

# **EL SALVADOR 1989: THE TWO JESUIT STANDARDS AND THE FINAL OFFENSIVE**

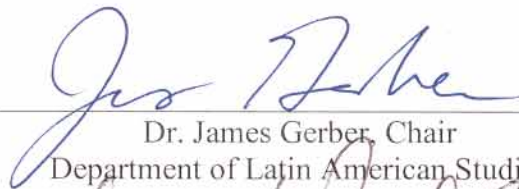
A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Latin American Studies

by  
Ignacio W. Ochoa  
Spring 2003

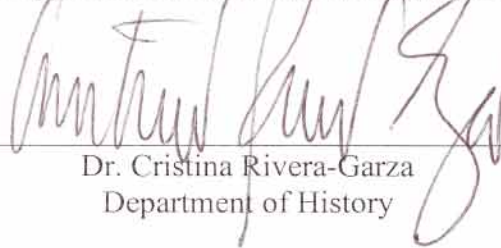
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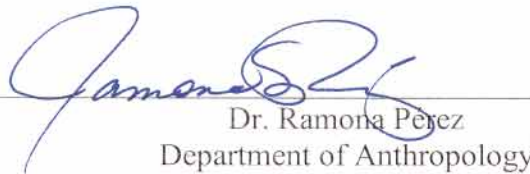
  
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by

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Christian Base Communities of the Parish of San Cristóbal de Jayaque, La Libertad, El Salvador, with whom I used to work, and to the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart and team of Jesuits who founded the pastoral work there and continue the work today.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

While working on this thesis, I have been extremely fortunate to have the help, guidance and friendship of several people whom I will never be able to repay directly for their kindness. I will do my best to pass on similar gifts to friends, colleagues and students in the future. I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Professors James Gerber, Cristina Rivera-Garza, and Ramona Pérez for their encouragement and careful feedback on various drafts of this thesis. I especially want to thank Lynn Eddy-Zambrano, Bertha Hernández, Stephen Elliott, and my wife, Regina Marchi, for the long hours they put in, on a completely voluntary basis and under an extremely tight deadline, in helping me to translate and edit this thesis, which was originally written in Spanish. Without their help, the document you are reading would never have been completed in time for spring graduation. I am also extremely grateful to Dr. Lee Staples, from the Boston University School of Social Work, who motivated me to pursue graduate work, and to Dr. Thomas Davies, Jr., the former Director of the Latin American Studies Program at San Diego State University, who warmly encouraged me to apply to the Masters' Degree program. Finally, I would like to thank my friends Simon Smith, S.J., Rodolfo Rubio, Carlos Lima, Tarsicio Parrado, S.J., José María Andrés, S.J., Victoriano Castillo, S.J., Jorge Sarsanedas, S.J., Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., Jon Sobrino, S.J., Ramiro Martinez, S.J., and Ed Dunn, OFM, for the conversations and shared reflections they have offered me regarding our experiences together in El Salvador.

## PREFACE



*Jon Sobrino*

I am a former Jesuit from Central America, and was present at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) during the time of the Jesuit Massacre of November 16, 1989. The impact of this event on the political landscape of El Salvador is the subject of this thesis. On the first anniversary of the massacre, some 20,000 people including dozens of delegations from Latin America, the United States, Canada, Europe and other parts of the world, came together to march in the streets of San Salvador. They marched not only to honor the lives and work of the murdered Jesuits, and not only to demonstrate solidarity with the Salvadoran people, but to maintain international pressure on the Salvadoran government to reach a negotiated peace settlement with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). In the subsequent 13 years, whether I have been in El Salvador, Guatemala, San Francisco or Boston, I have come together annually with Jesuits, former Jesuits and friends as we take part in anniversary observances in memory of the massacre. In 1998, I reconnected with Jon Sobrino, S.J., who had come to Boston from El Salvador to lecture on the aftermath of the massacre at the Harvard University Divinity School and the Weston Jesuit School of Theology. Sobrino was a member of the UCA Jesuit community whose life was spared that day because he was in Thailand attending a theology conference. After seeing Sobrino in Boston, I began to think about writing and transcribing all the unpublished material I had been working on during the 1989 Final Offensive, and started to get back in touch with various Jesuits I had worked with in El Salvador. It had been over a decade since many of us had been able to compare our reflections about the war. I offer this academic work for analysis by those concerned with Central America's economic, social, and political reality as they continue mediating and working for human rights and peace.



*Ignacio Ochoa, Regina Marchi, Jon Sobrino, Simon Smith  
Harvard University Divinity School, 1998*

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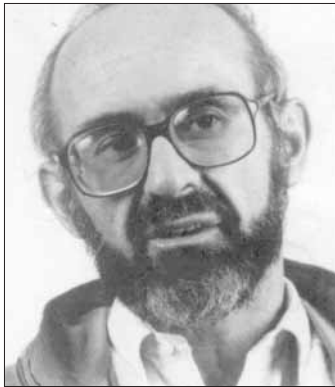
# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

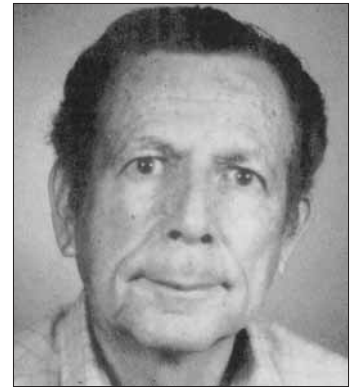
During my studies in philosophy and theology as a Jesuit in Central America in the 1980s, I had the opportunity to get to know each one of the six Jesuits who were assassinated at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) on November 16, 1989. They were my professors and mentors during my coursework at the university. Amando López was my academic advisor. I did social pastoral work for two years with Ignacio Martín-Baró and his team in the parish of San Cristóbal de Jayaque. I taught a religion course one semester at a technical school as part of an educational project directed by Joaquín López y López. Juan Ramón Moreno taught my cohort Ignatian Spirituality during our novitiate training in Panama, and continued to give us classes in philosophy and theology at the UCA. As a sociologist working with the internally and externally displaced, Segundo Montes gave regular presentations to the Jesuit students regarding the humans rights situation of Salvadoran refugees.



*Amando López*



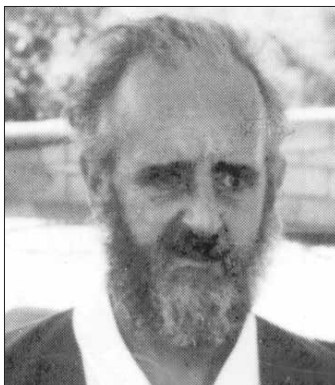
*Ignacio Martín-Baró*



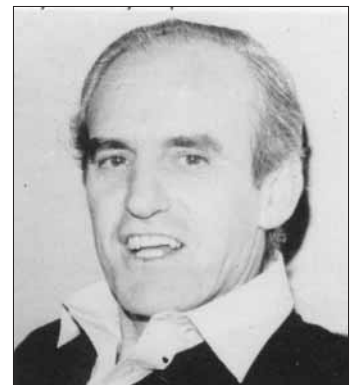
*Joaquín López y López*



*Juan Ramón Moreno*



*Segundo Montes*



*Ignacio Ellacuría*



Ignacio Ellacuría, who taught us philosophy, was my favorite professor, and to this day, the best professor I have ever had. Every Wednesday, we Jesuit students played Basque handball (frontón) with Segundo, Amando, Nacho and Ellacuría. After finishing my studies in El Salvador in November 1988, I was assigned to work in my native country



*Santa María Chiquimula Parish, Doña María and Doña Salomé with Victoriano Castillo and Ignacio Ochoa, October 1989*

with the Maya-K'iche' population in the Santa María Chiquimula region of the department of Totonicapán, Guatemala. On November 8, 1989, together with another Jesuit companion, Victoriano (Vico) Castillo, I returned to San Salvador, [1] where we were supposed to attend a regional meeting to help

draft a program of academic studies for future Jesuits in Central America, and give a presentation on the pastoral work we had begun with the K'iche' in Guatemala. The meeting was disrupted by preparations being made for the Final Offensive that the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) launched nationally on Saturday, November 11, 1989. At the meeting, all the Jesuit students and those teaching at the UCA or working on social service projects joined the humanitarian efforts to prepare for the war. My personal experiences played out within the community of my fellow students, as we turned one of the Jesuit student residences into an underground clinic during the first two weeks of the war. These experiences of the war are the roots of this thesis, which is a testimony to the struggle of the Salvadoran people, the death of the



*Santa María Chiquimula Church*

Jesuits, and the larger significance of their death to the world. The central thesis of this paper is that the massacre at the UCA revived and accelerated the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. In developing my argument, I have used primary sources documented during the war, including personal discussions and interviews, FMLN status reports of the war that I recorded throughout the duration of the Offensive

as they were transmitted live via Radio Venceremos, [2] and my personal experiences while living in the Central American Jesuit community. The Radio Venceremos transcripts have never been published and offer important historical insight regarding the FMLN's intentions and progress during the Offensive, as well as their reaction to the Jesuit massacre. Similarly, a first-hand account of this tragedy, written by someone who was at the UCA before, during and after the massacre, also has never been published. I believe that my personal experiences provide a human side to and deeper understanding of the historical events recounted in existing books on the massacre, [3] all of which were written by people who arrived in El Salvador between one month and two years after the event to begin researching the topic. This paper is also informed by secondary sources, in the form of newspaper articles and scholarly literature that discuss the lives and work of the Jesuits killed, [4] and the general topic of El Salvador's war. [5] The underlying historical and theoretical framework of this study is the philosophy of reality, as conceptualized by Drs. Xavier Zubiri [6] and Ignacio Ellacuría. [7] Both philosophers structured social actions as *habitudes*. The principal object of study for the two thinkers was not social reality, but rather the philosophy of society. That is, the relations between social science and philosophy which assume that men and women are political beings in the Aristotelian sense. According to Zubiri and Ellacuría, "the political animal" is transformable to the degree that it adapts to reality, thereby historically creating more possibilities and greater degrees of emancipation for itself. The premise of these philosophers from the Basque Country was that one cannot philosophize unless one immerses oneself in reality and becomes completely "inculturated" [8] in that reality. Zubiri took up this task in Spain and influenced European thought, while Ellacuría in El Salvador, influenced Liberation Theology, a reflection of the sentient Latin American reality. Into the historical-theoretical framework, I will incorporate those moments in which the Central American Jesuits, in turmoil over political conflicts and the tremendous ecclesiastical schisms in Latin America, took on the responsibility for being "the learned voice for those who have no voice," as Ellacuría used to say to us in class. An issue I will address throughout this thesis is the internal outcry that welled up in me the moment I went with other Jesuits at 6:45 a.m. to bear witness to the massacre of November 16, 1989. The first conclusion regarding the why behind this massacre was that it was a stupid act done by perpetrators who did not foresee its transcendence and how it would weaken, above all, the institutional power of the Salvadoran military. Yet, in spite of the fact that the boldness of stupidity can be great indeed, this answer did not convince me. Other immediate answers circulated among some of the journalists, hinting that it was the Left itself, trained in Machiavellian methods by the Jesuits, who had killed them. [9] These remarks had their roots in Ellacuría's position regarding the creation of a third political force to help loosen the political grip of both the Armed Forces and the FMLN. He advocated the establishment of broader, more democratic processes of dialogue that would include the general civilian population. From the moment Ellacuría suggested this idea in 1981, [10] the FMLN was lukewarm

to the proposal. Both the FMLN and the Armed Forces realized that this political solution would force them to make significant concessions, and each preferred the idea of a total military victory. Within the context of the murders, these insinuations were an affront to the Jesuits; yet the politicized language of the war and the search for justifications for the massacre opened the way to doubt, leading even some supporters of the FMLN to wonder if perhaps the rebel forces were responsible. In a short time, however, responsibility for the massacre became clear, as both national and international investigators unveiled the Salvadoran Army's direct guilt in the crime. [11] As Teresa Whitfield notes, the election in El Salvador of the ultra-conservative ARENA party in March of 1989 "brought the country's state of war and social polarization to a head. ARENA's economic policies began to roll back the clock and undo the moderate economic and political changes made by the previous government." [12] This was followed by a drastic upsurge in political violence against labor, student and popular organizations and renewed military activity on the part of the FMLN. [13] Ideological and political positions in 1989 reached a profound Marxist contradiction of reality, leading to a new dialectic in the Salvadoran conflict. International repudiation of the rising levels of violence and repression carried out by the Armed Forces encouraged the beginning of a new, more desperate and more violent stage of the war. Throughout 1989, as military violence against popular organizations increased, the FMLN prepared for and openly told reporters of its plan for a massive insurrection. [14] Meanwhile, the Jesuits at the UCA, with their scientific data and studies of public opinion, maintained that neither the guerrillas nor the Armed Forces could achieve a final military victory. Only through dialogue and negotiation, they insisted, would an end to the war be achieved. As I will discuss, both the lives and deaths of the Jesuits helped open the way to national dialogue and an eventual coming together around a set of peace accords accepted by most sectors of Salvadoran society. The murderers of these promoters of justice provided evidence to the world of the extremism of El Salvador's ultra-conservative government and military that had long received extensive economic support from the United States. [15] When I began to work on this thesis and started to review scholarly analyses of the Salvadoran situation during the decade 1980-1990, I posed the fundamental question: Why would the Armed Forces commit the massacre? The answer to this question has revealing implications, because the Salvadoran government, its Armed Forces, and U.S. military advisors must have known that killing the UCA Jesuits would lead to a delegitimization of their own policies and institutions. [16] And yet, in spite of this, the massacre was carried out. So then, why? The hypothesis I present here is: *During the Final Offensive of November 1989, the assassination of the Jesuits, accused of being the intellectual backbone of the guerillas, was an attempt by the Salvadoran Armed Forces to debilitate the FMLN and the civil population they served. However, this action proved to be the beginning of the end for the unchecked power and legitimacy of the Armed Forces, and the driving force behind the Salvadoran peace process.* To support this hypothesis, I will discuss in chapter II why the work of the Jesuits made them a military target. In

order to accomplish this, I will provide a framework of twentieth century changes in the Church, the evolution of Liberation Theology, and Jesuit praxis in Central America. I will review the pastoral work of the Society of Jesus in modern times, inspired from the beginning by the Society's founder, Ignatius of Loyola, and how this challenged Salvadoran politics. In chapter III, I will discuss the history of El Salvador's 10-year civil war, and the roles and responses to it of Ignacio Ellacuría and other Jesuits in El Salvador, based on their theological formation. While actively working to accompany, support and empower the poor, the Jesuits were a consistent voice calling for a negotiated settlement to the war, long before the idea became fashionable in international circles. This chapter will discuss the first five days of the Final Offensive before the massacre, providing some historical background that contextualizes the state of the Armed Forces and FMLN at that moment in time, and portends the Army's motivations to commit the massacre. In chapter IV, I proceed to describe the massacre, told through three short narratives based on my personal experiences, including conversations I had on the day of the massacre and preceding weeks with those who were present at the time. These personal reflections offer details on how the war in general, and the massacre in particular, affected the Jesuit community, the friends and families of the victims, and the larger Salvadoran society. They are provided in an effort to underscore the unexpected, savage and senseless nature of these deaths and provide the reader with a greater understanding of the depth of local and international outrage. It is this horror and outrage, I argue in my conclusion, that fueled changes in U.S. foreign policy towards El Salvador that, compounded by changing Cold War dynamics, forced both the Army and the FMLN to resume stalled peace talks and agree to what were previously considered unacceptable concessions (such as disarming and demobilizing, bringing human rights violators to trial and initiating legal and constitutions reforms). In chapter V, I discuss how local, national, and international reactions to the massacre re-stimulated the stymied national dialogue, for which the UCA Jesuits had staunchly advocated and put their lives on the line. Finally, in chapter VI, I elaborate my conclusions, arguing that the blood spilled by thousands of Salvadorans during the civil war, mixed together with the blood of the UCA martyrs in the Final Offensive, paved the way for meaningful political dialogue in El Salvador and the subsequent signing of the Peace Accords in January 1992. Included in the conclusions are my personal reflections in response to the metaphysical question surrounding the massacre of the Jesuits, with the intention of discovering the ultimate significance of those things that, within a Zubirian philosophical understanding of reality, make history dynamic.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - BATTLING UNDER THE TWO JESUIT STANDARDS: IN MAGNIS VOLUISSE SATIS EST

Most people, unaware of the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America and the rest of the world, cannot comprehend how it is possible that a sector of the Catholic Church is committed to working in support of the revolutionary movements of Latin America. Their view, based on the predominant model of the Church from the past, is that the business of the Church is solely spiritual (Civitas Dei) and that its members are nothing more than distributors of the sacraments, allied with the dominant classes that control the state. [17] It is true that the Catholic Church in Latin America configured the Colonial Period during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and served



*Paulo Suess, "Os povos Indígenas e culturas." Christian Base Communities meeting, Panamá 1987*

politically to justify the dominant ideology, teaching that social divisions derived from divine right. And while the Church operated a vast network of assistance programs and schools, this was done with the approval and support of national elites, comprising a Church for the poor, rather than a Church with or of the poor.

