

(prepared for delivery)

REMARKS OF U.S. REP. JOE MOAKLEY
CHAIRMAN OF THE SPEAKER'S TASK FORCE ON EL SALVADOR
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA--SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR
JULY 1, 1991

I. Introduction.

I am honored to be here at this historic university and grateful for the kind invitation to speak to all of you this afternoon.

I am especially grateful to Father Estrada for his very flattering introduction. He represents the very best in the Jesuit tradition and has done a remarkable job of presiding over this very great university during these very difficult times.

I also want to thank Father Michael Czerny and my dear friend, Father Charlie Beirne, for their assistance in arranging today's speech. I am ^{also} delighted to participate in a program with Father Jon Sobrino who has always been a strong defender of social justice.

And I want to thank Father Rodolfo Cardenal who has bravely agreed to translate my remarks. I just hope his Spanish has a Boston accent.

I want to say at the outset that I am not one of those fellows who runs around the world telling other people how to run their countries. I have never set out to change the world; I'll be happy if I can make things a little better for the people I represent back home in Massachusetts.

El Salvador represents my first major effort in the field of international affairs and judging from the reviews I've received in some of the more conservative Salvadoran newspapers, there are some people out there who hope it will be my last.

As you may know, I am the Chairman of a special task force that was appointed by the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives to monitor the investigation into the terrible murders that took place on this campus on November 16, 1989. Members of the task force have not tried to investigate the case ourselves, but we have tried to monitor the progress of the investigation conducted by the authorities in this country.

Over the past year, our task force has prepared one major report and a number of shorter reports discussing the investigation. These efforts would not have been possible without the help of Father Estrada, Father Tojeira and other officials at the UCA and the Society of Jesus. We have also received important help from the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, William Walker, who I believe is a very good man and a man who wants very much to see justice done in this case.

I am conscious, as I stand here, that past relations between the people of El Salvador and the Government of the United States have not always been smooth.

Your former President Jose Napoleon Duarte once said that El Salvador has endured during this century "fifty years of lies, fifty years of injustice, (and) fifty years of frustration." El Salvador's history, he said, is the history "of a people starving to death, living in misery. For fifty years, the same people have had all the power, all the money, all the jobs, all the opportunities."

And throughout those fifty years, I am sad to say that all the people of El Salvador heard from the United States was silence.

It was not until ten years ago, after the revolution in Nicaragua, that the U.S. Government began to pay serious attention to El Salvador. Because even the Reagan Administration understood that your country, with its history of social inequality, its corrupt and brutal military and its active and

militant left was as logical a candidate for revolution as this hemisphere has ever seen.

And so, for the past ten years, America has provided more than \$4 billion in economic and military aid to El Salvador. That aid has been designed to help your military make violent revolution impossible, and to reform your government so that violent revolution would be unnecessary.

There are some in the Congress of the United States who have fully supported these policies. Others, such as myself, have supported the goals, but have also expressed serious concern about the wisdom of providing military aid.

II. Importance of the Jesuits case.

Those concerns were validated on the morning of November 16, 1989.

Obviously, the horrible murders at this campus were not the first in El Salvador nor, tragically, would they be the last. Tens of thousands have died as a result of political violence over the past decade. It makes no difference in the eyes of God, and it should make no difference in our own eyes, whether a victim of that violence is famous or unknown, rich or poor, a partisan of the left or right or of no side at all.

Every one of us is entitled to our rights; and every one of us is entitled to justice when those rights are violated.

It is not on abstract human or moral grounds, then, that so many of us have come to attach so much importance to discovering the truth about the murders that took place here at the UCA.

We are moved, instead, by the friendship that so many of us had for one or another of the murdered priests; we are moved by the respect we felt for the courage of these men in their pursuit of

social justice and peace; we are moved by the innocence and suffering of Julia Elba and her daughter Celia; and we are moved by the brutality and cowardice of the murders themselves--carried out, not in the heat of some battle--but in cold blood, in the dead of night, by dozens of well-armed and well-trained troops.

We are moved by these murders and we are determined that unlike the cases of Archbishop Romero, Fr. Rutilio Grande and so many others; at least this one crime against God and humanity will not go unpunished.

