



EL RESCATE HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT

REPORT FROM EL SALVADOR

November 12-19, 1990

"The U.S. has been forced to take a hard look at these martyrs and through them, for the first time, at El Salvador . . . The cut in aid and the way in which this advances a negotiated solution is a great contribution made by our martyrs."

Jesuit Jon Sobrino (1)

A year after the Jesuit assassinations the political pressure on the government, Armed Forces and U.S. Embassy is far from receding, as demonstrated by the Congressional aid vote and by events here in El Salvador and internationally on the anniversary. Though many Salvadorans fear the case will never be resolved, others are certain that ultimately the crime and its repercussions will contribute to the collapse of the Armed Forces as currently structured and to the demilitarization of the country. The reduction in military aid, U.N.-mediated negotiations and the resurgence of a powerful opposition movement are all consequences of the November 1989 offensive and the massacre and the resulting political debilitation of the government and military.

For several weeks rumors flourished in political circles that the case would break wide open, that an "important announcement" would be made by the government on the anniversary. The President was out of the country until November 16 however, and when the National Network usurped all television programming that evening for an official statement, Mr. Cristiani appeared to promote a telethon for the disabled. The massacre, which for many symbolizes the decade-long trauma of the nation, was officially ignored.

The following day the President met with the Spanish Vice-Foreign Minister and a delegation of Spanish parliamentarians and stated, "There is a hypothesis that more people could be involved . . . but I cannot make that conclusion." (2) He assured the visitors that the Armed Forces are not blocking the investigation and lamented the "damage" it has caused to his government. Other government and military officials also held firm, Dr. Oscar Santamaria criticizing the opposition for "politicizing" the case . . . "using it as a symbol, giving it a different hue," and insisting that in spite of "imperfections" the investigation has been conducted "satisfactorily". (3)

In a meeting with the Spanish delegation, Minister of Defense Ponce denied that any other officers are implicated, saying, "According to my information, I deny that it was a conspiracy . . . We are ashamed that some members were involved . . . and we are cooperating fully with the judge." (4) Ponce later told journalists that the "error..of some members must be recognized . . . but the institution is not to blame . . . Many sectors are interested in discrediting the Armed Forces." (4) In an interesting shift, ARENA President Calderon Sol said the government hoped the case would be "fully investigated" and accused "some sectors . . . such as North American diplomats . . . of blocking the investigation." (5) DIARIO DE HOY considers the case "repugnant" but said it has become the "standard bearer . . . that links groups pledged to destroy El Salvador . . . and has given spirit to the terrorist movement . . . It would be an even greater injustice to blame the institution for the crime of a few members." (6) LA PRENSA GRAFICA, however, noted the

"contradictions, setbacks and perhaps intentional obstacles . . . which have caused serious damage to the country" and called for an in-depth investigation, "Some cases must be resolved as examples . . . of what must never occur again." (7)

"The fact that the Embassy has hidden evidence is an indication that more people are involved . . . They must turn over all documentation."

Jesuit Provincial Jose Maria Tojeira (8)

"The U.S. must adopt a more balanced policy toward El Salvador."
Congressmember Joe Moakley (9)

On November 14, Tojeira accused the Embassy of "mistreating witnesses, propagating false rumors and hiding evidence." The Jesuit Provincial for Central America attributed the Embassy policy to the "personal blundering" of officials involved in the case . . . "Blundering and the eagerness, dominant from the very beginning, to protect the political interests of the U.S." (10) The UNTS went further, charging the assassinations were planned by the High Command and "authorized by the Embassy . . . as part of the counterinsurgency strategy which included the elimination of opposition leaders like us . . . only we were in hiding." (11)

In New York, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights issued a statement strongly criticizing the role of both governments and accusing Embassy officials of knowing in advance of the planned assassination and "doing nothing to stop it." (12) According to spokesperson Martha Doggett, Major Buckland could have been the key witness in the case since Salvadoran law does not permit co-defendants to testify against one another; she charged that the withholding of evidence could be a violation of both U.S. and Salvadoran laws. "One has the impression," said Congressman Moakley, "that the little progress that has been made is directed more toward calming the U.S. than to guaranteeing that justice reigns." (13)

"My government, my Embassy and I have made great efforts in this case," Ambassador Walker insisted, and added that he "doesn't understand" the accusations that Embassy officials have hidden evidence . . . "We are all trying to get to the truth." (14) The State Department admitted the case has affected bilateral relations but Richard Boucher contended the Embassy has "dedicated greater efforts to the search for justice in this case than to any other affair concerning El Salvador." (15)

The Salvadoran opposition has been cautious in its criticism of the U.S. during the past year; demonstrators no longer gather in front of the Embassy or spray paint its walls and there is an absence of anti-North American rhetoric here, but the conduct of the Embassy in this case has infuriated many. During the anniversary march to the UCA some participants carried placards demanding that Ambassador Walker be removed from the country. The FMLN issued a statement calling on the U.S. administration not to block the investigation; "The international community must increase the pressure," the communique read, "Impunity, militarization and all military aid must end . . . The Armed Forces continue to be the obstacle to democracy." (16) The Embassy, said PCN Deputy Hugo Carrillo, "is the key to a resolution of the case." (17)

"You can't sell the idea of democracy in El Salvador until this case is solved."