[18] Yet, as Historian Rodolfo Cardenal argues, between 1871 and 1931, the Church not only helped to define Central American historical reality, but the social and cultural movements of Central America helped to define the Church. [19] In

1931, Pope Pius XII retook the Encyclical Rerum Novarum from Pope Leo XIII (1891) with a new Charter called Quadragesimo Anno. This, among other observations on socialism and communism in Europe, explained the inequalities

that were provoked by accumulated wealth and the management of capital in the hands of very few people. Quadragesimo Anno described capitalism in terms of power and despotic economic dictatorship. It stated: *We want to refrain from condoning the practices of some adherents of private property who, with their manner of interpreting the use of and respect for property, are putting this institution in danger more than those who oppose them.*"

*[Queríamos abstenernos de calificar la conducta práctica de algunos partidarios del derecho de propiedad privada,*

*que con su manera de interpretar el uso y respeto a la propiedad, consiguen, mejor que sus adversarios, poner en peligro esta institución.] [20]* In the context of the cold war, nuclear arms and space exploration, the Church was moved towards global human solidarity by Pope John XXIII with his social mission through *Mater et Magistra* (1961), and *Pacem Terris* (1963), expounding that: *Human kind has never had such abundance of richness, economic possibilities and capacities, and still, there is a great part of the world population suffering with hunger and misery, and countless illiterate people. Man has never had such a sharp sense of liberty than today, and yet new forms of social and psychological slavery continue to be born. [Nunca ha tenido el género humano tanta abundancia de riquezas, posibilidades y capacidad económica y, sin embargo todavía una parte grandísima de la población mundial se ve afligida por el hambre y la miseria, y es incontable el número de analfabetos. Jamás tuvieron los hombres un sentido tan agudo de la libertad como hoy, pero entre tanto siguen naciendo nuevas formas de esclavitud social y psíquica.] [21]* This social mission, promulgated by Pope John XXIII when he announced the Second World Council of Bishops (Vatican II) on September 11, 1962, opened an alternative option of organization for the poor in Latin America. Indignant at the widespread misery and hunger, committed Christians and official representatives of the Catholic Church jointly began social pastoral work to respond more effectively to the economic problems suffered by the poor. In 1991, Pope John Paul II produced the Charter Centessimus Annus, which emphatically indicated the consequences of capitalism in today's world and pointed out that these consequences should be dealt with by the international community. Among the problems noted were: (1) disproportionate materialism, (2) wasteful consumerism, (3) extreme poverty in underdeveloped countries entangled in growing external debt, and (4) the threat of ecological catastrophes. As in its apostolic beginnings in the First and Second Centuries, the mission of the Church in the modern world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries regained its ethic of working for effective human solidarity — especially with the contemporary political challenge of responding to the defective developments of globalization. From Latin America, Ignacio Ellacuría, in his political reflections on the Christian commitment of the Salvadoran Church, used to say: “If politics is understood to mean incarnating the gospel message in the processes of history and . . . denouncing oppressors and those who do violence to the people, calling sin sin and grace grace, then the Church has been involved in politics.” [22] Anyone wishing to understand the human implications of the Central American wars must venture into the complex web at the root of each country's conflict. Although each revolution carries with it much idealism, it was not mere quixotic daring that lead to the



*Ernesto Cardenal reading his poems at a Christian Base Communities meeting in Nicaragua 1984*

temptation of some Jesuits to participate in Central America's political struggles in the 1970 and 1980s. The Jesuit formation had much to do with this. In the Jesuit life, one cannot abandon the inner dialogue of the two standards, nor avoid the pull of reality. For Jesuits, reflection on "the two standards" serves as the basis for discerning all pastoral action. The two standards, or "banners,"

correspond to the meditations proposed in the Spiritual Exercises written by Ignatius of Loyola. In an image of sixteenth-century chivalry, they represent two battling armies: the army of Lucifer and that of Christ. The seductive pull of both armies was present in Ignatius' life, but his admiration for the standard of the army of Christ was motivated by Christ's life on earth: his rejection of worldly principles and deliberate embrace of a life of poverty and humility, suffering the scorn of men in a supreme self-surrender to the fulfillment of God's will. For Ignatius, progress in the Christian spiritual life was in direct proportion to submission of self-love, desires, and gratification; the ultimate norm was always to seek to enhance the glory of God. This inner demand is like a scalpel making a deep and painful incision into the body of self-love. The Spiritual Exercises embody the battle within the soul between Christ and the Prince of Darkness. The seduction of Evil in the world around us, propagated by the mass media, consumerism, labor exploitation and dehumanization, requires an alternative training to help us interpret the conditions of the oppressed and marginalized so as to respond to Christ's ultimate mission—which in Classical and Systematic Theology as well as Liberation Theology, consists of freeing the poor. For every Jesuit, this assignment requires constant discernment between contending spirits to seek the magis or "highest glory," so that men and women can live lives of justice and abundance. [23] One must bear the brunt of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, always returning to them in personal and communal discernment: "Ignatius followed the Spirit, never pushing ahead, and thus was gently led, he knew not where." [24] The context of Central America in the 1970s was characterized by the social and political changes that transformed the region. One of the most important events that marked the Central American social process was the Sandinista Revolution in 1979. The pastoral work that the Jesuits developed

there raised many expectations among young Jesuit students who became involved in the social and economic research processes of the country. The Revolution was seen as a chance to transform the economic and social structures from the dynamics of oppression to a new, egalitarian society. However, when this endeavor failed in 1989, the hopes and expectations of many were destroyed. This political defeat brought the eventual closing of many programs at Jesuit centers of socioeconomic and political analysis, such as CRIES (Regional Center for Economic and Social Investigation). The ties that had been maintained between Jesuit scholars and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Planning under the Sandinista government were gradually lost, as the new government of Violeta Chamorro assumed power. As to the high level of solidarity with Nicaragua offered by activist groups in the United States and Europe during the 1980s, ideological matters predominated in the discourse of the international volunteers, illustrated in the loss of commitment to the pastoral work and education programs. The Nicaraguan poor were left to appeal to the conscience of those who claimed to be in Nicaragua to work of, by and for the cause of the poor. Within the Company of Jesus, the Ignatian spirit and the two standards reappeared in our community reflections as we tried to understand God's will and his promise to the poor of Central America. Jesuits made an effort to reconcile social science with theology and the analytic and political aspects of Marxism with Christianity. This historical debate had originated at the beginning of the twentieth century (1900-1923) in Europe by Jesuits who were entering the modern world at that time. Taking into perspective the historical tradition that characterized the Jesuits' 450 years of institutional life, we understood that what was happening to us now in Central America had also, in some way, already been experienced by the founders of the Company of Jesus, as well as by the elder Jesuit leadership in Central America. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe, Jesuits began to work for secularization and social commitment, and lived in solidarity with the men of their time who struggled to defend ideals of justice. We Jesuit students had the opportunity to hear, first hand, about the work of the Jesuits in the early part of the century, since many of the oldest Jesuits of the Central American Province lived at our residence in Santa Tecla, San Salvador. The domicile for elderly Jesuits was directly across from the student living quarters and shared a common garden, library, outside corridors, and Basque ball court. Some of these elderly Jesuits had arrived on our shores in the early 1900s, when the European world was seeking charismatic leaders with the intellectual and moral fiber necessary to mold the modern world. Coming from France, Spain, Italy, England, and Germany, each of them had witnessed great changes within the Catholic Church, [25] which had begun to correct errors (such as failing to prioritize the poor) committed in previous



centuries. As Historian William Bangert notes, there began to exist two kinds of Catholicism at the early part of the twentieth century, one loyal to the ancient faith and one committed to modern laical propositions and the separation of church and state: “The Society [of Jesus] found nations traditionally one in their Catholicity, now divided in two . . . There were two Frances, two Italies, two Spains.” [26] For example, the separation of Church and State in France in 1905 provoked great theological criticism at the time. While some Jesuits nostalgically identified with the old regime, others thought differently. The revolutions of thought were strongest in France and the United States, and, as Bangert observes, gave “new direction to the world.” [27] Later, Jesuits that experienced the human suffering of World War I in Europe worked so that the Catholic Church entered into dialogue with other faiths. The first ecumenical encounter was in 1925 in Stockholm, Sweden. Bangert gives us the following account of what happened:

*Since the pontificate of Leo XIII, the Popes in a series of penetrating documents, have been developing the Church’s teaching on the social and economic order . . . Several Jesuits, especially Germans, made unique contributions to this repository of ideas. Regarded by many as the father of modern Catholic social thought, was Heinrich Pesch, of Cologne. This prodigious scholar and author, who died in 1926, opponent of economic liberalism and advocate of what has been called Christian solidarism, built an integrated economic theory based on Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy . . . [Pesch] with the tool of the modern science of economics, erected on his social philosophy, an economic system which he elaborated in his monumental work of five volumes, Manual of the National Economy (1905-1923). Pesch was the link between Rerum Novarum of 1891 and Quadragesimo Anno of 1931 . . . Two other German Jesuits, Gustov Gundlach and Oswald von Nell-Breuning carried on Pesch’s school of thought with profundity of learning, and this they saw spread from Rome to penetrate other parts of the world. [28]* In Central America, most of the Jesuits who trained and educated my generation (students in the early 1980s) were born and raised under the religious and political persecution unleashed by the Spanish Civil War from 1936-1939, along with



*Ignacio Ochoa (second from left) at a Christian Base Communities meeting in Panama 1985*

those trained under the social reforms of the Mexican Revolution (1917-1938), and the Guatemalan Revolution (1944-1954). Many of these older colleagues witnessed the social consequences that impoverished Europe during World War II. This cohort of Jesuits, coming mostly from Spain and France, had been trained from the modern world orientation that produced all kinds of changes in



*Miguel D'Escoto and Ernesto Cardenal at a Christian Base Communities meeting in Nicaragua 1984*

European society. Historian Alain Woodrow discusses the diversity of situations in which Jesuits could be found living and working during the early part of the twentieth century: “Jesuits could be found equally at home as a Brahmin among the priestly caste of Hinduism in India, a mandarin in the imperial court of China, an astronomer in Italy, or a tutor in Germany.” [29]

Sociologist Edmond Vandermeersch

describes the situation this way: *Whether he is 35 years old or 60, the Jesuit in this country is a hospital orderly, in Paris or Marseilles, a taxi driver, an engineer, a driver of a steamroller for public roadworks, a country priest, a hospital or prison chaplain in Antananarivo, Marrakech, Amiens, or Nancy, a professor of literature or handicraft in a provincial college or technical school, a social counselor helping immigrant workers, a student of languages in Beijing, a catechist for the mentally retarded on a cargo ship . . .* [30] He notes that this life of community and solidarity led many Jesuits to become involved in union activities with their coworkers, in syndicates such as the CGT (Central Worker’s Guild). Those Jesuits who were card-carrying members of the Communist Party or who supported friendly relations with China, he observes, were also the ones to come to the aid of immigrant workers, renters’ associations or other organizations that promoted social justice, because they recognized the rights of the oppressed. [31] In the 1960s, Xavier Zubiri and Ignacio Ellacuría entered the theological scene with their praxis, a dialectic juncture that helped set the philosophical bases for Liberation Theology in Latin America. The philosopher Roberto Valdés Valle discusses the currents of thought in those years, and illuminates the theoretical bases examined by Zubiri and his favorite student, Ellacuría. To illustrate Ellacuría’s philosophical interests in Innsbruck from 1955-1963, he speaks of the debates at that time over the thinking considered modern: *As is well known, neo-Thomistic theory sought to renew Catholic Thomistic thought through a synthesis between the philosophy of Saint Thomas, the discoveries of science, and the philosophies of Kant and Heidegger. Among the most important figures of this movement were Cardinal Marcier (founder of the Lovain School) and Jesuit Marechal. In Spain, the most prominent*

*figure was Juan Zaragüeta, teacher of Zubiri . . . He sought a synthesis between Thomism and modernism. Clearly, what was sought was to repeat what Saint Thomas had done centuries before when he tried to combine his Christian beliefs and essential philosophical positions with Aristotelian thought . . . [Como es bien sabido, el neo-tomismo buscaba renovar el pensamiento católico tomista a través de una síntesis entre la filosofía de Santo Tomás, los descubrimientos de las ciencias y las filosofías de Kant y Heidegger. Entre las figuras más importantes de tal movimiento estaban el cardenal Marcier (fundador de la Escuela de Lovaina) y el jesuita Maréchal. En España, la figura más destacada fue Juan Zaragüeta, maestro de Zubiri . . . Lo que buscaba era una síntesis entre el tomismo y el modernismo. En definitiva, se trataba de repetir lo que siglos atrás había hecho Santo Tomás cuando buscó armonizar sus creencias cristianas y posturas filosóficas esenciales con el pensamiento de Aristóteles . . . ] [32]*

Valdés Valle considers it important to distinguish Ellacuría's philosophical contexts, given that, It would be a grave error not to remember that the neo-Thomistic movement of the 1950s was an advanced posture within a very conservative Church that for a long time had chosen to hide its head and attack the modern. *It would also be a mistake not to recognize the undeniable role that this movement played in the preparation of Vatican II. [Sería un grave error no recordar que el movimiento neo-tomista de los años cincuenta era una postura de avanzada en una Iglesia muy conservadora y que durante mucho tiempo había optado simplemente por esconder la cabeza y atacar lo moderno. Sería también no reconocer el innegable rol que este movimiento jugó en la preparación del Concilio Vaticano II.] [33]* For Ellacuría, it was Zubiri who stood out among the radical thinkers that synthesized Thomism and Modernism, demonstrating the limits of existentialism. Cardenal gives us a profile of Ellacuría, describing some of the traits of the young philosopher by means of a letter that he received from Quito from his professor, Aurelio Espinoza, when he was studying theology in Innsbruck, Austria in 1958. In this letter, Espinoza praises Ellacuría's theological studies at the most respected school of theology in Europe, but warns him not to become too "German" in his intellectual orientation: *I think this is a great opportunity for you, to be in a place where you can benefit from the German contributions to science and critical theory. But it would be unfortunate if you were so greatly subsumed by German thought, that you lost your individual spirit and serene confidence in your own aesthetic criteria and perspectives, which I don't believe we Latinos lack. [En concreto, yo considero que es una ventaja grandísima para Ud. el quedar en estado de aprovechar toda la aportación alemana a la ciencia y a la crítica, pero consideraría como una fatalidad si Ud. quedase tan subordinado a ella, que perdiese su libertad de espíritu y la serena confianza en su*

*propio criterio y en la perspectiva estética de la cual no creo que carezcamos los latinos.]* [34] We see in the academic report of his four years in Innsbruck that while he had superior intelligence, his behavior was considered mediocre: “Besides being highly intelligent, his character is potentially difficult. His spirit of critical judgment is obstinate and he is not open to others. He separates himself from the community with a small group over which he has a very strong influence.” [35] This persistent and independent character trait would be reflected in Ellacuría’s future work in Central America. Ellacuría was ordained as a priest in Innsbruck on July 26, 1961. A few months later, while visiting his family in Bilbao, Spain, he looked up the philosopher Xavier Zubiri. Ellacuría had written Zubiri various letters from Innsbruck expressing his admiration for his philosophical writings, and wanted to ask Zubiri if he could write his doctoral thesis on him, and if he would be willing to direct the thesis. Beginning with that meeting, Ellacuría established the Zubirian school of thought among his philosophy students in Central America, which, to this day, continues to grow in Latin American academic circles. As Whitfield observes: *The meeting was the beginning of a friendship that was to have an effect well beyond the death of Zubiri in 1983—or even that of Ellacuría six years later. In the University of Central America Philosophy students and Jesuit scholastics alike still follow a curriculum in which the influence of Zubirian thought can clearly be traced.* [36] Ellacuría returned to Central America with the task of finishing his doctoral dissertation and the intention of getting a reticent Zubiri to continue to publish articles and reflections. His thinking was contextualized by situations of political and ecclesiastical changes that impacted Latin America at the time. Although Zubiri resided in Madrid until his death on September 21, 1983, Ellacuría maintained a life-long intellectual relationship with him and made sure his mentor was kept up-to-date on the socioeconomic situation in Central America. Once the Second Vatican Council was declared in 1962-1965 and the Episcopal Conference in Medellín, Colombia in 1968, Ellacuría posed the need to move from philosophizing about politics to political philosophy—that is, a philosophy concerned with matters such as the State, the law, authority, war, and the right to rebel. The Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965 was an ecclesial schism with profound theological consequences within Catholic faith dogmas. Bangert explains that for Pope Paul VI, the Declaration on Religious Liberty was one of the most important texts of Vatican II. Filled with a sense of history and responsibility, it declared that twentieth century man had arrived at a dual state of personal and political self-consciousness. It echoed the liberal writings of John Courtney Murray in its realization that humans aspired to live in dignity and freedom under limited government. According to Bangert, *Murray clarified the links between*

*religious freedom and limited constitutional government as well as between freedom of the Church and freedom of the people. With a sensitivity to developments in history, he demonstrated the inadequacy of certain nineteenth-century concepts to answer the questions about religious freedom in the current age, and with a feel for the particular history of the United States, he enunciated the truth of American democracy's compatibility with Catholicism. His reflections were a milestone in the development of Catholic thought. Closely tied to the Church's attitude on religious freedom is her encouragement of the ecumenical spirit. In their ability to comprehend the theological positions of non-Catholics, two Jesuits, Augustine Cardinal Bea and, in the United States, Gustave Weigel, won great respect for the Church. And for years before the Council's stress on the dignity of man, in the United States, John La Farge pioneered for interracial justice. [ 37] While the Synod was in debates prior to the Second Vatican Council, Jesuits from the United States were already doing pastoral work in the Black ghettos of the U.S. [38] In the three large theological faculties under Jesuit administration at the time, the academic work was directed towards the training of Catholic priests and Lutheran, Presbyterian and Episcopal ministers. Jesuits collaborated with the theology programs at universities such as Harvard, the University of Chicago, and the University of California at Berkeley, bringing to the foreground serious reflection on human rights, women's rights, non-violence and liberation theology. [39] Jesuits at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. contributed data for reflection on nuclear arms to Bishops in the United States. Also, the Jesuit-run Kennedy Center of Ethics in Washington, D.C., became a center for original research on issues of bio-ethics. Meanwhile, in the Third World, Jesuits enmeshed themselves in work with indigenous peoples, peasants, and laborers, dedicating themselves to promoting justice and discovering other ways of thinking theologically about contemporary humanity. [40] The academic rigor and praxis of philosophical and political thought led to the theorizing of what is called "liberation theology," for which the Central American Jesuits bear a large responsibility, in terms of its creation and practice. [41] The long-range Christian strategy followed by many priests, brothers and nuns in Latin America, was to achieve a salvation or "liberation" that guaranteed self-sustained development that met the needs of the majority of the people, and not the consumerist needs of rich countries and local elites associated with those countries. [42] As Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff notes, the Christian Base Communities in Latin America took on exceptional importance, both ecclesiastically and politically: *This generally began with reading the Bible and proceeded to the creation of small base or basic ecclesial communities (comunidades eclesiales de base). Initially, such a community served to deepen the faith of its members,**

to prepare the liturgy, the sacraments, and the life of prayer. At a more advanced stage, these members begin to help each other. As they become better organized and reflect more deeply, they come to the realization that the problems they encounter have a structural character. Their marginalization is seen as a consequence of elitist organization, private ownership, that is, of the very socioeconomic structure of the capitalist system. Thus, the question of politics arises and the desire for liberation is set in a concrete and historical context. The community . . . [seeks] a liberation that has economic, political and cultural dimensions. [43] However, a polarization existed between the official Church in Rome and the popular church of Latin America. This polarization was evident in Nicaragua during the



