

I have a disease and I've seen a lot of doctors and had a lot of examinations. They say that its the life I've led. A nervous condition and its quite possible that its true because of the suffering that I've gone through. So it worries me a great deal, because now is the time I could be helping him, helping the household with my work. And here I am with my arms crossed while the disease is taking all our money. This is what worries me.

Rigo interpreter: Well, we have to see what happens with the medicine, another eight days and see if she gets better, if not, we will find another way.

Narrator: One of the conditions of the peace accords was the establishment of an independent truth commission to investigate the atrocities of the Civil War. The US congress invited the truth commission to report on their investigation.

Torrecelli: In examining the staggering breath of the violence that occurred in El Salvador, the commission was moved by the senselessness of the killings. The brutality with which they were committed. The terror they created in the people. In other words, the madness or "locura" of the war. We would like to draw attention to the excellent work of the speaker's special task force on El Salvador, otherwise known as the Moakley commission, which reached much the same conclusions as did the truth commission.

Brokaw: In el Salvador, the government tonight is wrestling with damage control. A shocking UN report on atrocities committed with the help of the United States during that country's twelve-year civil war.

Correspondent: The UN report details human rights abuses during the 12-year war which ended in 1992. President Alfredo Cristiani today called for an immediate and general amnesty to close the door on the temptation for revenge.

de Soto: It was well know largely, who was the authros of the main atrocities of the war years. Or at least, what party was the author of these atrocities. The important things was to go through this, the theater of the public aairing about the truth concerning these atrocities. In a sense, it was necessary in order to put behind them the trauma of the war, and of the horrid acts that were committed during the war, for the Salvadorans to go thorough the catharsis of facing the truth about what they had done to each other during those years.

Narrator: The truth commission determined that Emilio Ponce, the Salvadoran minister of defense, and other officers, death squads, and para-military groups aligned with the Salvadoran government were responsible for 85% of the atrocities of the civil war.

Powell: I wanted to take the opportunity and to express my, once again, my admiration for the El Salvadoran armed forces and for the leadership that Minister Ponce and the other gentlemen here today have given to those armed forces.

McGovern: We sided with the most anti-democratic forces in El Salvador, the armed forces. We stood with them against uh, the Catholic Church, uh, we stood with them against opposition political parties, we stood with them against students, we stood with them against organized labor, we stood with them against the campesinos. I mean we stood toe-to-toe with some of the biggest creeps, you know, of the hemisphere.

Replace his interview p. 15. →
Abrams: It is a question you have to ask when you are fighting any war, or when you're helping somebody else fight a war. Um, what are the costs and what are the benefits. The human costs in El Salvador were extremely high. Um, however many we will never quite know. But, it's tens of thousands of Salvadorans certainly who died in that war.

Chavez: What's really tragic is that the Salvadoran people have to pay such a high toll in lives. People say 100,000 lives were lost. I think there were more. Only for demanding, and winning very basic democratic rights.

Narrator: The peace accords also called for UN monitored open elections in 1994.

Old Narrator: The FMLN formed a political party and for the first time participated in Salvadoran national elections.

Zamora: I think the fundamental point in the 1994 elections was how to move the peace process forward. And the fundamental thing was how to really to integrate the ex-guerrilla forces that were the FMLN into the political process.

Chavez: The FMLN had to transform itself from a political and military organization that had fought a war of twelve years into a legal political party. Had to learn how to do electoral politics.]

Narrator: The FMLN campaigned for land redistribution, improving schools and healthcare and rebuilding the communities destroyed during the war.

Narrator: The Arena party, which was accused of sponsoring death squads campaigned for increasing El Salvador's economic opportunities.

Calderon Sol: (Spanish)

Chavez: Even though the war had ended two years before that election, still the climate of fear in important sectors of the population was intense. There was a very strong campaign by the right, by the official party, by very important business here in El Salvador, by the military, to really create the fear in people that a victory of the FMLN or a victory of the progressive forces in this country would mean more violence. That would mean recession, that would mean the basically, the loss of jobs because rich people will send their dollars out of the country.

Narrator: For the first time in his life, Rigoberto Acosta de Alas voted in the national elections.

Narrator: By a great majority, the Arena party won the 1994 presidential elections, as well as key regional and local posts.

Zamora: Maybe if we had won that election, we would be in deep trouble at this moment, given our lack of experience. The very integration of the FMLN forces into the legal or the political arena in this country, really was too early to give a vote for the left in '94.

Narrator: The FMLN won enough seats in the National Assembly to become the second most powerful political party in El Salvador.

Brackley: I think, that a permanent change has occurred in the political climate of El Salvador, regardless of the difficulties. It's no longer possible to simply eliminate your opponent. That's been a strategy of the extreme right and of the right until now in Salvadoran history. This is no longer possible. If I could say that I had one hope or one prayer for Salvador today, it would be simply that they just had a chance to live, to live in peace.

Narrator: Margarita would not live to see the peace that she had so long wanted for her country.

Brackley: Margarita died two days before her 42nd birthday. Her family has suffered hard times since then. Rigo has been working as a tailor. He has that sewing machine outside their little hut and has generated a little income from that. But it's been a very tough time, economically they are finding it very hard.

McGovern: I think that it's really important that we not forget El Salvador, I mean we spent billions of dollars essentially destroying that country. We invested heavily in that war.

White: What we heard throughout the last twelve years is that Central America is crucial to the national interests of the United States. WE don't care enough today to even make certain that we have a coherent policy towards those countries.

Moakley: We are directly responsible for a lot of the damage that's been done to the country. You've got a country that has been split in half. You've got a country that's got about 50% unemployment. You've got a country that just now is entering into some democratic process. I feel responsible, I mean, I think that you know, we spent 6 billion dollars down there helping to destroy the place, I think we should spend a couple of dollars putting it back together again.

Sobrino: I think, for us in order to bring justice and peace here, we need the help of others. But I also think that others need our help. It is much more difficult to understand ourselves as a human family, but as the other solution, to think along those lines and while we walk forward (???)

Narrator: Three years later the FMLN won 40% of El Salvador's national assembly. THE capital city, San Salvador, elected Shafik Handal, a former FMLN commandante, mayor.

END CREDITS:

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