In this one case, we demand the truth. In this one case, we insist that the justice system do its job. In this one case, we demand that the Government and the armed forces of El Salvador live up to their pretensions to democracy and their claim to respect the law.

Opponents of the government have been picked up, questioned, tortured and murdered in this country for years. Now, in the course of peace talks, they are asked to trust the government, to trust the armed forces, to trust the political system. It should not be too much to expect that government, those armed forces and that system to be worthy of trust in this one case.

For if El Salvador, with all the international pressure, cannot bring those who murdered the Jesuits to justice, how can anyone expect justice the next time a labor leader or a teacher or a campesino is killed? How can we expect those who have seen their relatives and neighbors kidnapped and tortured and murdered to lay down their arms unless they can do so in an atmosphere of justice and law? How can we expect an end to the violence of the left unless there is an end to the impunity from prosecution of the right?

That is why finding the truth in the Jesuits' case is so important; not because it might please the United States, England, Spain or some other foreign country; but because finding

the truth is essential for El Salvador to live at peace with itself.

III. Status of the case.

As you know, eight members of the armed forces, including one Colonel, have been charged with the murders. Two others have been charged with destroying evidence. Four others have been charged with perjury.

I believe that Judge Ricardo Zamora deserves great credit for bringing the case to this point. He has done his best to build a strong case against the accused. And he has done his best to investigate the possible involvement of others in ordering or participating in the crimes.

The role of the military is another story.

General Ponce has said over and over again that these murders should be considered the acts of individuals and not the responsibility of the armed forces as an institution. General Ponce is dead wrong.

Consider that:

- o radio stations, controlled by the military, broadcast threats against the Jesuits shortly before they were killed;

- o there were more than 200 soldiers at or near the scene of the crime;

- o the murders were carried out by an experienced and well-trained military unit, acting under orders;

- o efforts were made at the scene to cover up the crimes and to point the finger of blame at the FMLN;

o a phony firefight was recorded in the official log of military operations;

o not a single officer has come forward voluntarily with information concerning the case;

o evidence controlled by the military has been withheld and destroyed;

o many of the officers who were called to testify lied and lied again about what they know;

o even the special military Honor Board appointed by President Cristiani to review the case lied about it.

General, believe me, you have got an institutional problem.

And that's not the worst of it. I am convinced that, at a minimum, the high command of the armed forces knew soon after the murders which unit was responsible for the crimes. At a minimum, they sought to limit the scope of the investigation in order to protect certain officers from prosecution. And I continue to believe there is a strong possibility that the murders were ordered by senior military officers not currently charged.

I am convinced that there are officers in the armed forces who did not themselves participate in the crimes, but who have further information about the crimes. To date, these officers have not come forward because they fear they will be killed. They know that telling the truth about the military is considered by some in El Salvador to be a capital crime. Again, I say to General Ponce, you have an institutional problem.

It is the institution of the armed forces that is responsible, not only for the murders but for the failure of the investigation, thus far, to uncover the whole truth.

It is the institution that instills fear in potential witnesses; it is the institution that teaches its officers--no, orders its officers--to be silent, to be forgetful, to be evasive, to lie.

It is the institution that demands loyalty to the armed forces above loyalty to the truth or to honor or to country.

The fact is that there is nothing a soldier or officer could do that would be more patriotic or better for the armed forces or for El Salvador than to come forward with the truth in this case. And if that happens, it will be our responsibility, and that of the civilian government, to protect that witness and to make certain that the evidence he provides is acted upon, not covered up.

I still believe it is possible that a new witness or witnesses will come forward. I believe this because I know there are many good people in the armed forces of El Salvador, some of whom were educated right here at this university or at other Jesuit schools.

I believe there are many in the armed forces who want to see the full truth come out. I believe there are many who want to reform the armed forces and to see it take its proper place within your society.

I have been asked many times what it would take to satisfy me in the Jesuits' case. Would I be satisfied with the conviction of five soldiers? Must a Colonel be convicted? Are eight convictions enough?

My response is simple. I want the truth. Like Ambassador Walker, I want the truth because I believe the Salvadoran people deserve the truth. The whole truth.

There is no such thing as half justice. You either have justice or you don't. There is no such thing as half a democracy. You

either have a democracy in which everyone--including the powerful--is subject to the law or you don't.

That's why I believe it is so important that the whole truth emerge in this case.