*Jorge Sarsanedas (second from left) at a Christian Base Communities meeting in Panama, 1985*

Sandinista decade of 1979-1989, where the Jesuit University of Central America (UCA Nicaragua) opted to work with the poor, forming various kinds of cooperatives and participating in the training of technicians for government projects, especially agrarian projects. Backed by the social doctrines of Vatican II and the documents of Medellín and Puebla, the Jesuits found themselves enmeshed in the clash of a civil war rooted in the structures of economic exploitation and the

domination of U.S. foreign policy. The Jesuits of the UCA in Nicaragua, like those of the UCA in El Salvador, were accused by the conservative elites of the region of being Marxists. [44] Woodrow relates that during the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, the Jesuit Superior General, Father Pedro Arrupe, responded to a question regarding the attitude of the Jesuits, Marxism, and violence in Latin America in the following way: *It is true that revolutionary violence can be legitimate, as Paul VI states in his encyclical Populorum Progressio: 'In the case of evident and prolonged tyranny which would violate the fundamental rights of the human person and attack the common good of the country.' These are the words of the Holy Father, not of the revolutionary Fr. Arrupe! But it is equally true—not only according to the Gospel and to the Church, but also to experience—that violence gives birth to new forms of violence which are even worse . . . [S]ome hold that certain elements of the Marxist analysis are useful for examining our society. This does not mean defending the Marxist ideology, but studying its positive elements, which may exist in other ideologies and religions.* [45] For the Jesuits of Central America, theological reflection needed to include the root causes of the economic and political

problems in the region. The methodological vision from a human perspective reverted to the use of Marxist dialectical materialism to explain class struggle. And although, for the Jesuits, Marxism was not a complete explanation, they felt that the foreign policy of the United States, with its anti-communist campaign in Central America, covered up the injustices and abuses of the most fundamental rights of men and women. The poverty throughout Central America was seen by the liberation theologians as a social sin, caused by the economic policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and approved by the national elites and military. The Reagan-Bush-Kissinger administration, entrenched in Central America in the 1980s, [46] encouraged the conservative elites of El Salvador in their hatred of the Jesuits of the UCA. [47] The campaign of



*Jose María Andrés at a Christian Base Communities meeting in Panama, 1986*

misinformation orchestrated and funded by the United States against the “ideologues” of the Central American social movements, as the Jesuits of the UCA were labeled, achieved its objective. Robert Royal puts this in perspective, analyzing the murder of Monsignor Romero and the relationship of the defamatory campaigns to the assassination of the Jesuits at the UCA in 1989: *During the protracted guerilla warfare of the late 1970s and 1980s, religious figures in El Salvador were subjected to various forms of repression and intimidation, supposedly because they were playing into the hands, wittingly or unwittingly, of communism. The Cold War was entering its final phases with various proxy wars being fought between the US and the USSR on several continents. El Salvador was one place where to speak in favor of peace or social reform was regarded by the government as tantamount to calling for Marxist revolution . . . In the overheated social conflict that gripped El Salvador in 1980s, defense of the poor and helpless, as in Romero’s case, was often identified as commitment to the guerrillas or Marxist analysis. The Jesuits often came under the same criticism. But their position was more nuanced than it was given credit for being at the time. They denounced violence and always preferred negotiation and dialogue. But dialogue itself was, for some in El Salvador, tantamount to capitulation.* [48] Meanwhile, the attitude of the Pope has been ambiguous regarding the Church’s

social doctrine and the political participation of religious leaders in Central America. When asked about the visit of John Paul II to Central America in 1983, Monsignor Thomas Balduino of Brazil responded: *This trip has been frustrating. The Pope hasn't gone beyond his traditional circles and sources of information. He has not listened to the voice of the people. [Regarding John Paul II's warnings against the Church's becoming political] There's great ambiguity from the moment it is thought that the Church shouldn't mix itself up in politics . . . It's accused of being political when it identifies with the oppressed. [Este viaje ha sido una frustración. 'El Papa no ha salido del círculo habitual de sus informaciones. No ha escuchado la voz del pueblo . . . [A propósito de las advertencias de Juan Pablo II en contra del compromiso político de la Iglesia] Hay ambigüedad desde el momento en que se cree que la Iglesia no debe mezclarse en política. Y, se le acusa de politización cuando se acerca a los oprimidos. [49]* In



*Peter-Hans Kolvenbach and Ignacio Ellacuría, San Salvador 1988*

Nicaragua, John Paul II denounced the absurdity of a Church of the Poor, ironically in the Central American country where most of the poor had embraced the praxis of liberation theology, and where most of the clergy worked on behalf of a Church more closely linked to the reality of the poor. For John Paul II, this Church of the Poor should not be involved in politics and utilize the struggles of the oppressed in disobedience to

the local Catholic hierarchy. Thus, the highest leader of the Catholic Church chose not to see the “defilements” denounced by the Central American Jesuits, such as the thousands of people “disappeared” in Guatemala or the thousands executed by the army in El Salvador. [50] From the perspective of Zubiri and Ellacuría, these historical events have made the Central American societies advance towards structural categories of historical realities. The ideological tensions constantly in motion in the ecclesial context of Central America, according to them, would be better understood from analogies to the biological and psycho-organic realities of humans. In the specific case of Salvadoran reality, they argued, any pastoral action or applied social theory should be contextualized within the categories of the transmission of the tradente (tradition and experience accumulated over generations). That is, the



parádosis (the giving and offering) that is not only the transmission of intrinsic genetic, biological elements of the Salvadorans, but also a transmission of possibilities of environmental and structural changes that break the enslaving patterns that prevent freedom. Historical dynamism is not seen by Zubiri and Ellacuría as social dynamism, but rather a dynamism of the possible.

## CHAPTER III

### THE JESUITS AND EL SALVADOR'S CIVIL WAR



*Central American Jesuit Community; (seated left to right) Noé Vargas, Carlos Lima and Cesar Jerez; (standing left to right) Otto Herrera, Hugo Gudiel, Juan H. Pico, Rodolfo Rubio and Ignacio Ochoa, Nicaragua 1983*

Ignacio Ellacuría believed that popular social movements, as well as the guerrilla army in El Salvador, fulfilled the revolutionary role of mass conscientiousness-raising among the poor. From passive subjects, ordinary people became active agents participating in national social transformations. Within the UCA, in Nicaragua as well as in El Salvador, Jesuits were fulfilling the historical role of helping to transform the educational systems and create students with the attitudes and aptitudes to

appropriate their future in the face of world economic development. The following citation from Ellacuría illustrates how he thought of his academic project in El Salvador:

*The university should embody itself intellectually among the poor to do science on behalf of those who don't have science, be the learned voice for those who don't have a voice, the intellectual backing for those who, in their very reality, hold truth and reason, but lack the intellectual arguments that justify and legitimize their truth and reason. [La universidad debe encarnarse entre los pobres intelectualmente para ser ciencia de los que no tienen ciencia, la voz ilustrada de los que no tienen voz, el respaldo intelectual de los que en su realidad misma tienen la verdad y la razón, aunque sea a veces a modo de despojo, pero no cuentan con las razones académicas que justifiquen y legitimen su verdad y su razón.] [51]*

For Ellacuría, researching the truth and denouncing unjust structures were the lance point of his editorials and political analyses. The function of the university, he maintained, should be in service to critical thought about Salvadoran reality and the social forces that impacted it. He maintained that history is not just a string of accumulated events but, above all, a creation of possibilities in which liberty can emerge; ultimately it is this liberty that makes possible human life and history. In Central America, what was happening on ecclesiastical and political levels since the Second Vatican Council between 1962-1965, the Bishops' Conference in Medellín in 1968, and the Bishop's Conference in Puebla in 1979, was the discovery of the possibility of a dialogue between Marxist theory and contemporary reality. [52] That is to say, historical and dialectical materialism, which Ellacuría intuited as the liberating function of philosophy. Working at the UCA in El Salvador and seeing Salvadorans as agents of their history through a process of consciousness-raising gave Ellacuría an opening to theological and philosophical reflection that had an impact on theological thinking and projects across Latin America. Between 1967 and 1979, Ellacuría established the Center for Theological Reflection at the UCA, destined to impact theological thinking for



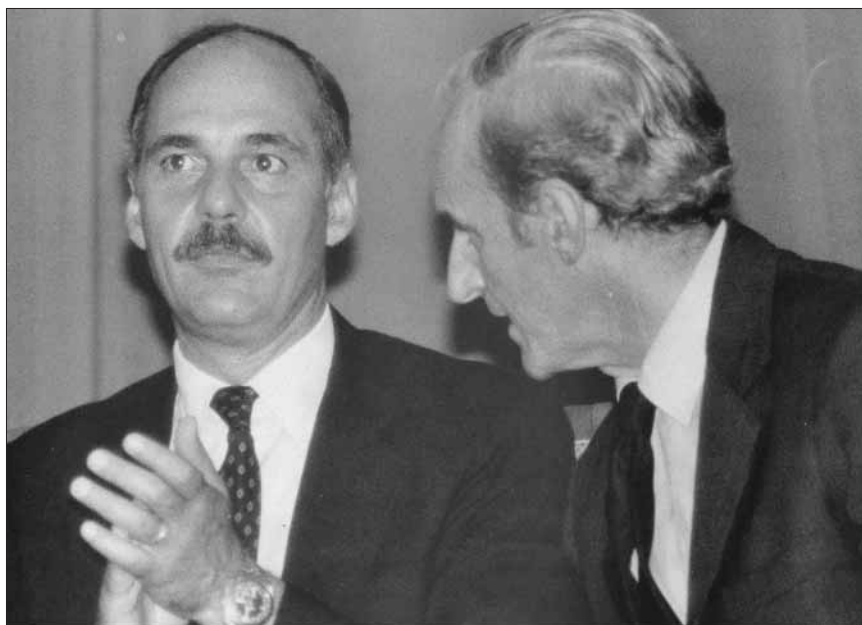
Nicaragua Elections 1984. (1) Rodolfo Rubio, (2) Carlos Lima, (3) Victoriano Castillo, (4) Ignacio Ochoa

Jesuits and non-Jesuits around the world. In the same period, he edited the *Revista de Estudios Centroamericanos* (ECA), a prominent journal of Central American social and economic analysis, which gradually became the voice of the UCA political line. In 1977, under the direction of Juan Ramón Moreno Pardo, S. J., the Jesuits also published *Revista Diakonia*, a journal of Latin American theology, particularly, liberation theology, which continues to be one of the most respected theological journals in Latin America today. On July 29, 1976, when, after years of bitter struggle by peasant groups, the Salvadoran government reluctantly established agrarian reform through the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Reform (ISTA), the Catholic Church and the Salvadoran State began a confrontation that would last over three months. Ellacuría had chosen to be on the side of the majority of Salvadorans, and from the University he confronted the national oligarchy to carry out land reform. However, under pressure from the powerful landowners of ANEP (National Association of Private Business) and FARO (Eastern Region Agrarian Business Front), the government backed away from the land reform decree and accused several popular groups such as FECCAS (Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants) and UTC (Union of Rural Workers) of inciting revolution, along with the Catholic Church. Ellacuría responded with a biting public denunciation in an ECA editorial entitled, “A sus órdenes mi capital,” [53] whose title, “At your orders, my capital (\$),” was a sardonic spoof on the common subordinate reply, “At your orders, my captain.” This editorial cost the UCA the subsidy it received from the national budget. In addition to withstanding a widespread smear campaign against them, [54] the Jesuits subsequently suffered five bomb explosions within the University. [55] For the extreme right in El Salvador, the Society of Jesus was a guerilla front. [56] On January 5, 1977, the government expelled two Jesuits from the country. On March 12, 1977, Salvadoran Jesuit Rutilio Grande, parish priest of Aguilares, was assassinated. Grande was a land reform activist who helped coordinate pastoral work by giving classes on popular theology and adult literacy, using Paulo Freire’s methods of community organization. He recognized the importance of the Church’s accompaniment of the poor, noting that the identity of Salvadorans was, among other things, their religiosity. The religious, he maintained, was as important as the economic, the political and the social. [57] After the murder of Grande, the Salvadoran army continued to detain, harass and deport Jesuits and other religious personnel, and in May of 1977, radio announcements and thousands of pamphlets dropped over the capital by military helicopters, proclaimed, “Be a Patriot, Kill a Priest.” [58] In response to their growing critics, Ellacuría published a six-part newspaper series in June of 1977 called, “The Jesuits in the Presence of the Salvadoran People,” a detailed

description of the Society's history and work in El Salvador. In it, he wrote: *We do not know the reasons for which they have waged their fierce battles against the Jesuits. Judging from the attacks, we Jesuits have always been liars, sectarian and two-faced. We are very clever at manipulating people and institutions with an eye to achieving our hidden goals. We are hypocrites. We are Marxists (that is, monsters of the most dreadful sort). In summary, what can be gleaned from this collection of insults and calumnies is that we Jesuits are the most terrible plague to descend on this country. And the remedy, as with all plagues, is to exterminate it. It is clear that the Church is changing, and it is clear that the Jesuits, as part of the Church, have changed. These changes have been small, but effective. The fundamental aspect of the change consists of the decision to serve the country's majority.* [59] The same year, several more Jesuits were expelled from the country, some of whom went on to join popular revolutionary forces of Central America such as the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) in Guatemala, or the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua. Others joined the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL-28) or the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) in El Salvador, which together with the Popular Revolutionary Block (BPR) would eventually become the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). [60] In 1979, Ellacuría became Rector of the UCA, amidst turbulent political times and the beginning of a full-blown civil war between the guerrilla forces and the Salvadoran army. [61] On March 24, 1980, after a chain of assassinations of Salvadoran social movement leaders and members of the Christian Base Communities, the Armed Forces ended the life of the highest leader of the Salvadoran Church, Archbishop Arnulfo Romero. [62] Romero had been an outspoken critic of the country's structural injustices and, in particular, the military's violence against civilian populations. After his assassination, the growing persecution and massacre of civilian populations and the internal scattering of refugees terrorized the entire country, leading thousands to attempt to flee. [63] One of the most horrendous massacres of the year occurred on May 14, 1980, in a coordinated effort between the armies of El Salvador and Honduras, at the Sumpul River on the border between the two countries. As hundreds of Salvadoran peasants tried to escape the violence in the east of the country by crossing the Sumpul River to seek refuge in Honduras, the respective armies ambushed them on each side of the river. In mid river, men, women, children and the elderly were gunned down until no one was left standing. Although many bodies were washed downstream by the currents, never to be found, some six hundred cadavers were retrieved from the river. [64] Throughout the 1980s, there were numerous attacks on church workers [65] and institutions. As Berryman notes, "Churches and convents were machine gunned, sometimes during services; offices were searched;

bombs were set off . . . lay activists were picked up, tortured and murdered; and death threats became routine.” [66]

The years from 1980 to 1989 brought increasingly greater obstacles to dialogue between the government and the guerrillas. The bloodshed was repeatedly condemned by the Jesuits at the UCA, who demanded a political and negotiated settlement to the armed conflict. Although Ellacuría was continually accused of being a “leftist” by extremist members of the Salvadoran right, he maintained frequent communication and influence with members of both the left and the right, as had his predecessor at the UCA, Rector Roman Mayorga, [68] Like Mayorga, Ellacuría’s efforts reflected the Jesuits’ belief that social reforms would only come about in El Salvador if key sectors of the Armed Forces and right-wing political leaders were on board. As social elites, some top members of the Armed Forces and the ARENA government had studied at the UCA, [69] El Salvador’s most prestigious university, and had had Ellacuría and the other Jesuits as their professors. Some of these leaders relied on the Jesuits’ input in the formulation of their policies. [70] Even President Alfredo Cristiani, head of the ultra-conservative ARENA government, had frequent discussions with Ellacuría about the country’s political situation. [71] Phillip Berryman explains, “Although people in the military and the right regarded Ignacio Ellacuría as deeply involved with the FMLN – indeed, as their “brains” – since the early 1980s, he had maintained an independent position, both sympathetic to and critical of, the left.” [72] This mediating position was recognized in news coverage of the Jesuits, such as the following excerpt from a Boston Globe article: “Father Ellacuría was an intelligent and influential critic of U.S. policy and a clear voice in favor of a negotiated end to 10 years of civil war . . . He maintained contacts in



both the government and army rebel leaders, an association that infuriated right-wing extremists.” [73] An article in the Toronto Star noted: “Responsible conservative opponents may have resented these Jesuit intellectuals, but many recognized that the priests served as a conduit for dialogue

*Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani and Ignacio Ellacuría, San Salvador 1989*

between the government and the rebels, and acted as a moderating influence.” [74] In 1985, a space at the UCA called Cátedra de la Realidad Nacional (“Pulpit” or “Lecture Hall” on the National Reality) was established for national political debate. It was open to the public, and various politicians, labor leaders, academics, religious, cultural groups and students regularly gathered to express their views on the armed conflict and proposals for national dialogue. [75] This process was soon televised and broadcast on nationwide radio, and political candidates from all sides participated. The space also served for Ellacuría and the UCA Jesuits to promote their proposal of a “third force” to encourage dialogue among the Army, the government, the FMLN, and civil society. This position rejected the militaristic objectives of both the FMLN and the government, and demanded a third political force that sought to transform the country’s structural system through a reform of capitalism. The intention was to resolve the war by creating a more just economy, and the hope was that true dialogue would help open up positions bogged down in political extremism from the Left as well as the Right. [76] For Ellacuría, the concept of the third force was not just a political-ideological current midway between the army and the FMLN, but was founded on the alienation that the civil society had suffered for nine years from both sides in the struggle for power. He felt that reestablishing the voice of the organized popular sector (labor unions, student organizations, teachers, cultural organizations, day laborers, Christian base communities, etc.) in the dialogue proceedings had to be a priority in order for political leaders to resolve the war. The third force took into account the social force of the thousands of Salvadoran refugees living in the United Nations refugee camps in Colomoncagua and Mesa Grande, Honduras. The political consciousness of these refugees had grown strong during nine years in the camps, with help from international volunteers who provided them with education and training. In spite of having lost everything in the war, the refugees were willing to return and reintegrate into the Salvadoran economy, and the strength and determination of this enormous refugee sector generated solidarity around the world. [77] Meanwhile, Salvadoran refugees in the United States, as Segundo Montes shows in his sociological studies, were another crucial sector of the population that deserved to have a voice in the national dialogue, argued the Jesuits. The remittances they sent to their families in El Salvador represented the country’s largest source of foreign exchange revenue. [78] The UCA Jesuits contended that the internally and externally displaced, union leaders, groups representing factory workers, students and popular organizations, all had to be represented and invited to play a strong role in seeing their interests met, as part of the peace negotiations. For Ellacuría, no existing political party, not even the FMLN, was serving this cause. [79] While sympathetic to their

struggles for democratization, he criticized the tendency of the left vanguard to utilize popular organizations for their own political ends—a criticism which the Salvadoran left did not initially welcome. [80] The role that the UCA Jesuits played within Salvadoran society was key to establishing the foundations for dialogue between the government and the FMLN. They maintained that the only means to resolve the armed conflict in El Salvador was through negotiation. Amidst this call, on August 7, 1987, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias convoked the other Central American presidents to establish a regional agreement that would serve to develop this dialogue. This document, called Esquipulas II (after the town in Guatemala where the talks had been initiated), established a commitment to create a program of reconciliation, pacification, and democratization in each country in the region. [81] The aim of this effort was not to end conflicts, but to shift from armed to political struggle. [82] To work towards reconciliation, each President promised to dialogue with opposition groups and to declare an amnesty for the Contras in Nicaragua



*Peter-Hans Kolvenbach and Central American Jesuit Community, San Salvador 1988*

and the guerrillas in Guatemala and El Salvador, under the oversight of an International Verification Commission: *[The] International Verification and Follow-up Commission, [was] composed of Foreign Ministers of the Contadora and Support Groups and of the Central American countries, as well as the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*



and the OAS. The move for international verification led eventually to the establishment by the Security Council on November 7, 1989, in resolution 644 (1989), of an on-site mechanism, the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA), the first United Nations peace keeping operation in the western hemisphere. ONUCA's primary mandate was to patrol the borders of the five countries in order to monitor their compliance with the security commitments made in the Esquipulas II Agreement. [83] The agreement declared that for there to be peace in Central America, a cease-fire was necessary; that no country would use its national territory to attack or destabilize its neighbors; and that each would promote political pluralism and respect for human rights. Both on an informal level, through conversations with regional government and rebel leaders, and in his published political analyses, Ellacuría had an influence on the shaping of Esquipulas II. Its emphasis on negotiations, rather than armed conflict, and on respect for pluralism and human rights reflected his concept of "a third force" for achieving peace. Ellacuría insisted that in El Salvador, both the FMLN and the government would need to make serious changes. The government and military would have to stop the repression and violence against opposition parties and engage in true economic and social reform. (At this time, violence against labor and popular organizations had skyrocketed, with sixty-four labor union leaders murdered, captured or "disappeared" in the first four months of 1988.) [84] Meanwhile, he maintained, the FMLN would need to recognize that, though it was fighting for democracy, it was not truly democratic. Its militarism and dogmatic ideology would have to change, and the organization would need to demonstrate that it could concretely contribute to resolving El Salvador's economic and social problems. [85] In the spring of 1988, ECA editorials questioned whether the Sandinista government in Nicaragua was actually capable of achieving a viable economy, even without war, and asked whether the FMLN had sufficiently reflected on the Nicaraguan experience to learn from the Sandinista's mistakes. Ellacuría maintained that the left needed to come to a more realistic sense of what was actually possible and what was impossible, taking into account the emerging new relationship between the superpowers. [86] For years, Ellacuría's position pleased neither side. The right accused him of being a communist sympathizer, while many on the left considered his views to be heretical to their dreams of a military victory. [87] Nonetheless, he continued to push both sides to rethink their positions, and noted hopeful signs of progress. In the spring of 1989, he observed that FMLN leader Joaquín Villalobos had admitted that the "crisis of socialism" called into question previous "certainties," and that "the notion of one-party society is doomed." [88] He was pleased that the FMLN appeared more willing to judge policies, not on the basis of ideology, but on

their ability to contribute to solving El Salvador's problems. [89] At the same time, Ellacuría saw a number of signs that ARENA was more willing to change. In 1989, he published an article discussing the advances and challenges of the first 100 days of the ARENA government. In his analysis, Ellacuría distinguished the civil line of President Alfredo Cristiani from the militaristic line of the head of the army, Roberto D'Abuisson, noting that the Armed Forces showed no signs of a willingness to change. [90] Taking steps towards negotiation, both ARENA and the FMLN had offered in September of 1989 to meet on a regular basis for dialogue. However, at their meeting in Costa Rica in October of 1989, FMLN delegates concluded that the ARENA government was not serious, pointing to a series of ongoing violent attacks against unions and other popular forces. [91] These attacks culminated in an October 31 bomb explosion that destroyed the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers' headquarters and killed 10 labor leaders. In response, the FMLN launched a massive offensive attack on November 11, 1989. [92] The magnitude and intensity of this offensive took the Salvadoran military by surprise, as rebel forces were unusually well-equipped, in terms of ammunition, food and other supplies. [93] Many of the top Salvadoran military and government leaders were out of the country, vacationing or attending business meetings in Guatemala, the United States, and elsewhere. [94] FMLN troops were militarily winning and occupying large areas of the national territory. On Radio Venceremos, on the morning of November 13, Commander Ana Guadalupe Martínez announced that the FMLN had gained military control of the provinces of Chalatenango, Morazan, La Union, San Vicente, and La Paz. By November 15, they had taken the provinces of Zacatecoluca, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Usulután, La Libertad and San Miguel, representing a majority of the national territory. [95] Some 3,000 combatants had entered the capital, establishing rebel strongholds in working class neighborhoods around the city. [96] According to a "State-of-the-War" address on the first 100 hours of the Offensive, FMLN Commander Nidia Díaz announced that the rebels occupied 16 city neighborhoods. [97] The Armed Forces was in a state of disarray during the first days of the FMLN action, and rumors circulated that the army could lose power. [98] Given this context, upper echelon officials of the army decided it was necessary to do something drastic in an attempt to regain the upper hand. According to several Salvadoran military officials who were later interviewed by investigators, the decision to kill the UCA Jesuits was made at a meeting of top military leaders on the evening of November 15. [99] One source who was present later reported that Colonel Guillermo Alfredo Benavides, the Director of the Salvadoran Military Academy, stated that "This is a chance to go after [FMLN sympathizers]. I have the UCA in my sector." In response, General Juan Rafael

Bustillo, Commander of the Salvadoran Air Force, (an entity long associated with human rights violations), reportedly answered, “Well then, you know what you have to do.” [100] However, when the fighting started, the UCA Jesuits chose not to go underground, reasoning that it would be irrational for the military to risk the international repercussions of direct violence against them. [101] They refused to be intimidated by the right-wing death threats repeatedly made against them on call-in radio shows broadcast over the government monopolized airwaves. [102] On the evening of November 13, when army troops, claiming to be looking for weapons, arrived to search the Jesuit quarters (just a half hour after Ellacuría had returned to the UCA from a trip to Spain), Ellacuría decried the intrusion and the soldier’s lack of a search warrant, but nonetheless invited them to return the next day to search the whole campus, if they wished.

## CHAPTER IV

### THREE NARRATIVES ABOUT THE MASSACRE

#### Desolate a Few Hours After the Massacre of the Jesuits



*Celina Ramos*

The heat arrived before the sun on November 16, 1989. Five days into the Offensive, I found myself working with a paramedic team that the FMLN had installed at the Jesuit residence “La Sultana.” In spite of the intensity of the armed conflict, it was a morning just like any other. It started with a new thought for the day that was forgotten almost instantly with the first physical movement required. Going to the bathroom, thinking about other people, thinking about the dead, about my last conversations with some of them. Thinking about the wounded who left the clinic bandaged, healed more by their own exhilaration for having risen up in this war than by any treatments our two doctors administered. Now memory obliges those of us who were there to remember that unexpected morning. Unexpected morning for all of the Jesuits in Central America. Unexpected morning for the families of Elba, Celina, and Celina’s fiancé. Unexpected morning for the families of Ellacuría, Lolo, Moreno Pardo, Nacho, Montes and Amando. Unexpected morning for all of us. Obdulio, Elba Ramos’ husband and Celina’s father, waited until six o’clock before walking from the front entrance to the inner patio of the university’s new Jesuit residence. The hours from 1:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. were hours of mental torture for him. The imaginary specter of horror, “el susto,” as we say in Central America, remained with him, tormenting him until his death four and a half years later. The temporary watch station set up at the main entrance to the residence was his refuge during the first five days of the war. He was a gardener for the university and had the privilege of being the watchman for the UCA Jesuit residence because his wife, Elba, was the cook for the philosophy and theology students at the Jesuit residence in Antigua Guatemala. [103] Obdulio was there at the massacre; he felt it in every fiber of his being as he listened to the screams intermixed with gunfire. The little roof of the watch station at the main entrance to the Jesuits’ newly opened residence hall sheltered the first direct witness of the November 16



*Elba Ramos*

massacre at the UCA. When the clock struck 6:00 a.m., Obdulio walked towards the patio, gasping and without hope of finding his wife and daughter alive. He had heard everything. He later told us that the first thing he saw when he ventured forth were the priests' bodies laying in the entry patio and he could go no further. He could only imagine the rest. He ran back to the main gate and out onto Albert Einstein Avenue. Pushed by fear, he approached the nearest Jesuit residence. [104]

At 6:15 a.m. he pounded furiously at the door; the hammering sound announced death to those inside. One of the Jesuits, still sleepy, peered cautiously through the peephole to see that it was Obdulio banging. He opened up immediately, looked up and down the street and pulled him inside by the arm, like one smuggling someone clandestinely. Our companion greeted him with, "Good morning!," wondering why Obdulio was so pale. Obdulio hesitated for a moment. He didn't have time to say anything, not even to look into the eyes of his employers who were waiting to hear what he had to say, alarmed by his pounding so early in the morning. He entered the house, unable to speak clearly, pale and confused. Choking on his words he blurted out, "The priests have been killed!" That's all he could say. He fainted. The Jesuits dragged him from the door to close it completely, afraid the Armed Forces would come by and spray machine gun fire. The group hesitated for a moment, not sure if it was yet time for the curfew to be lifted - the 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew that had been imposed by the government as of November 12. [105] While one of us brought water to try to revive him, someone from the bathroom who heard the whole thing told us to go to all the Jesuit residences and give them the bad news. Obdulio revived after we held his head back and fanned him with a copy of *Vida Nueva* magazine. We sat him on a couch in the living room and he told us again: "The priests have been killed! Oh God! Oh God!" For him, that phrase said it all, and his uncontrolled sobbing minutes later told us the rest of what he was incapable of communicating in that first half hour after curfew was lifted. He wanted us to see the truth for ourselves, with our own eyes. The army had also killed his wife Elba and his daughter Celina. Some of the Jesuits got in their cars to share the news with the other residences nearby. Others retreated to their rooms, confused, unable to believe what they had heard. In disbelief, some turned on their short-wave radios to confirm the news, as was the daily custom of many Jesuits while they shaved or bathed. The telephone began to ring and did not stop for the rest of the day. From that moment, with more urgency than ever, each of us had to practice the Jesuit principle and foundation, to walk under the two standards, to

try to discern among the life choices before us, ad majorem dei gloriam. These meditations, so much a part of every Jesuit, were expressed in different ways. Each one of us walked a different path, as we moved from contemplation to action that November 16th morning in 1989. Each encounter with one another, each step we took, was a coming and going of signs and symbols that we translated into messages, each of us responding in our individual way to the same act and the same war. By the end of the day, I felt that I understood everything and, at the same time, understood nothing; sans arme ni baggage.

### **Under the Joshua Tree: Our Farewell to Elba and Celina**

As if at a wake for people we did not know, a group of Jesuits together with some journalists we knew and some close friends, started gathering under a small Joshua tree. We were only ten steps from where the bodies lay, talking about our respective experiences during the first five days of war. That was how we learned of Jesuits who were lost or had not been heard from since the Armed Forces cordoned off areas throughout the city. Jesuits in the Chacra neighborhood were stuck in an area under guerrilla control. Only a few of the Santa Tecla group were able to join us that morning because transportation to the university was so limited. Jesuits at San José College remained there, except for a few who showed up in the afternoon. Jesuits from the San Antonio Abad community were able to join us, thanks to Dick Howard, Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), and an international volunteer who transported many of them to the UCA. José María Tojeira, the Provincial Superior in Central America, had awakened Dick with a phone call, telling him what had happened and asking him to be the one to give the news to Monsignor Arturo Rivera Damas and Monsignor Gregorio Rosa Chávez. [106] Dick went in search of the archbishop and his vicar so that they would go and see what had happened at the UCA residence and so that, as high-ranking members of the Catholic clergy, they would make an official statement about the assassination of the Jesuits. In exchanging stories, we learned that Héctor, another JRS volunteer, had not been heard from since Sunday, November 12, when he was in the community of Zacamil. That Sunday, Dick and Héctor had left in separate cars to deliver food and medical equipment to the parish aid center. Héctor successfully got across the military checkpoint, but Dick Howard was detained and interrogated. The army took everything he had and told him not to return there because it was “infested with guerrillas.” [107] Meanwhile, Héctor disappeared, car and all. The next day, the car showed up,

burned and full of bullet holes. It was believed that Héctor had been burned together with other bodies the army dumped just a few blocks from the parish. Héctor was one of a group of Salvadorans living in the U. S., who, aware of the revolutionary fighting going on in his native country, answered the call put out by FMLN's political-diplomatic organizations to recruit personnel for the final offensive. In an interview I had with Edward Dunn, O.F.M., co-founding member of the Sanctuary Movement and director of the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrants' Rights (ICIR) of Southern California, he stated that at least 7,000 Salvadorans were recruited in the United States to assist in the 1989 Offensive. Héctor's family had belonged to the grassroots Christian Base Communities in El Salvador and continued to be active in the Church community of the Mission Dolores Parish in East Los Angeles. Members of the JRS contacted Héctor's family in California on November 29 to give them the bad news. Each story that we shared took us back to the days before the Offensive. When we ran through the list of the rest of the members in residence at the UCA, we realized that Rodolfo Cardenal was not there. Someone from Santa Tecla told us that Cardenal had left the house after the army search on November 13. We knew that another housemate, Jon Sobrino, was attending a theological conference in Thailand and wondered if he had been contacted yet with the news. Someone said he would take care of it later. Of the five Jesuit houses in the Antiguo Cuscatlán and Jardines de Guadalupe area, several companions had not been heard from since Saturday, November 11th. Among them were Noé Vargas, Isafías Martínez and Oscar Torres. Someone confirmed that Jean Marie Louis, a Haitian Jesuit, had been relocated from San Antonio Abad to Santa Tecla the night of November 12, because the national radio network (Radio Cuscatlán) announced that there were Cubans collaborating with the FMLN guerrillas. [108] Martín Gómez was likewise moved from La Chacra to Santa Tecla because he could not disguise his Nicaraguan accent. Support for the FMLN by Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union was an accusation the Salvadoran government, like the US government, constantly promoted via the mass media during the war, despite the fact that the uprising had fully indigenous roots, as political scientist Peter Smith notes. [109] From just a dozen Jesuits, our numbers had more than doubled by 7:00 a.m. and about that time a few journalists and some of our friends had found out about the massacre. Around 7:45 a.m., José María Tojeira, Provincial Superior for the Society of Jesus in Central America; Richard Howard of the JRS, and Monsignor Rivera, Archbishop of San Salvador and his vicar, Monsignor Gregorio Rosa Chávez appeared at the scene of the crime from the Calle Cantábrico residence located behind the university chapel. We all began to form a circle around our fallen brothers. Chema Tojeira began showing Monsignor Rivera and Monsignor Rosa Chávez

what had happened. Dick, however, came up to us to say he couldn't bring himself go into the room to see Elba and Celina. We all treated each other in a brotherly manner, embracing one another, not knowing what the final outcome of the Offensive would be or what would happen to each of us. We understood the reactions of those who approached us but were unable to look at our companions lying on the ground. Mely Porras, friend and confidante to some of the Jesuits, had known each of the victims for many years. She joined us and began to sob uncontrollably. She took us back to Managua, reminding us of stories of when we worked together on the UCA's Christian Life Community pastoral program (CVX) in Managua. Next to the CVX office was the Diakonía Theological Reflection Center, directed by Juan Ramón Moreno Pardo, with whom we shared many enjoyable moments discussing Canon Law and morality. Mely shared memories about Lolo, Amando and Montes that few of us Jesuits had heard before. Someone mentioned that Lucía Barrera, the woman who cleaned the university rectory and the Provincial Curia offices, was at the residence on Cantábrico Street. Lucía had been an eyewitness to the crime. A few hours after the curfew was lifted, she was taken to the Vatican Embassy in El Salvador for protection. Lucía had been unable to return to her home in Soyapango the afternoon before because of the heavy fighting going on between the Armed Forces and the guerrillas. This happened to many of the UCA's employees. Starting on Monday, November 13, the university administration let the workers off at 3:30 p.m. so they could get home before the 6:00 p.m. curfew. The intensity of the fighting in Soyapango was so fierce that Lucía had to ask Father Ellacuría for a place to spend her first night away from her family. Ellacuría himself gave Lucía blankets and two pillows so she could make herself comfortable in the Monsignor Romero Chapel at the university. [110] Lucía left the office and had some time to enjoy the pastoral center's chapel. Original pencil drawings by the artist, Roberto Huezo, had just been hung on the chapel walls. Each drawing depicted a scene from the history of El Salvador's tortured and disappeared citizens. A few days before the Offensive, Carmen Alvarez, from the Department of Literature, and Mely Porras, from the Department of Languages, both professors at the UCA, had shown me the drawings and told me that they spoke to them in a very personal way, especially to Carmen. They were the only images she had of the destiny that may have befallen her son after his disappearance at the beginning of the 1980s. Mely showed me the altarpieces created by Fernando Llorca, vivid adornments of the Brown Virgin of Latin America, Monsignor Romero, and a dove symbolic of both the Holy Spirit and the peace so longed for by the Salvadoran people. Behind the chapel's altar there was a small, private room with a special sanctuary for prayer. Lucía had time to pray alone. Ellacuría came down from the residence to the chapel