Luis Fajada Espinola, Spanish Deputy (18)

"The legal process is dead..We practically have less than we did when President Cristiani announced the names of the accused."

Jesuit Francisco Estrada (19)

The Jesuits are certain the case will not be clarified through legal channels, that only increased political pressure will force the truth. Though five of the six Jesuits were Spaniards, that government has not until recently been particularly active in demanding a complete investigation. This week however, the delegation of deputies, representing all parties in the Spanish Parliament and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Inocencio Arias were in the country to express concern about the case and meet with government, military, religious and opposition leaders. The case "is a test of the credibility of the Salvadoran government," said Arias. (20) The delegation praised the professional work and courage of Judge Ricardo Zamora and insisted the Parliament "will not accept half-way explanations" from the government and military. (21) The Spaniards participated in the march to the UCA on November 15 and Arias said he was "very moved" by his experience in El Salvador. Deputy Fajada Espinola touched on U.S. involvement . . . "If the U.S. can contribute something, it has the moral obligation to do so." (22) The delegation also demanded a thorough investigation of the death of a Spanish doctor, Begona Garcia in September; Garcia was working in an FMLN field hospital and was killed, in combat according to the military. An autopsy conducted in Spain demonstrated that the 24-year old doctor was assassinated, shot twice at close range, one bullet by a gun held to her neck, the other bullet in her forehead, fired from a distance of one meter.

On November 15 the European Economic Community issued a statement of concern about the lack of progress in the investigation of the Jesuit case and the "lack of collaboration from some sectors of the Armed Forces." (23) Demonstrations and memorial services were held in many cities of the U.S. and in Europe. In Germany, Jesuit Alfonso Alvarez Bolado said there is little possibility the case will be resolved because, "state crimes are never clarified . . . until a new government comes to power." (24)

*"This is my destiny."
Ignacio Ellacuria, November 12, 1989 (25)*

Thirty-five relatives and friends of the slain Jesuits arrived from Spain on November 13 to participate in the activities commemorating the assassinations. Ellacuria's brother, Father Jose Ellacuria, traveled from Taiwan where he has worked as a Jesuit for thirty-five years. He told friends that he passed Cristiani in the Tokyo Airport and said he was "very moved" to be here. "I was with my brother the day before he returned to El Salvador", he said, "We tried to convince him not to go but he insisted, 'This is my destiny.'" (26) Family members stayed at the UCA and participated in a series of reflections, religious and cultural events during the week. El Salvador was a new experience for most of them and Jesuit Francisco Ibizate later said, "They have seen a new world here . . . have felt our love, the love of the UCA, of the religious communities and of the Salvadoran people." (27)

On the afternoon of November 15 thousands of people gathered in the Plaza Civica for a memorial service organized by the Permanent Committee of the National Debate. Jesuit Francisco Estrada, Rector of the UCA, thanked the participants for their presence and said, "Governments and political parties change . . . The only constant is the people, united as we are today." (28) An estimated 30,000 people, including family members, Spanish deputies, international religious delegations, the Jesuit community and political leaders marched the long distance from the Plaza to the UCA in the evening, carrying flashlights. At 2:00 a.m., November 16, the hour of the massacre, a memorial mass was held. "They offered an intellectual model of peace and justice," Father Tojeira said that morning, "in a world where intellectuals are often isolated from reality." (29)

A final mass was held late in the afternoon of the 16th on the UCA campus, near the site of the massacre. Archbishop Rivera y Damas and Father Tojeira led the service, assisted by seventeen Bishops from Europe, Canada, Latin America and the U.S.. William Walker, who displays a photograph of Ignacio Ellacuria in his office, attended, as did government representatives Dr.

Oscar Santamaria and Colonel Juan Antonio Varela, both members of the government dialogue commission. The delegation of North American Bishops called for a total cut in U.S. military aid saying, "It has not served any good purpose . . . has only caused death and destruction." (30)

*"This anniversary must signify the dramatic end to a long nightmare."
Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez (31)*

The decision to assassinate the Jesuits was not sudden or accidental, but the culmination of a long process that commenced even before the United States began to "manage" the war, but the crime revealed the monster created by the cold-war foreign policy which has guided the U.S. since the fifties. The national security doctrine resulted in "dirty wars" in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile; El Salvador became the laboratory for the more sophisticated strategy of low-intensity conflict. Following the assassinations, Ambassador Walker admitted there were some "management control problems" here, but one of the many unanswered questions, perhaps the most important for North Americans, remains: Was the monster "out of control" or was it simply complying with its responsibility to eliminate perceived enemies? Did U.S. officials have prior knowledge, did they participate in or consent to the decision?