Without the truth, the armed forces will never be cleansed of its responsibility for this crime, and for shielding those involved in it. Without the truth, this government cannot lay claim to truly democratic institutions. Without the truth, the argument that those in opposition to the government should lay down their arms is undermined. Without the truth, the path towards peace in El Salvador will grow steeper still.

IV. Peace.

And I don't have to tell any of you how important it is to bring the civil war in El Salvador to an end.

Not long before he died, Father Ellacuria said that "the way of war has now given all it has to give; now, we must seek the way of peace".

As Father Ellacuria would have been the first to say, the way of peace is not easy, nor is it without risk.

But the way of war is murdering El Salvador. It is a war without victors, only victims. Seventy-five thousand dead. A million forced to flee their homeland. A generation of children denied the innocence and the laughter of childhood. Thousands of young men and women who have lost an arm or a leg to explosives or gunfire.

Even the powerful, the Generals and the commanders, on both sides, are victims. For those responsible for this war must bear the burden in their souls of the killing they have caused, the destruction they have produced, the injustices that have been

generated throughout this decade of war.

For ten years, we have heard what the leaders on both sides are against. We have listened to the words of hate, the demands for vengeance, the predictions of triumph. But it has never been important what each side is against; it only really matters what each side is for.

Now, during the negotiations, the burden has been on both the Government and the FMLN to define what they are for. Both sides deserve credit for the progress that has been made; both deserve blame for the senseless violence that has continued.

It breaks my heart, after all this time, to hear of yet more young people being disfigured or maimed or killed. It makes me sick to hear this violence justified as a bargaining tactic. And it makes me wish even more that Father Ellacuria were still here to share with us his wisdom and compassion.

It is not my job or the job of anyone from my country to define the appropriate terms for peace in El Salvador. That is solely the responsibility of Salvadorans, with help, as needed, from the United Nations.

But we in Congress do have a responsibility to see that the United States is a force for peace, not war, in El Salvador.

It is our job to help those on both sides who share the vision of an El Salvador that is democratic and just.

And so I say to the FMLN, if you want our understanding, negotiate in good faith; end your campaign of sabotage; do not kill civilians; and bring to justice those who murdered the two Americans killed after the helicopter crash last January.

And I say to the armed forces, if you want our aid, do your part to end the violence; respect the rights of those with whom you

disagree; negotiate in good faith; and bring to justice not just some, but all, who ordered or participated in the murders at this campus nineteen months ago.

V. Closing.

I have been following events in El Salvador for about ten years. And I can't count the number of times I have been told not to expect very much from El Salvador. I have been told over and over again by people in my own government that violence is just part of the culture. Killing and corruption, I am told, have always been common in El Salvador.

Well, I love my country, but I think it's pretty arrogant for anyone from a nation with a \$300 billion defense budget, \$25 billion in arms sales, a huge military foreign aid program and the highest murder rate in the western world to criticize another society for its tendency towards violence. I don't say that Salvadorans are better than anyone else, but I have never seen a people that wanted or deserved peace more than the people of El Salvador.

You do not have to travel far from this beautiful campus to see whole urban neighborhoods constructed out of tin and cardboard, wedged into ravines where nothing grows except the appetites of young children.

You do not have to travel far to find babies being delivered and surgery being conducted in surroundings less sanitary than the average American's back yard.

You do not have to travel far to find farmers struggling to grow food for their families with no equipment except their own hands and no credit except their own empty pockets.

You do not have to travel far in El Salvador to understand why it is so important that the destruction end and the re-building

begin.

And you do not have to travel far to understand why the lives of Father Ellacuria and his colleagues, far more than their deaths, were so important.

The Jesuit fathers taught us that peace is better than war for the simple reason that life is better than death.

They taught us to value the dignity and to respect the rights of every human being, no matter how humble.

They taught us that, although it has often been considered a crime in this country, it is never a crime to speak up for the poor, the helpless or the ill; it is never a crime to tell the truth; it is never a crime to demand justice; it is never a crime to teach people their rights; it is never a crime to struggle for a just peace. It is never a crime. It is always a duty.

So, in closing, I say let us pray that God will grant us the strength, with the memory of these martyred heroes always present in our minds, to fulfill this duty each and every day of our lives.