about 5:30 p.m to invite Lucía to sleep in one of the vacant guest rooms in the new residence hall. But out of modesty, and grateful for a place to lie down and spend the night, Lucía insisted on staying in the chapel. This corner was an extremely important first lead in the Jesuit legal case. Her testimony was key to unraveling the truth about what took place at dawn on November 16. [111] Elba and Celina also ended up asking for refuge, going to Father Segundo Montes, Director Superior of the UCA community, to seek a safe place to spend the night. Segundo personally made sure the guest room was prepared for them and let everyone know they would be staying there that night. The day before, Elba had been happy and proud to introduce us to her daughter, Celina. She told us that Celina had been trapped in Lourdes since Saturday, November 11th when the Offensive began. Celina was on her way from the town of Sonsonate to San Salvador, but because the fighting between the guerrillas and the Armed Forces was so intense, public transportation was not running on a regular basis and some buses never arrived at their destination. Around 12:00 p.m. that Saturday, Celina called to explain the situation to her mother, who was in the middle of preparing lunch for the theology students. While Elba talked on the phone with Celina, Isaías Martínez came into the kitchen. Elba told Isaías about her daughter’s situation in Lourdes, and Isaías suggested Celina get in touch with the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart, who had a house there, to ask if she could spend the night. [112] We did not learn about this until that Wednesday, November 15, when we were eating lunch at the theology house. We sat around the table with Elba, Celina and our Jesuit colleagues Rodolfo Rubio, Pedro Garcia, Jorge Urquiza, José Francisco (Chepe Chico) García and José (Chepe) Ideáquez. Seated at other tables in the room were Juan Carlos Núñez, Adan Cuadra, Luis Carlos (Lucho) Toro and other student guests from the UCA who I did not know. When Elba was telling us about what had happened to Celina, I mentioned that Nacho Martin-Baró, Victoriano Castillo and I had gone to Jayaque on Sunday, November 12 to celebrate mass. On our way back from Jayaque we were stopped in Lourdes by a military contingent from the Atlacatl battalion. From the car we could make out one of the sisters from the Oblates of the Sacred Heart, to whom we waved good-bye. Celina jumped into the conversation and told us she remembered seeing a gray jeep drive by on Sunday and that one of the nuns had said something like, “Well, at least the Jesuits got through the military blockade,” [113] but at the time Celina had no idea that it was Vico, Nacho and me. Elba went on to tell us that her daughter was planning to get married that next Saturday, November 18. Surprised, we all responded in chorus, “What! A wedding?” Elba burst out laughing at our reaction, and half jokingly with Celina, she shot us a quick look, winked, then looked her daughter in the eye, “It’s just that the Front

(FMLN) has decided that Saturday, November 18 is not a good time for my daughter to get married, so I guess she'll just have to wait, right, dear?" Celina was not happy with her mother's remark because it showed that her mother was not entirely in favor of the idea of her marrying. Elba argued that Celina was still very young. When Celina looked at her mother forlornly, Elba hugged her and said tenderly, "No sweetheart, I'm not opposed to you getting married, I would just like you to wait a few years, to finish school, because at sixteen you don't have very much experience, isn't that right, boys?" [114] she asked directing her gaze towards us as if she hoped we would second her opinion. We assented, but knew better than to continue talking about the wedding because Elba would take advantage of the opportunity to lecture her daughter and look to us for clerical approval. This trick is used a lot by people in the countryside when they are around a priest, brother, or nun and want to admonish a loved one. Lunchtime conversation then turned to the pastoral work Vico and I had been doing in Santa María Chiquimula, Guatemala and the work we had started in the Jayaque parish three years before. Elba wanted to know more about what Jesuit students did in other Central American countries, after they left El Salvador. Vico and I had brought back postcards and some little gifts from Guatemala for some of the families in Jayaque. I brought Elba a coin purse made of typical Guatemalan fabric in which she could keep her change when she shopped. She told me affectionately that the little gift would solve her problem of so many loose coins rolling around her kitchen drawer. She added that her kitchen was now decorated with a number of chapín [115] items because the month before, Lucho Toro, another Jesuit student, had brought her a pair of Guatemalan kitchen mitts to protect her hands when handling hot things on the stove. According to Guatemalan custom, you cannot give a gift to someone in the presence of another unless you give that person something too. That being the case, I gave a woven wool bag from Guatemala to Celina. To express her pleasure, Celina told us about a friend from Santa Tecla at the José Damián Villacorta Institute who always had chapín items with her - bags, change purses, and colorful cloth bracelets. "From now on, I'll tell her that I have friends in Guatemala too, just to make her jealous," Celina said, smiling. Elba thanked me on behalf of her daughter and herself and asked to see the postcards. I took a packet of assorted photos and post cards out of my backpack and everyone gathered around in a circle to look at them. Celina stood next to her mother so they could look at each picture together and both began to ask questions about life in the Guatemalan countryside. Celina asked how rural women in Guatemala got married because she had heard that they still had old-fashioned customs in Guatemala and that women were sold or traded for cattle. So I told them about some of the traditions in Santa María Chiquimula

where Vico and I had been working, about asking for the bride’s hand and other marriage rituals. Celina was wide-eyed with surprise, like someone listening to a grandparent telling a tale. After lunch she played in the living room with Sultán, a German shepherd that Juan Carlos Núñez looked after. At around 4:30 p.m., we heard Elba and Celina saying goodbye to some of our friends. They walked through the dining room and left the house, little plastic bags stuffed full of their belongings in their hands. We were standing by the side of the house and asked them where they were going, since we had assumed that they would be sleeping there. We knew it was too late to be leaving the house and using urban transportation at that hour. Elba answered that they would be spending the night at the “Doctors” house, a word everybody used to refer to Ellacuría, Sobrino, Montes, and Martín-Baró. While they weren’t the only Jesuits with Ph.D.s, the title fit because they were Deans, Rector, and Vice Rector of the university. Rodolfo and



*Obdulio stares in disbelief at his slain wife Elba and daughter Celina, November 16, 1989*

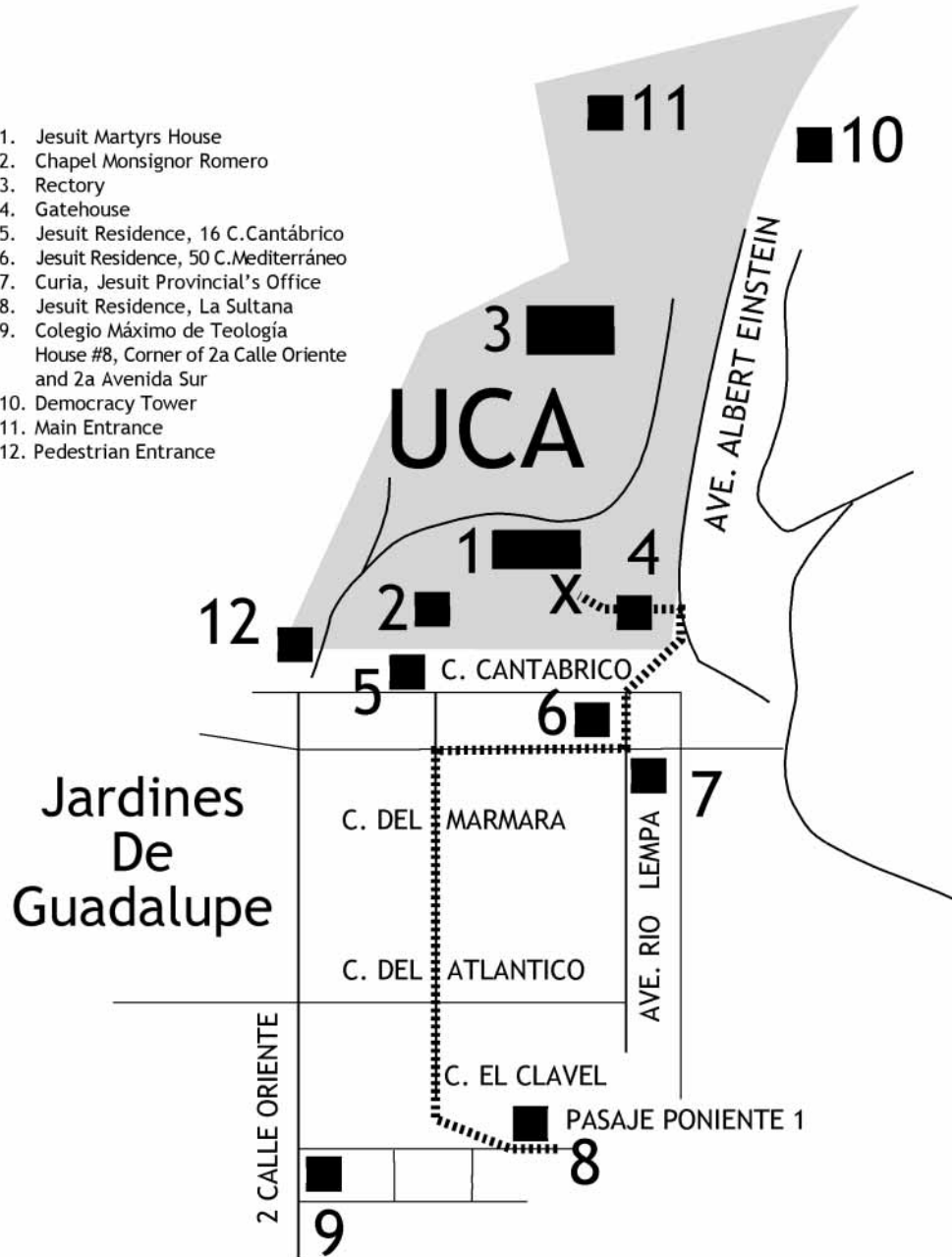
Pedro invited Elba and Celina to spend the night with us at the Sultana Residence, but Elba declined. Rodolfo added jokingly, just to tease Elba, that she was moving up in society because now she would not even accept an invitation to stay at our house. (Elba had a private room at the theology students' house, but she used it only to store her personal things or take afternoon naps, since she resided in her own home with her husband and daughter.) When the magnitude of the Offensive became clear to her on Saturday, November 11, she made arrangements with the Superior to stay at one of the houses on Mediterranean Street or Cantábrico Street. That was why, instead of staying at the theology house or going with us to the Sultana residence, Elba decided to go to the "Doctors'" house that evening. She told us frankly that she was afraid to stay with us because we students were 'mixed up with the guerrillas.'" Now that her daughter Celina had gotten out of Lourdes safe and sound just that morning, Elba said that she preferred to stay with the "Doctors" where it was calmer and safer, rather than in place that might be dangerous, like our house. [116] With that, we said our good-byes and wished them a good night.

### **After the Massacre: Status Liminaris**

Every one of us reached deep into our Jesuit principle and foundation in the face of what we witnessed that morning after Obdulio brought us the news. Carlos Manuel Alvarez and Rolando Alvarado went to notify all the different Jesuit houses. A few Jesuits accompanied Obdulio to the scene of the crime by way of Albert Einstein Boulevard. Others went there by walking down Cantábrico Street. At 6:30 a.m., Rodolfo Rubio, Pedro Garcia, Jorge Urquiza, Vico Castillo, Chepe Chico García and I walked as a group towards the UCA. On our way, we stopped by the house where the JRS volunteers lived to give them the news. John Gugliano, a former-Jesuit from the United States, was the only one home. In a jumble of reactions in Spanish and English, he opened the door and ushered us into the living room. We started to fill him in on the news as he got dressed. On the dining room table were some branches of marijuana that were drying out, emitting the telltale odor of burned rush mats. There were also cigarette butts and half-drunk bottles of wine and rum, left over from a week before when we celebrated the birthday of one of the volunteers. John wanted to respond to the news, but was also anxious to tell us about what happened to him the night before on his arrival to San Salvador from Guarjila, Chalatenango. [117] He had been frightened to death by the open warfare in the city, but news of the Jesuit massacre stunned him. He grabbed his pants, put on his boots without

# UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA (UCA) JARDINES DE GUADALUPE

1. Jesuit Martyrs House
2. Chapel Monsignor Romero
3. Rector's Office
4. Gatehouse
5. Jesuit Residence, 16 C. Cantábrico
6. Jesuit Residence, 50 C. Mediterráneo
7. Curia, Jesuit Provincial's Office
8. Jesuit Residence, La Sultana
9. Colegio Máximo de Teología House #8, Corner of 2a Calle Oriente and 2a Avenida Sur
10. Democracy Tower
11. Main Entrance
12. Pedestrian Entrance



tying them, and with shirttails hanging out, went with us, wanting to know more. We walked as a group, spanning the width of the road leading to the UCA. Halfway there, we encountered a seemingly endless line of guerrillas stationed along the sidewalk. They could tell we were not ordinary people like themselves because we walked with a sense of ownership through the Jardines de Guadalupe neighborhood, without regard for the military operatives surrounding us. A woman with an AK-47 machine gun slung on her back approached us. Chepe Chico stepped forward to tell her the news about our brothers killed in the early morning hours at the UCA. With a look of deep respect, she gave a command signal to all the guerrilla troops ahead of us, indicating who we were. Three blocks later, before turning onto Albert Einstein Boulevard, we came across a convoy of Armed Forces troops. They said nothing to us. As we got closer to the entrance of the university residence, we came across other military trucks full of soldiers coming down the South Highway towards Albert Einstein Boulevard on their way to Jardines de Guadalupe. They just looked at us and asked us nothing. We were the first ones to arrive at the scene of the crime. We could see the windows of the Towers of Democracy at very close range, full of bullet holes from top to bottom. We got to the entrance of the residence and saw that the door of the watch station was wide open. This was where Obdulio had spent the night. As we walked the 25 meters up the steep dirt path towards the entrance of the residence, we began to discern the bodies sprawled on the patio. Suddenly, through my entire body, I had the feeling I was not part of a group, but alone. I could feel that each of us was walking around the bodies by himself, trying to figure out the identity of each of our assassinated friends. Chepe Chico came to my side, almost asking rather than stating, "This is Ellacu, this is Nacho, here's Amando, and here is poor Montes." I corrected him: Nacho was the one he said was Amando, and Montes was the one he said was Ellacuría. It took me several minutes to identify the deformed and bloody faces and bodies that, as the international news media would later recount, "had the brains yanked out of their heads." [118] I walked around them, from head to foot, trying to find the angle from which to best identify them. They were all lying face down, but due to the weight of their bodies, their faces left indented profiles in the dirt. The left hand of each one had purposely been pressed into a fist raised above their shoulders to denote them as communists, as extremists in the Armed Forces and the government had always accused them of being. Nacho Martín-Baró was the only one wearing pants, shoes and a jersey. I identified him because he was wearing the same clothes he had been wearing on Sunday the 12th when we were together in Jayaque. Ellacuría was wearing his brown bathrobe and his gabardine slippers. Segundo Montes was wearing his white, short-pant pajamas. Amando López

wore a dark bathrobe. All had slippers on their feet except Nacho Martín-Baró, who wore the black tennis shoes that he always wore when doing pastoral work in Jayaque. I had to make a special mental effort to identify them again



*Jesuit Massacre, November 16, 1989*

after I focused on how the skin was pulling away from their faces, as if they were wearing warped rubber masks that resembled themselves. Rodolfo and Pedro approached me to ask if I had seen Elba and Celina yet. I shook my head with an expression of I can't keep back the tears anymore and started to follow the bloody path of a body that had been dragged from outside to Jon Sobrino's room inside the house. It was the body of Juan Ramón Moreno Pardo. From the swirl of blood that opened in the form of a spiral, it was evident that he had been dragged hurriedly. I walked further. Lying by the door of the next two rooms, just a rag now, was the body of Lolo López. I had to retrace my steps to get out of the house. As I did, I ran into Father Ricardo Falla. In a whispered voice, he asked me to go back through the rooms with him, one at a time, to note what each person had on their desks, what they had read the night before. With the eyes of an anthropologist, he started to see the different kinds of eyeglasses our companions

had left on the desks in their rooms, now riddled with bullets and smoldering. We began to look at book titles and at the trash that remained in the burned trash cans. We examined the small objects that could tell us to which one of the Jesuits they belonged. Next to Moreno Pardo, on the floor, was a book by Jürgen Moltman. On Ellacuría's desk was a collection of Ortega y Gasset, Heidegger, El Mío Cid, El Quijote and Cinco Lecciones by Zubiri. He used to tell us in class, "Only a few books are necessary to understand the human condition." There were wooden racquets for Basque handball in the rooms of Nacho, Ellacuría, Amando and Montes. I recognized them because the four of them used to come to our house on Wednesdays to play. We used to play two on two, on teams with Ramiro Martínez, Carlos Lima, Otto Herrera and me. After going through all the rooms, we became aware of the procession of Jesuits and friends that had begun to congregate outside. Some journalists showed up with cameras and tape recorders. María Julia Hernández and her team from the Archbishop's Office of Legal Tutelage and Human Rights were already outside, bending over the bodies as they carried out their forensic work alongside the judge. We continued searching the rooms until we came upon Elba and Celina, still partially embracing one another. There, next to them, was Obdulio, in a fetal position, squeezing his head inside his crossed arms. He was hugging himself with pain, crying with sorrow. When we approached to embrace him, he fainted. A group of Jesuits and some nearby women took him out of the room. The scent from a rue plant brought by one of the neighbors helped revive him. Later on, he repeated his brief account to us. Even then, he said nothing about Elba and Celina, but spoke of the "barbarous" things that had been done to "the Fathers." The hallways smelled of rue plant mixed with fresh blood, as I stood looking at Elba and Celina. Their backs and legs were filled with bullet holes. Elba died embracing her daughter, still trying to protect her from the bullets.