The day following the massacre, FMLN Commander Joaquin Villalobos said the Jesuits were killed because they "contributed enormously to the education of our people, to the political debate, to an understanding of the need for political pluralism . . . The Armed Forces and the oligarchy don't support intellect, reason or debate." (32)

"Rest in peace, Ignacio Ellacuria, Segundo Montes, Ignacio Martin Baro, Amando Lopez, Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, Juan Ramon Moreno, Elba and Celina Ramos," said Jon Sobrino . . . "May their memory never let us rest in peace." (33)

SOURCES: 1. UCA lecture, 11/14/90; 2. Television Channel 12, 11/17/90; 3. Television Channel 12, 11/14/90; 4. Ibid.; 5. Radio Horizonte, 11/16/90; 6. Radio Horizonte, 11/15/90; 7. DIARIO DE HOY, 11/16/90; 8. LA PRENSA GRAFICA, 11/19/90; 9. Radio Horizonte, 11/12/90; 10. EL MUNDO, 11/14/90; 11. DIARIO LATINO, 11/14/90; 12. Radio Horizonte, 11/14/90; 13. Television Channel 12, 11/15/90; 14. EL MUNDO, 11/14/90; 15. Radio Horizonte, 11/14/90; 16. Television Channel 12, 11/15/90; 17. Radio Horizonte, 11/17/90; 18. Ibid.; 19. LA PRENSA GRAFICA, 11/14/90; 20. Television Channel 6, 11/12/90; 21. Television Channel 12, 11/15/90; 22. Television Channel 6, 11/15/90; 23. Television Channel 12, 11/16/90; 24. Radio Sonora, 11/15/90; 25. EL MUNDO, 11/16/90; 26. Television Channel 12, 11/13/90; 27. Television Channel 6, 11/16/90; 28. Radio Sonora, 11/15/90; 29. Television Channel 12, 11/16/90; 30. Television Channel 12, 11/18/90; 31. Ibid.; 32. Radio Venceremos, 11/17/89; 33. UCA lecture, 11/14/90.

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For Immediate Release

November 21, 1990

STATEMENT BY RICHARD BOUCHER/DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

EL SALVADOR: GUERRILLA ATTACKS

YESTERDAY AT 1:00 A.M. SAN SALVADOR TIME, THE FMLN GUERRILLAS LAUNCHED ~~WHAT APPEARS TO BE~~ ITS LARGEST AND MOST VIOLENT CAMPAIGN SINCE LAST YEAR'S GENERAL OFFENSIVE. THE ATTACKS BEGAN AT ILOPANGO AIRBASE IN SAN SALVADOR AND AND TOOK PLACE IN FIVE OTHER DEPARTMENTS THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND NIGHT.

REPORTS RECEIVED THIS MORNING INDICATE THAT SEVEN CIVILIANS ARE DEAD AND 67 WOUNDED AS A RESULT OF THE ATTACKS. THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES SUFFERED 33 DEAD AND 160 WOUNDED. GUERRILLA CASUALTIES ARE REPORTEDLY 44 DEAD AND 39 WOUNDED. WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF CONTINUED MILITARY ACTIVITY THIS MORNING.

THE FMLN'S USE OF MORTARS IN THESE ATTACKS HAS CAUSED CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, AND WE HAVE REPORTS THAT THE GUERRILLAS HAVE USED CIVILIAN HOMES AS COVER IN USULUTAN AND CHALATENANGO. IN CHALATENANGO, AN FMLN MORTAR HIT A HOSPITAL DIRECTLY. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON CASUALTIES FROM THAT INCIDENT.

THE UNITED STATES STRONGLY CONDEMNS THIS MILITARY CAMPAIGN AND DEPLORES THE FACT THAT THE FMLN IS AGAIN VIOLATING ITS COMMITMENT NOT TO UNDERTAKE MILITARY ATTACKS THAT AFFECT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

THE FMLN HAS ISSUED A CYNICAL COMMUNIQUE DESCRIBING THESE ATTACKS AS A "LIMITED NATIONAL CAMPAIGN" UNDERTAKEN "IN THE SPIRIT OF ACCELERATING THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS," AND RESERVING THE RIGHT TO LAUNCH A LARGER MILITARY OFFENSIVE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

THE GUERRILLAS' ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN THEIR WORDS. ONCE AGAIN, THE FMLN IS TALKING ABOUT A PEACE SETTLEMENT WHILE RAINING VIOLENCE AND DEATH ON EL SALVADOR'S CITIZENS. THE FMLN HAS REPEATEDLY STALLED THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS OVER THE PAST FOUR MONTHS, AND NOW CLAIMS TO BE SEEKING TO ACCELERATE IT. THE FMLN SHOULD END ITS HYPOCRISY AND BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY TOWARD A CEASE-FIRE AND A FINAL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, AS PRESIDENT CRISTIANI HAS CALLED FOR. WE ALSO NOTE THAT JUST YESTERDAY, THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVED WITHOUT A SINGLE DISSENTING VOICE A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE SALVADORAN CONFLICT.