## CHAPTER V

### LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS



*Funeral of Febe Elizabeth, assassinated at the October 31, 1989 FENASTRAS massacre. “Febe Elizabeth ¡vive!”*

I sat on the grass where my dead friends lay, for just a moment, but it felt like an eternity. I was taken back to my childhood, with an image of traveling by train with my grandfather at that age when children ask so many questions. When I rode on the train I liked to sit in the opposite direction of travel to look out the window at everything being left

behind, asking my grandfather about each landscape, each color, each one of nature’s movements that raised an infinity of questions for me. The silence of death is a cold place where emotions are shut down - where the truth is nothingness, emptiness. It is that state when a halo that has been tied up, held prisoner, is suddenly set free, untying itself from everything, both inside and out. Vico came up and patted me on the shoulder. He asked me if I would help him pick up some of what was left of Amando Lopez’s brain strewn on the ground next to his smashed head, [119] to take back to the Sultana house. The grisly reality of his request made me answer him with a question: why? He responded, “To bury it ourselves in a symbolic ceremony this evening.” [120] At first the idea seemed strange, but as I listened to Vico talk about what Amando had meant to him, that he was the spiritual director who best understood the Jesuit students, I realized that Vico wanted to honor his memory and the rest of our fallen friends in a special way. When others were not paying attention, we walked closer to the bodies. Most of the people around were examining the destroyed rooms, trying to avoid looking directly at the gruesome sight of the bodies. María Julia



*The FENASTRAS Massacre October 31, 1989*

Hernandez and her team from the Archbishop's Human Rights Office were carrying out their forensic work. Vico pulled out a small plastic bag, and placing it like a glove on his hand, picked up one of the pieces of flesh with bits of brain and bone that had been scattered on the ground from Amando's face. He placed the bag into a larger plastic bag and put this in the pocket of his brown jacket and we walked toward the shade of the Joshua tree. No one saw us. We stood for a while under the Joshua tree sharing reflections and memories with other Jesuits and friends who were there. All the Jesuits present gathered around 1:00 p.m. for a lunch meeting called by our Provincial Director, José María Tojeira, at 50 Mediterranean Street. At the meeting, we divided into smaller groups of six to discuss various issues including the collaborative drafting with the Archbishop of a response document, preparations for the burial mass, and how we were going to regroup for safety. From each smaller group, came practical questions about the liturgy and funeral preparations we would need to conduct over the coming week. Committees were formed to attend to the friends and families of the Jesuits, and to plan the lodging arrangements for them and other Jesuits who would be arriving from other parts of the world. Santiago Nájera (Santi) and I were asked to do the preparations for



*Barrio Zacamil destroyed by Salvadoran Airforce during the FMLN Final Offensive, November 19, 1989*

the liturgy. I was in charge of preparing the songs and the chorus for the masses on Saturday, November 18, and Sunday, November 19, while Santi would organize the logistical details for the national clergy and bishops who would be present at the masses. Chema Tojeira, Monsignor Rivera, Monsignor Rosa Chávez and the Apostolic Nuncio believed that those who assassinated our colleagues were the same people who murdered Archbishop Romero. We discussed safety precautions we would need to take to avoid more Jesuit deaths. All of us residing in Jesuit residences were asked to stay at the homes of friends during the upcoming days. We made a collective list of contact telephone numbers and places to meet in case of an emergency. During the meeting, President Alfredo Cristiani came to the house, accompanied by his wife, to offer their condolences. Speaking with Chema Tojeira, Monsignor Rivera y Monsignor Rosa Chavez, he denied that it had been the Armed Forces, but affirmed that it was the ultra-right that had committed the crime. [121] The meeting closed with the drafting of the following official statement expressing the Society of Jesus' position with respect to the massacre:

*Statement by the Society of Jesus:* [122]

*In response to the murder of six Jesuit priests: Ignacio Ellacuría, Segundo Montes, Ignacio Martín-Baro, Joaquín López, Juan Ramón Moreno and Amando López, and to the murder of our employee: Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina Mariseth Ramos, the Society of Jesus issues the following statement to the public:*

First: This crime was carried out with excessive brutality and should be denounced, investigated rapidly, and punished with the full weight of the law. The Society of Jesus does not want revenge, but does seek justice. The Society is convinced that if a crime such as this one goes unpunished, peace will never be possible in El Salvador. Peace can only be built on justice.

Second: The death of the six Jesuits and the two people who perished with them are added to the 70,000 deaths that this war, with its origins in social injustice, has caused. We Jesuits want a peace built on the rights of the poor. Death has united them to so many poor Salvadorans who were murdered while they peacefully sought liberation. We have no doubt that the reason for this murder was our priests' peaceful commitment to justice. The truth of our Archbishop's statement that the same hatred that killed Monsignor Romero massacred our brothers is abundantly clear to us.

Third: We demand that the Government of the Republic carry out an investigation that is not only exhaustive, but swift, and thorough. The fact that the area in which the killing took place was, in the hours previous to it, heavily militarized during the curfew, and the fact that the act of the massacre lasted almost a half an hour, leads us to believe that enough evidence must have been left to clear this up quickly. If the results of this investigation are slow in coming, as has happened in other cases, the Society of Jesus reserves the right to draw its own conclusions from the data that is gathered.

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Fourth: We do not want our brothers' sacrifice to be in vain. We are convinced that only by stopping the war, a halt to all types of repressions, and a political settlement to the conflicts negotiated through dialogue can offer ways out for our troubled country. The Jesuits who were murdered worked wholeheartedly, actively collaborating for peace with justice, negotiated through dialogue, built with respect for the rights and dignity of the poorest among us. Without a doubt, their death will sow the seed of new commitments on the horizon of peace for this country.

Fifth: The Society of Jesus continues to pray for all those who hate us, and who through their insults and false accusations brought about this horrific crime that shocks us today. We pray too for the hands of the executioners,

*“who know not what they do.”*

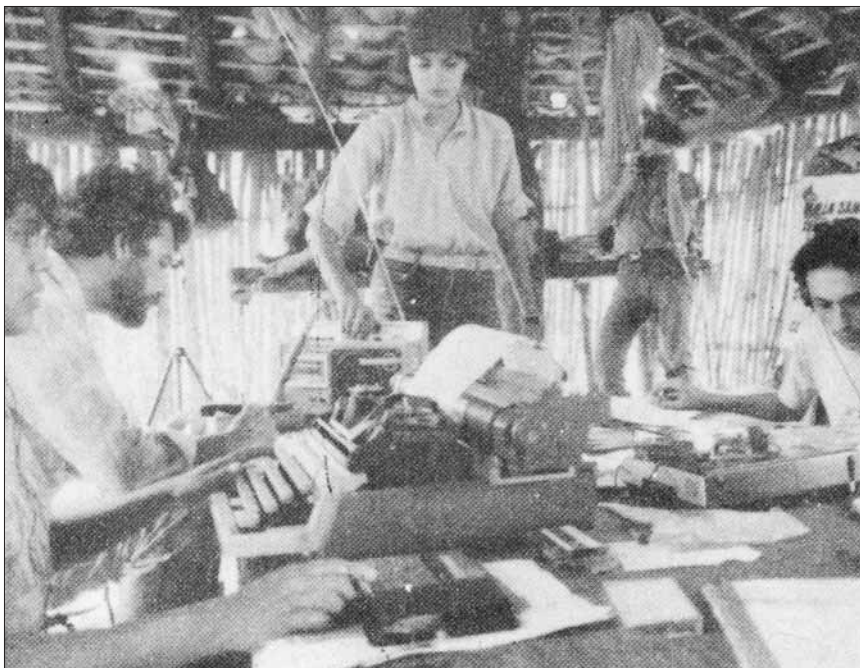
*Sixth: Our eight brothers and sisters “washed their garments and bleached them in the blood of the lamb” as did Monsignor Romero, Rutilio Grande, Octavio Ortiz, so many other priests and above all, those unknown Christians, who in their poverty and humility gave their lives in solidarity with those who suffer most in our country. May these Salvadoran martyrs and saints, so many in number, stand by all of us in our commitment so that El Salvador, ‘might have life, and have it abundantly.’*

*San Salvador, November 16, 1989*

*361st anniversary of Saint Roque Gonzalez de Santa Cruz of Paraguay and Saints Alonso Rodríguez and Juan del Castillo of Spain, Jesuit missionaries to the Guaranies who were martyred on November 16, 1628 in Paraguay.*

Each of us went our own way after the meeting. Vico and I went back to the Sultana house. When we got there, most of the Jesuits: Anibal Meza, Isaías Martínez, Pedro García, Jorge Urquiza, Rodolfo Rubio, Eliud Martínez, Chepe Chico García and a few of the women guerrillas who were there formed a circle in the yard for our ceremony. We shared memories about the lives of each one of our Jesuit companions and about Elba and Celina. That initial question of why? returned to torture my mind. Even though we were all familiar with the praxis of the work of each of our murdered companions, the clarity of the response became more and more evident the more we listened to one another, as we tried to console ourselves during our ceremony that afternoon. The Jesuits were murdered because they were a thorn in the side of an unjust system, and because the Armed Forces placed the blame for the FMLN Offensive on those at the UCA who, with their cutting criticisms, pointed to the structural failings of El Salvador’s economic system. We told stories of Amando López and his kindness and we held a symbolic burial with his remains in the middle of the yard. After the ceremony, Pedro García asked us all if we were going to stay there that night. Everyone said no. Jorge Urquiza and Rodolfo Rubio had found a place for the three of us to stay among friends. A married couple, Don Lito and Doña Mercedes, who were happy to assist us in our time of need, prepared an elaborate dinner for us, but we weren’t hungry. We were only sad. Other companions stayed in other homes that night.

Rodolfo and I shared the same room, and I continued recording the Radio Venceremos transmissions that evening, as I had done each day since the onset of the Offensive. Radio Venceremos was the official voice of the FMLN. During the Offensive, their daily broadcasts kept up the troops' morale and kept the Salvadoran people informed as to what was going on. The broadcast team showed great professionalism as they communicated, step by step, the war's progress. Radio Venceremos programming on the night of November 16, was the channel's first public bulletin about the Jesuit massacre. Carlos Henriquez Consalvi, aka "Santiago," a commentator who went by the assumed name of "Maravilla," and a female announcer whose alias was "Mariposa," were the revolutionary broadcasters most familiar to the Salvadoran people. Nine consecutive years of transmission put Radio Venceremos in first place



*Radio Venceremos: (left to right) Morena, Santiago, Mariana Will and Marvin.*

among international correspondents for developments in national news and progress on the war. Because of its early connections to a German journalist, Radio Venceremos had its place on the short-wave dial to provide news about El Salvador to the international community. In the same way that short-wave Radio BBC in London came on the

underground scene during World War II, opposing Nazi Germany, Radio Venceremos was extremely important in El Salvador for its political opposition to the military dictatorship and the neo-nazi parties of the right. During the Offensive, called "Febe Elizabeth Vive!" (in honor of one of the labor leaders killed in the FENASTRAS bombing), the guerrilla motto, "Al tope y punto!" ("To the finish!"), exclaimed by the Radio Venceremos team, encouraged the rebel troops to advance on the Army bases in San Salvador and into the heart of the city. Through the radio, the FMLN demonstrated its military strength and political capacity, helping to convince the United States that the war could not be won through armed conflict, no matter how much military aid the U.S. provided to the Salvadoran Army.

In the face of the Jesuit massacre, committed by an Army sustained with over \$4 billion in military-economic support from the United States, [123] the U.S. was eventually obliged to allow the United Nations to facilitate dialogue and negotiation to bring an end to the war through diplomatic, rather than military, means. In the home of Don Lito and Doña Mercedes on the evening of November 16th, I taped the broadcasts of “Santiago,” “Maravilla” and “Mariposa,” reporting the latest FMLN military actions while offering news on the international reactions to the massacre. They urged all Salvadorans to listen to the FMLN top commanders who would be making their comments in the next couple of hours, denying allegations from right-wing groups and the Armed Forces that the FMLN had committed the murders. On hearing these preliminary denials, we felt a sense of relief that erased forever the doubts that had circulated that morning. From that moment onward, we maintained confidence in our decision to help the guerrillas by allowing them to use our house as a clinic. The following are excerpts from Radio Venceremos broadcasts that show reactions by the national and international communities immediately after the Jesuit massacre: [124]

*In the face of the sinister massacre of the Jesuits that occurred today, Thursday, November 16, 1989, the FMLN informs the Salvadoran people the following:*

*First: That the massacre of the Jesuit priests Ignacio Ellacuría, Segundo Montes, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Joaquín López, Amando López, Juan Ramón Moreno and of Mrs. Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina Ramos, was executed by the death squads of the Armed Forces. This Thursday at dawn, a group of approximately 30 men dressed in green, violently entered the priests’ housing unit. These men riddled the priests with large-caliber bullets. The bodies of the priests were then dragged toward the patio where they received a coup de grâce that completely destroyed their brain matter.*

*Second: That this absurd massacre as well as all the bombings against the populated areas of San Salvador and San Miguel have been ordered by Alfredo Cristiani and the high-ranking officers of the Armed Forces and are part of a counterinsurgency plan to wear out the political opposition and create chaos and terror among the civil population. Death threats against Ignacio Ellacuría were made on the national channel of the Armed Forces the night of November 15th. Security forces conducted searches in the premises belonging to the opposition, looking for the*

leaders in order to kill them. This is the same scheme that they carried out in 1979 and 1980 when they murdered Monsignor Romero, massacred the leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, murdered the rector of the national university Dr. Doctor Félix Ulloa, and murdered tens of thousands of Salvadorans.

Third: That there is no doubt that the regime of ARENA and the Armed Forces is a Fascist beast that is fatally injured. Thus, we call out to the popular democratic and religious leaders to voice their denunciation and condemnation of this ill-fated massacre. We ask them to call out to the international community to isolate the Fascist regime of Alfredo Cristiani.

Fourth: To the officers of the Armed Forces who knew the priest Ellacuría—whose trajectory in negotiations, research, and scientific analysis of reality was well recognized by the officers themselves—we ask you to take a dignified determination not to tarnish your conscience. There have always been elements in the Armed Forces who do not want to sink low with the criminals. We hold out our hands to them so that together we can save the country, and they can also save part of the institution of the Armed Forces. Alfredo Cristiani and the Armed Forces murdered the Jesuit priests. The FMLN condemns this crime and unites in the sorrow of the Salvadoran people who absurdly lose some of the most highly esteemed intellectuals in our country. Their intelligence and sensitivity were tirelessly at the service of change and progress for our society. Their work will be everlasting; Fascist maneuvers will never eliminate it. To all our leaders, combatants, militants, and all our Salvadoran people in general, we call upon you to fight in the fields. The only way to respond to this indignant massacre is the action we are taking now. Let's overthrow ARENA and the Tandona! Our country is counting on our strength, on our decisiveness, and we will not fail it!

General Headquarters of FMLN

Shafick Jorge Handal      Salvador Sánchez Cerén

Joaquín Villalobos      Eduardo Sancho

Francisco Jovel



The next day, Radio Venceremos began its news programming with various international cables condemning the massacre. The following are some of the worldwide reactions: [126]

*This is Radio Venceremos, the voice of the laborer, the peasant, and the guerrilla, transmitting from San Salvador, El Salvador, today, Friday, November 17, 1989, at 6:00 a.m. throughout the national territory.*

- *The murder of six Jesuits was condemned today by the Popular Christian Social Movement (MPCS) of San Salvador. They asked the international community and diplomatic forces of El Salvador to intervene, with their good will, so that the government and the Armed Forces adopt realistic positions and accept the immediate agreement of ceasefire with the guerrillas.*

- *The Supreme Curia of the Society of Jesus, based in Rome, condemned in a press release the murder of the six Jesuits, among the barbaric violence that has already claimed many other victims within the civilian population of El Salvador. They hope and plead that the blood of the six Jesuits was not shed in vain.*

- *In other international wires, the press points out that the Spanish Jesuit Luis de Sebastián, ex vice-rector of UCA, today in Madrid accused the Salvadoran Army of the murder of Father Ellacuría and five other Jesuits. 'The Salvadoran Army and those who support this army, which is the United States government, killed them,' de Sebastián stated in a telephone conversation from the northeast of Spain . . . [The Jesuits] had impressive academic careers; they were extraordinary men, brave, generous, and with a great heart,' he said. He also said that this regime will represent a tremendous loss for all of humanity. The Society of Jesus lost one of its most distinguished religious and authentic groups. These were the comments expressed by the Jesuit Luis de Sebastián, ex Vice-Rector of UCA.*

- *We continue reading the foreign press cables. Yesterday, a U. S. congressman asked his colleagues to support a bill that would suspend all military assistance to the Salvadoran government and would promote a negotiated solution to the civil war of the country. According to a letter that circulated in Congress, the North American military assistance only contributes to the conflict by sustaining the illusion that this war of attrition will resolve the disputes*

*that are mainly political, social, and economic.*

- *Christopher Dodd, Democratic Senator from Connecticut, stated that his government cannot continue to pay for these atrocities, referring to the murder of the six Jesuits, including the Rector of UCA.*

- *The National Council of Churches [ . . . ] is exerting pressure on the Salvadoran government to stop the attacks against the civilian population and demanded that Mr. [George] Bush support a negotiated solution to the conflict, with the agreement not to regionalize the conflict.*

- *The North American Archbishop, Michael Sing, also called for the suspension of all military assistance to El Salvador. He appealed to the Salvadoran government to respect the lives of civilians. He asked to cease the bombings of the civilian population.*

- *FENASTRAS condemned today the genocide practiced by the government and Army of Alfredo Cristiani against the civilian population. It also demanded the prosecution of those responsible for the spiral of violence in the country . . . and of the bombings of the civilian population during these days . . . that since the 12th have generated hundreds of victims in battles; hundreds of dead and injured left displaced without a place to live . . . They hold the government responsible for the bloody attempted murder against the Labor Federation last October 31 and the murder yesterday of six Jesuit priests. At the same time, they demand that the regime find those responsible for the crime and that they be punished according to the law.*

- *Humberto Centeno of the Salvadoran Workers' Union (UNTS) called for the formation of a professional government comprised of the democratic forces of the country, including the insurrection, given that the current ultra-right regime has fallen into illegitimacy . . . The opposition parties should participate, along with the popular movement, in this provisional regime . . . Alfredo Cristiani suffers an institutional rupture, since the insurgent Offensive and widespread social disobedience have paralyzed the country . . . Centeno requested, on behalf of the main Central Union, a cease fire in order to give way to peace negotiations, under observation by the United Nations and the Organization of American States. With regard to the murder yesterday of six Jesuit priests and two civilians, the*

union member admonished the high command of the Armed Forces and Mr. Roberto D'Abuisson, [whom] Father Ellacuria called "anti-democrats," criticisms that the fascists did not tolerate . . . Centeno considered that the UNTS's call for a general strike to protest the indiscriminate bombings carried out by the Armed Forces in densely populated zones in the capital and the east part of the country has been a success, indicating that it was effective by 70%.

- Fidel Chávez Mena, Secretary General of the Salvadoran Christian Democratic Party, blamed the ultra-right sectors that are interested in obstructing the peace process and considered them guilty of the murder yesterday of six Jesuit lives . . . [Chávez Mena] who is now president of the Christian Democratic Party (DC) in America, lamented that the Jesuit priests were murdered only for the crime of telling the truth, of being a scientific and academic voice in this country. The Rector and Vice-Rector of UCA, Ignacio Ellacuría y Ignacio Martín-Baró were murdered in the early hours of [Thursday, November 16], along with three more priests of Spanish origin and one Salvadoran, by 30 individuals dressed in military uniforms, according to a witness. The circumstances under which the crime was committed, the time of curfew and the heavy military surveillance that existed around the university and [Jesuit] residence, and the threats from the right wing that they received recently, make it obvious to conclude that these murders were done by the ultra-right. Chávez Mena considered that this could mark the beginning of a selective murder campaign against political and labor leaders. He finally said that DC Party has offered its good will to stop these confrontations; thus, since yesterday he initiated contact with President Cristiani and persons from other political parties. He also said that he is very concerned about the intense bombing by the Air Force in heavily populated regions. .

- The BBC's service to Latin America informs us that Joao Baena Soares, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, has stated that he will send a peace mission to El Salvador. Baena Soares will travel tomorrow to El Salvador to hold a dialogue and propose a ceasefire in the areas of conflict, as well as assist the victims of the violence. Baena Soares and his closest collaborators will meet with authorities from the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. The trip is a result of an invitation extended by the government of El Salvador, according to the resolution declared by the OEA Assembly, which entrusted Baena Soares and three OEA members with the mission just hours after the murder of the Jesuits. .

• *The Archbishop of San Salvador, Monsignor Arturo Rivera y Damas, announced that he has offered to mediate between both sides, thus answering the call made by Pope John Paul II. Today he informed the national and international media that the guerrillas have accepted this mediation offer. He also said that he had already communicated with President Cristiani, who answered that he accepted Monsignor's offer, but that he still had to talk with his cabinet and staff to coordinate the mechanisms that would be taken to arrive at this possible dialogue.*

• *A report has been published at the United Nations regarding the situation of Human Rights in El Salvador. The report, prepared by the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, states that the government forces or individuals linked to them continue to carry out numerous summary executions. The guerrillas have also carried out executions and exhorted peasants in some of the combat zones. On the official [governmental] side, humiliation, torture, and sexual abuse of prisoners are common, and the harassment of religious, humanitarian, and union organizations has increased. The report expresses confidence that President Cristiani has serious intentions of improving the situation of Human Rights. [However] in the place where a real impact on the Salvadoran conflict can be made, the government of the United States has threatened to suspend military assistance to Cristiani's government if the fighting does not stop and if whoever assassinated the Jesuits of UCA is not resolved . . .*

After breakfast, I went upstairs to the bedroom to pick up my tape recorder, which was still recording Radio Venceremos. We thanked the family for their kind hospitality and returned to our house. The day began with a sort of internal recovery. Even though we felt vulnerable because we knew that if the assassins had entered the UCA house, then they could come to any of our homes when they so desired, this thought disappeared when we arrived to find Pedro García, Chepe Chico, and three others cleaning the house. We were all happy to see each other. At approximately 1:00 pm, we started a barbecue in the patio. We had a large stock of meat that we wanted to use up, so we invited all the theologians and philosophers to join us for lunch. Jorge Urquiza walked to the Maximum House of Theology to invite those who were there to come for lunch. Some Jesuits who had arrived that morning from other countries began to show up, since the news that we were having a barbecue had spread. In the end, the group was large and the conversations crisscrossed among all of us as we brought each other up to date. Spontaneously, those of

us who had been assigned to prepare the liturgy formed a circle to share ideas. Ricardo Falla was there and gave us some suggestions. Santi Nájera and I agreed to meet the following day before noon at the UCA Chapel to begin preparations for Sunday's mass. I commented to Falla, among other things, about my recordings of the Offensive. He suggested that I give a copy of my tapes to María Julia Hernández, from the Archbishop's Human Rights Office, as the tapes might be helpful to the investigation in recognizing the ballistics that might have been recorded on the cassettes. He told me that experts could distinguish the sounds of the calibers used during the massacre. That night I made a copy of the corresponding cassettes to give to María Julia during mass. Around 5:00 p. m., all the Jesuits began to leave the house in order to return to their own before curfew. Chepe Chico, Pedro García, Rodolfo Rubio, Jorge Urquiza, Eliud Martínez, and I decided to stay in this house to sleep. At 6:00 p.m. on the dot, as if agreed upon by the Armed Forces and the guerrillas, the fighting resumed. Throughout the entire city, military combats raged again with an intensity that, among us, felt as if the rebels were avenging the blood of our dead friends. At sunset, the Air Force began to bomb the civilian population of the country's northeast region. At dawn, I was awakened by the sound of shots fired near the house. I tuned in to Radio Venceremos and continued recording the national and international news cables. The most common frequency used by Radio Venceremos was 6.3 megahertz during the day and 99 megahertz during the night. The morning of November 17th, Joaquín Villalobos, the FMLN's Chief Commander, responded to the murder of the Jesuits in the following way: *It should be said that the murder of the Jesuit fathers by Cristiani's government is a severe blow to the possibilities of an effective democracy. In our country, the Jesuit fathers constituted a sector of Salvadoran society that contributed enormously in the education of our country, in all social forces, in debates, in the need to teach reason, to discuss the existence of a political pluralism. It is obvious that the Armed Forces of El Salvador and the sectors of the oligarchy represented by Mr. Cristiani cannot tolerate intelligence, cannot tolerate debating, reflecting, and reasoning. That is why they committed this crime. On the other hand, the responsibilities of this crime need to be contextualized, not only from direct and concrete evidence, like the men in green uniforms [moving about freely during] a curfew; the fact that some days earlier a military group arrived to carry out an operative inspection of the place in which they would commit the murder, with a clear objective of preparing a plan; the death threats made against them via the national channel; but also in the context of what should be pointed to, in political terms, as an error by the dictatorship. It seems like a bad calculation, or something going on there, in whatever this decision was based. We have already shown that it was*

*impossible for the Armed Forces to stop the FMLN's plan. At no moment were they able to prevent it. Once the plan is set, it begins to be carried out, a rather critical situation begins to take shape, [they] carry out an evaluation. The previous day the Armed Forces designed a completely political and tactical layout in order to force the FMLN forces into a logistical scare. With this action, we see that all their calculations revolve around the material exhaustion of the FMLN forces. It would be a serious mistake if we had become involved in this plan without anticipating all these incidents. Nevertheless, it seems that all their calculations have been centered on this. If on the basis of centering all things on that calculation, they considered the time factor, in an average limit of some three to four days, they would have the opportunity of launching a counterattack . . . a counteroffensive, in an attempt to dislodge our positions, and all tactics used at that moment had the objective of making us use up our ammunition. I had not intended yet to evacuate our forces. However, in addition to economizing their use of ammunition, [they] have enough capacity in qualitative and quantitative terms, human materials, toward that effort. Nonetheless, and despite that, it seems that they did not notice and they considered that they could start a grand-scale counterblow that would facilitate their achievement of an important annihilation of FMLN forces. Based on this calculation, they make a design that is no longer just military, but also political. In this respect, we have to talk about the implication of the North American ambassador himself, of the US military advisors. We should be talking about how much the Bush administration, and who knows how many others, knew about this situation.* [127] This statement was one of the first public assertions regarding the motivations of the Armed Forces to commit this crime against the Jesuits. As has been noted in most books about the massacre, as well as in many international news stories, the UCA Jesuits in El Salvador were widely considered the intellectual backbone of the left. An article published in the Associated Press the day after the massacre observed that "Attacks and criticism of the Society of Jesus, one of the continent's most controversial and socially active groups, date to Spanish colonial times," and noted that the Central American Jesuits "have been in the fore of the [liberation theology] movement, which expresses a 'preferential option for the poor' and encourages the impoverished to fight for social justice." [128] Typical of the tone of the international news coverage is the following excerpt: "For years, right-wing extremists accused Reverend Ignacio Ellacuría, Rector of San Salvador's Jesuit University, of being the intellectual mentor of many guerilla leaders of the FMLN." [129] Moreover, prominent U.S. State Department staff referred to Ellacuría as "the intellectual godfather of the guerrilla movement." [130] This conception, combined with the military strength of the FMLN, particularly their takeover of

a significant percentage of national territory during the Offensive, led many initial observers to conclude that it was the military, rather than the FMLN, that was responsible for the death plan - a conclusion that was later proven to be true. [131] In the neighborhoods of Jardines de Guadalupe and Antiguo Cuscatán there was no rest the night of November 17th. The war again terrorized the entire country. In its news programming, Radio Venceremos reported that Army helicopters had been shot down in San Miguel and that there was FMLN control in the districts of San Vicente and Cabañas. In the municipalities of Chalatenango and Morazán, the guerrillas began to place FMLN flags around to mark their control over these territories. [132] The same phenomenon was taking place in the eastern neighborhoods of the city. At daybreak army airplanes were dropping highly destructive bombs over the civilian areas under FMLN control; helicopters constantly flew over using heavy artillery. In response, the guerrillas began to use anti-aircraft artillery within the city itself. The rhythms of the songs of Radio Venceremos were triumphant and the popular mobilization was noticeably more enthusiastic. Inside our home, a certain air of victory and final insurrection began to be felt. A group of Jesuits were nearly finished writing international reports and were about to disseminate them by fax to relate the events of the past two days. There was much frustration among everyone when the electric power went out and no one could use the computers. Soon, someone arrived from the San José Day School with a couple of manual typewriters in order to continue writing. At noon, a group of us went to the Monsignor Romero Chapel to prepare for the liturgy and vigil, because around 2:00 p.m. the bodies would be transferred from the morgue. The family of Elba and Celina had asked for their bodies in order to bury them with their own family members. In the chapel, I began to select the hymns for the mass and tune each musical instrument. Suddenly, my friend Julia Castellón Fiallos appeared with other sisters from the Asunción Congregation. Julia and I had belonged to the UCA choir in Managua and we knew how to harmonize automatically. The arrangement of the hymns became easier because Julia began to select the alto and contralto voices, while I selected the bass and baritone voices. As we selected the songs and arranged the harmonies, more religious and nonreligious people joined the choir. We rehearsed with the entire community, while Santi Nájera organized the missals and breviaries for the concelebrant priests. While the choir rehearsed, the coffins were moved inside and placed in front of the altar. The sight of those six bodies, there in front of us once more, brought a bitter taste to my mouth and a surge of tears. It was the same feeling I had felt at my grandfather's wake, just five weeks before. Mely Porrás came over to the choir to ask if it were all right for her to seat a young woman next to me. At that moment, the girl was on the floor in a

corner of the chapel, crying disconsolately. Mely told me that two weeks before, "Claudia," had attempted suicide by swallowing a bottle of pills in a parking lot at the UCA. On finding her convulsing on the ground, one of Nacho Martín-Baró's students ran to Nacho's office to tell him. Nacho ran down the stairs yelling for someone to call an ambulance. Everyone from the administration saw him carrying the girl in his arms. The Red Cross arrived and took over, but Nacho rode in the ambulance and asked that she be taken to a private clinic with which he was familiar. He waited there all day until the girl stabilized. Upon his return to the office, when Mely and others asked about her, he replied happily, "She's going to live!" [133] When Claudia learned that Father Nacho and the others had been killed, she came to the UCA to participate in the Saturday mass. During the entire mass, she wanted to be next to Nacho Martín-Baró's body, which had been placed closest to the choir. Sitting at my side, Claudia sobbed, looking down intermittently at the floor and at Nacho lying before her. With his bishop's staff in hand, Monsignor Rivera walked with Monsignor Rosa Chávez down the center aisle towards the altar, followed by a line of priests wearing stoles that honored the martyred. The Roman ritual of mass emphasized the celebration of life. During the sermon, Father Javier Ibisate read the Society of Jesus' official statement that we had drafted together the afternoon of the 16th. The liturgical celebration ended about 4:15 p.m. As we said good-bye, everyone in the chorus promised to return to sing at Sunday Mass the following day, when the rest of the family members of the massacred Jesuits were expected to attend. Claudia and six of us Jesuits remained to keep vigil for another hour. We were fearful that someone might break in during the night and vandalize the bodies. Realizing this, Claudia wanted to stay with them all night, regardless of the curfew, but we convinced her to leave. A Jesuit from the Despertar community, in San Antonio Abad, offered her a place to stay for the night and the rest of us went to our homes. We left Ellacuría, Martín-Baró, Montes, López, Moreno Pardo and López y López alone in their chapel, in their university, the place where they had spent so much of their time. When I got back to the Sultana House, my companions were preparing dinner. From the second floor windows, we began to see helicopters shooting around the area of San Bartolo. I set up the three tape recorders I now had to continue taping the news from Radio Venceremos, the shooting going on outside our house, and the broadcasts from the national station. In its reports of international reactions, Radio Venceremos announced that the Guatemalan Revolutionary Army (URNG) in Guatemala had taken over three municipal capitals on the Pacific Coast of Guatemala and was conducting political protests in solidarity with the FMLN. [134] Moreover, they had stopped some 600 cars headed toward the Southern Guatemalan Highway, calling on all Central



Americans to join the Salvadoran cause and condemn the Armed Forces' bombings of the civilian population. According to both Radio Venceremos and the United Press International wire service, [135] in the northern part of San Salvador the Armed Forces had carried out its heaviest bombing of civilian populations of the entire offensive – more than five straight hours, from midnight until dawn on Sunday the 19th. In addition to the air attacks, the Armed Forces began destroying the offices and headquarters of union organizations and the homes of the leaders of popular opposition groups, provoking a mass flight to accredited embassies to seek political asylum. However, this intentional use of violence against the civilian population in retaliation for the offensive only served to increase the Army's isolation from the international community. As of November 18, U.S. Senator Alan Cranston, along with many other elected officials, Church leaders and civilians around the United States, called for an immediate suspension of U.S. aid to El Salvador, [136] a call that while initially resisted by the Bush Administration, was eventually enacted. We awoke on Sunday, November 19, to the sound of loud explosions coming from the area of the Defense Ministry, located just a few blocks from the UCA. I ran to the university auditorium to prepare for the liturgy. Soon, the choir from the previous day's service arrived and continued to grow as the hour for the mass drew nearer. The diplomatic corps began to arrive and were shown to their seats in front of the altar. The family members of each of the Jesuits were also seated in front of the altar. President Cristiani and his wife, U.S. Ambassador William Walker, and other U.S. embassy officials arrived and were seated to the left of the altar. Behind them I directed the choir and rehearsed the Sunday mass. The crowd was enormous. It was an ecumenical service with Lutheran Bishop Medardo Gómez, a Dutch bishop and a Canadian bishop in attendance. The Christian Base Communities attended with all their priests and nuns. To open the service we sang, "Where are the prophets?" with Julia Castellón. During the Eucharist everyone came forward to receive the host. Suddenly, someone from the back broke away and ran up to the altar to kiss each one of the metal caskets. Father Falla went to offer him communion. Shortly after, applause filled the auditorium. It was Rubén Zamora, popular opposition leader of the MPSC (Popular Social Christian Movement), whose home had been bombed by the Armed Forces one month earlier and who, despite numerous death threats and advice from friends to flee the country, had come to say good-bye to his teachers from the UCA. Following the mass, a procession formed to carry the caskets to Monsignor Romero Chapel, where they were laid to rest in its principal crypts, to belong forever to the UCA and the people of El Salvador.

## CHAPTER VI CONCLUSIONS

In the spring of 1963, Martín Luther King Jr. wrote his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in response to theologians and religious leaders who charged that his activism was “unwise and untimely.” He wrote: *I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist. As I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use you, and persecute you.’ Was not Amos an extremist for justice: ‘Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.’* [137] The accusation of being “extremist” was typically made against those in El Salvador who worked for justice, particularly the Jesuits. From the moment the Jesuits elected to identify with the poor, they made an intellectual commitment that defined their mission and social praxis. The search for peace with justice in El Salvador was the fixed point on the horizon that guided each of their lives. In their deaths, the blood of these six men, Elba and Celina, ran together to create fertile ground on which the roots of the Peace Accords would grow. The international outcry in response to the killings was overwhelming. After the November 19, 1989 mass, we learned that protests and civil disobedience demonstrations all over the world had pressured the ARENA government into forming a commission to investigate the Jesuit case. In time, the unanimous conclusion of national and international investigators was that the murders were planned and carried out by top Salvadoran military leaders, and that a wide circle of military officers, soldiers,





*San Salvador Peace Celebration, January 16, 1992*

members of the Cristiani government, and U.S. Embassy officials had engaged in a cover-up of the crime and impeded its full investigation. [138] Members of the U.S. religious community, labor unionists, Hollywood actors such as Edward Asner, and elected officials such as the Lieutenant Governor of California, Leo McCarthy, boycotted Salvadoran coffee imports and shut down ports all along the West Coast. [139] U.S. Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, one of those pushing for a cut-off of military aid to El Salvador, was interviewed on Nightline. He called for the immediate removal of U.S. military advisors from El Salvador, saying that the U.S. should no longer support a government that killed priests. Another major action was taken by Democratic Mayors Raymond Flynn of Boston, David Dinkins of New York, Art Agnos of San Francisco, Coleman Young of Detroit and others, who sent a letter to President George Bush, urging him to end U.S. support for a military solution in El Salvador. [140] Mayor Agnos told reporters that “the citizens of this country do not want their dollars spent on torture and murder.” [141] On the other side of the Atlantic, the European Parliament condemned the killings, expressing strong concern over

the Salvadoran government's lack of real progress in the investigation of the case, and called on the government to re-establish dialogue with the FMLN. [142] The EEC voted to stop economic aid to the Salvadoran government at the end of November, 1989. On December 6, 1989, President of the U.S. House of Representatives, Thomas Foley, appointed a commission comprised of 17 House Democrats, led by Massachusetts Congressman Joseph Moakley, to follow the Jesuit case. [143] Moakley had become familiar with the situation in El Salvador through refugees living in his district, and he took the appointment very seriously. This commission would play a pivotal role in "naming names" of specific Salvadoran military leaders involved in the Jesuit murders, and of successfully advocating for a vast reduction in U.S. economic aid to El Salvador. [144] The reactions of international and national political leaders, conscientious objectors, religious leaders, labor unionists, scholars and students committed to the pursuit of justice put pressure on the Salvadoran government to shed light on the perpetrators of massacre. U.S. foreign policy in Central America was soundly criticized by both the national and international community because of its support for the ultra-conservative ARENA party. As a Washington Post opinion editorial on November 18, 1989, stated: *Six priests are dead in El Salvador, as well as two civilians unlucky enough to be witnesses to their murder, in circumstances suggesting the complicity of the security forces. The prominence of the victims and the terrible manner of their death make this suspicion deeply embarrassing to the United States, which underwrites the Salvadoran government and its war effort. The American government, on the basis of a rather strained and indirect connection between Moscow and the Salvadoran insurgents, is engaged in a busy diplomatic campaign to hold the Soviet Union responsible for the current guerrilla offensive in El Salvador. It cannot escape being held similarly accountable for demonstrated misconduct on the part of the Salvadoran army, which it has directly trained, armed, financed, advised and altogether kept alive for 10 years.* [145] At the same time, it became increasingly clear that the Salvadoran conflict could not be resolved militarily. As the Associated Press reported, "The massive offensive left no doubt about the Salvadoran guerrillas' military capacity and drove home the point that serious negotiations and government concessions are necessary to end the 10-year old civil war." [146] Even the highly respected, retired U.S. military General, Fred Woerner, concluded that "The war cannot be resolved militarily . . . The guerrillas cannot be overcome until the roots of the war – unfair distribution of wealth and pervasive social injustice—are addressed." [147] On the other side, the FMLN realized that although they had demonstrated to the world that they would not be beaten militarily by the Salvadoran Army, the November offensive did not trigger the popular uprising they had anticipated.

[148] They “had to digest the implications of changes in Eastern Europe, and the unexpected defeat of the Sandinistas in February 1990,” notes Berryman. [149] Given the changing Cold War dynamics, an FMLN spokesperson stated in May of 1990: “We don’t see ourselves as a revolutionary Marxist movement anymore. There is not space anymore for a subsidized revolution like Cuba or Nicaragua.” [150] Rather than persist in a military struggle, the FMLN realized that it would behoove them to become a political party and compete in elections. Worldwide protest against the Salvadoran government fueled the efforts of the United Nations to guide negotiations among the Armed Forces, the ARENA government, and the FMLN. On December 12, 1989, the San Isidro de Coronado Declaration was signed in Costa Rica by all of the Central American presidents, allowing the Secretary General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, and U.N. observers to supervise the Salvadoran peace negotiations and their implementation. [151] The peace negotiations continued for nearly two years, with the biggest stumbling blocks being requirements to purge the Armed Forces, reduce them by 50%, disarm the FMLN and establish a national Truth Commission to investigate human rights abuses. [152] However, the drastic cut in U.S. economic aid to El Salvador following the Jesuit massacre kept pressure on the Salvadoran government to continue with the negotiations. The streets of San Salvador erupted in celebration as leaders of the Salvadoran government and the FMLN signed the peace accords in Chapultepec, Mexico on January 16, 1992. The Truth Commission eventually investigated more than one hundred Salvadoran army officers, recommending that they be relieved of their military duties and discharged. [153] Some were eventually imprisoned, although most were pardoned. [154] Nonetheless, the commission was a way of publicly demonstrating guilt for criminal acts and human rights violations, and provided a response to the impunity that had reined unchallenged in El Salvador for decades. Psychologically and politically, the public trial and naming of the massacre’s perpetrators and other human rights violators helped hasten the purging of the military and opened up more political space for civilian organizations. Although El Salvador today still has many problems (such as persistent poverty, high unemployment, insufficient social services, stalled land reform, rampant crime and gang activity, to name a few), Ellacuría would emphasize the progress that has been made. With the peace accords, the Armed Forces were reduced by half and reconstituted. The infamous, military-controlled national police force was disbanded and replaced by a newly trained, civilian police force. The FMLN was demobilized and became a political party. Reform of the judicial and electoral system has begun. New human rights institutions have been created and new protections written into El Salvador’s laws and

constitution. Democratic elections in which the FMLN has competed and won seats have successfully been held since April 1994. The historic act of the 1989 massacre left its mark on Salvadoran society, accelerating the peace negotiations and proving to be a determining factor in their successful outcome. Williams and Walter interviewed a top Salvadoran military officer who said of the army's decision to kill the priests, "with that fatal decision, we had lost the war." [155] The authors go on to observe: *The murder of the Jesuits provoked widespread outrage and further undermined the already damaged credibility of the armed forces. It also jeopardized future U.S. assistance to the Salvadoran armed forces, and thus, their ability to defeat the FMLN. In October 1990, the Congress voted to withhold 50 percent of the \$85 million in military assistance requested for FY 1991 and condition its release on progress in the Jesuit murder investigation and in the peace talks.* [156] Similarly, Whitfield notes: *The [Jesuit] case had kept the army on the defensive and had consistently contributed to the change in U.S. policy that allowed negotiations to prosper... Few U.S. officials like to remember how faint had been U.S. support for negotiations until the Offensive of 1989. Only then, with military stalemate compounded by revulsion at the killing of the Jesuits, had change been triggered... [T]he Jesuit case had illuminated the institutional problems of the army and the weaknesses of the justice system.* [157] In a report of the U.N. peace efforts in El Salvador, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, also states that the Jesuits murders "sparked international outrage as well as pressure on the two belligerent parties to end their hostilities." [158] After repeatedly going over the events of the morning of Thursday, November 16, 1989, I have often had the feeling that I can see my friends, as if peering through a crack in time between the past and the present. Time comes to a standstill as I recount and try to explain what happened at the UCA that day. All social praxis (including political and economic praxis) is historical praxis, as far as Ellacuría was concerned. As such, historical praxis ferments in a process that is at once productive and transformational. The historical subjects, the men and women chosen to bear the truth about El Salvador's reality on their shoulders, are the apostolic pioneers of that ethical-moral study inherent in all liberating acts. As Royal notes, "The Jesuits viewed their work as an extension of their Ignatian charism: 'contemplatives in action for justice.' [159] " In discussing their commitment to truth, he writes: *Whenever regimes threaten those who tell the truth, a kind of slavery springs up. People begin to go along quietly with much they know to be false or wrong, simply because the price of truth is too high... If Christ, among other things, is the Truth, then telling the truth is a way of witnessing to him. Romero had taken that approach, and the six Jesuits also tried, with no little courage, to practice this form of truth telling in*



*Obdulio's Rose Garden in Memory of Jesuit Martyrs*

*circumstances in which the truth was guaranteed to inflame murderous passions.* [160] Ignacio Ellacuría was the best known of the group, and the most public critic of the ongoing human rights violations. But the others, in quieter ways, worked for human rights and social justice as well. Segundo Montes, a sociologist, had directed the UCA Institute of Human Rights. Nacho Martín-Baró, a psychologist and academic Vice Rector, promoted liberation theology in the poor parishes where he worked. Juan Ramón Moreno Pardo published the acclaimed theology journal, *Revista Diakonia*, and served as Vice Rector of the Archbishop Romero Center, where theologians from across Latin America studied and reflected on liberation theology. Amando López, former Rector of the San Salvador seminary, served as an academic advisor and spiritual director of theology students, and engaged in energetic pastoral work in the impoverished communities of the Soyapango area. Joaquín López y López worked for 20 years in “Fe y Alegria,” a program that builds schools and provides education to the poorest children in both the city and the countryside. As Royal notes, all but one of the murdered Jesuits were born in Spain and could easily

have lived out their lives in less demanding circumstances at home. [161] Instead, they opted to live and work among people suffering intense poverty, oppression and social turmoil, even to the point of giving up their lives. The ultimate, unrelenting philosophical question, for what purpose?, led to my discovery of Ellacuría's belief that the why? and the for what purpose? underlying Jesus' death can be only understood if we see that Jesus was killed because of the way he led his life and the mission he fulfilled. The why? of his death can be posed on the for what purpose? of his death. If Jesus died for our sins, he did so for the salvation and liberation of the men and women of his time. It was the struggle against those who oppressed the poor that killed him; in turn, his death conquered the oppressors and offered us a new way of understanding and living our lives. The Jesuits were killed because of the way they led their lives and because of the mission they fulfilled in El Salvador. They stood up to all forms of oppressive power and, in their death, conquered the oppressors. The lives of the Jesuits will continue to inspire progress towards an increasingly democratic political and social model in El Salvador. Someday, perhaps, the Salvadoran people may joyfully proclaim what the Jesuits knew during their lives on earth, that: "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." [162] This is the ultimate truth that Elba and Celina Ramos, Joaquín López y López, Amando López, Segundo Montes, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Juan Ramón Moreno Pardo, and Ignacio Ellacuría arrived at together.



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<sup>1</sup> The Provincial Curia of the Society of Jesus in Central America has its seat in San Salvador. All the central meetings in which pastoral decisions are made regarding social, political, and economic research of an ecclesiastical nature in Central America continue to be held in El Salvador.

<sup>2</sup> Official radio station of the FMLN. “Venceremos” means “We will overcome” in Spanish.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Salvador Carranza, *Mártires de la UCA: 16 de Noviembre de 1989*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990; Jon Sobrino, *Companions of Jesus: The Murder and Martyrdom of the Salvadoran Jesuits*, Nottingham, UK: Bertrand Russell House, 1990b; Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador*, Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993; Phillip Berryman, *Stubborn Hope: Religion, Politics and Revolution in Central America*, New York: Orbis Books, 1994; Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994; Roberto Martialay, *Sangre en la Universidad: Los Jesuitas Asesinados en El Salvador*, Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador*, New York: Orbis Books, 1990a; Jorge G. Castañeda, *La Utopía Desarmada: Intrigas, Dilemas y Promesas de la Izquierda en América Latina*, Mexico DF: Grupo Editorial Planeta, 1995; Rodolfo Cardenal, *Biografías: Mártires de la UCA*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1999; Ricardo Falla, “Subiendo a Jerusalén,” in *Ignacio Ellacuría: Aquella Libertad Esclarecida*, eds. Jon Sobrino and Rolando Alvarado, Santander: Editores Sal Terrae, 1999; Robert Royal, *The Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Century*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Raul Benitez-Manaut, *La Teoría Militar y la Guerra Civil en El Salvador*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1989; Adam Kufeld, *El Salvador*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990; Anjali Sundaram and George Gelber, *A Decade of War: El Salvador Confronts the Future*, New York: Monthly Review Press 1991; Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.–Latin American Relations*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; Phillip Williams and Knut Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> See Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre la Esencia*, Madrid: Talleres Gráficos Montaña, 1962; *Inteligencia Sentiente*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1979; *Cinco Lecciones de Filosofía*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1980; *Inteligencia y Logos*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1982; *Estructura Dinámica de la Realidad*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989; *El Hombre y Dios*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994; *Espacio. Tiempo. Materia.*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> See Ignacio Ellacuría, “La Idea de Filosofía en Xavier Zubiri,” in *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri*, volume 1, eds. José Luis Aranguren, et al. Madrid: Editorial Moneda y Crédito, 1970; *Filosofía de la Realidad Histórica*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990, and *Veinte Años de Historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*, volumes I, II, III, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> A theological term referring to the relationship between mission and culture.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, “In Memorium,” in *ECA Estudios Centramericanos*, Nov.-Dec. 1989, no. 493-494, San Salvador: UCA Editores, p. 1000.

<sup>10</sup> Falla, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Williams and Walter, p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> Whitfield, p. 330.

<sup>13</sup> Kufeld, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Berryman, p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> By November 1989, the Salvadoran government received one million dollars per day in U.S. aid. See Daniel Alder, "Leftists Launch Largest Attack on Capital Since 1981," *United Press International* (UPI), November 12, 1989. For a chart of U.S. military support to El Salvador from 1980-1990, see Williams and Walter, p. 133. Also see Benitez-Manaut, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Williams and Walter, p. 141. The authors state that widespread outrage over the assassination of the Jesuits further undermined the already damaged credibility of the Salvadoran Armed Forces and resulted in large cuts in U.S. economic and military assistance to El Salvador that curtailed the Army's ability to militarily defeat the FMLN.

<sup>17</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, New York: Crossroad, 1985, pp. 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Boff, pp. 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Rodolfo Cardenal, *El Poder Eclesiástico en El Salvador (1871-1931)*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1980, p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> *Los Obispos Latinoamericanos entre Medellín y Puebla, Documentos Episcopales 1968-1978*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1978, p. 235.

<sup>21</sup> "Gaudium et Spes," *Documentos Completos del Vaticano II*, 18th edition, Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 1995, p. 138.

<sup>22</sup> Sobrino, 1990a, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> San Juan, 10:10, *Biblia de Jerusalén*, Bilbao: Editorial Española Desclée de Brouwer, 1975, p. 1523.

<sup>24</sup> Pedro Arrupe, *La Identidad del Jesuita en Nuestros Tiempos*, Santander: Sal Terrae, 1982, p. 409.

<sup>25</sup> Alain Woodrow, *The Jesuits: A Story of Power*. New York: Wellington House, 1995a, pp. 111-120; William V. Bangert, *History of the Society of Jesus*, St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986, pp. 499-510.

<sup>26</sup> Bangert, 1986, p. 497.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503.

<sup>29</sup> Woodrow, 1995a, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>32</sup> Roberto Valdés Valle, "La búsqueda filosófica inicial" in *Ignacio Ellacuría: Aquella Libertad Esclarecida*, eds. Jon Sobrino and Rolando Alvarado, Santander: Sal Terrae, 1999, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> Valdés Valle, 1999, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Cardenal, 1999, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Whitfield, p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> Bangert, 1986, p. 503.

- <sup>38</sup> Woodrow, 1995a, p. 120; Bangert, 1986, p. 608.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 121.
- <sup>40</sup> Bangert, 1986, p. 516; David Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1999, pp. 97-98.
- <sup>41</sup> Carlos R. Cabarrús, *Génesis de una Revolución: Análisis del surgimiento y desarrollo de la organización campesina en El Salvador*, México DF: Ediciones de la Casa Chata, 1983, p. 142-143; Castañeda, p. 244.
- <sup>42</sup> Boff, p. 7.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.
- <sup>44</sup> Whitfield, pp. 5, 100, 109-110, 271, 307.
- <sup>45</sup> Woodrow, 1995a, pp. 143-144.
- <sup>46</sup> Cynthia Arnson, *A Revolution Confronts the United States*, Washington DC: Institute for Policy Studies, pp. 70-79; Smith, pp. 180-187; J. Michael Waller, *The Third Current of Revolution: Inside the 'North American Front' of El Salvador's Guerrilla War*, 1991, New York: University Press of America, Inc.
- <sup>47</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, "La intervención norteamericana en El Salvador," *ECA Estudios Centroamericanos*, spec. ed. (May-June 1983): 415-416; Doggett 1993; Berryman 1994.
- <sup>48</sup> Royal, pp. 270-301.
- <sup>49</sup> Alain Woodrow, *Los Jesuitas: Historia de un Dramático Conflicto*, Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1995b, p. 95.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 94.
- <sup>51</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, *De El Salvador a Colombia: Seis Pistas Para la Paz*, Bogota: Cinep, 1994, p. vii.
- <sup>52</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, New York: Orbis Books, 2000, pp. 45-47.
- <sup>53</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, "A sus órdenes mi capital," *ECA Estudios Centroamericanos*, no. 337, San Salvador, Noviembre-Diciembre 1976, pp. 637-643.
- <sup>54</sup> Douglas Grant Mine, "Jesuits Long Attacked by Rightists as Subversives," *Associated Press*, November 17, 1989.
- <sup>55</sup> Falla, p. 32; Lindsay Gruson, "Salvadoran Rebels Quit Peace Talks," *New York Times*, November 3, 1989, Sec. A., p. 7.
- <sup>56</sup> Whitfield, p. 307.
- <sup>57</sup> Rodolfo Cardenal, *Historia de Una Esperanza: Vida de Rutilio Grande*, San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1987, p. 521.
- <sup>58</sup> Doggett, pp. 302-303; Berryman, p. 19; Sobrino, 1990a, p. 14.
- <sup>59</sup> *ECA Estudios Centroamericanos*, no. 344, June 1977, cited in Doggett, p. 25.
- <sup>60</sup> Cardenal, 1987, pp. 526-527; Whitfield, pp. 64-65; Castañeda, p. 254; María Pilar Hoyos de Asig, *Fernando Hoyos, Donde Estas?*, Guatemala City: Fondo de Cultura Editorial, 1997, pp. 5-9; Yvon Le Bot, *La Guerra en Tierras Mayas: Comunidad, Violencia y Modernidad en Guatemala (1970-1992)*, Mexico DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995, pp. 146-152.

<sup>61</sup> Berryman, pp. 67-68.

<sup>62</sup> Romero, a Diocesan, received his theological training from the Jesuits at the San José Seminar of Theology in San Salvador.

<sup>63</sup> Berryman, p. 68.

<sup>64</sup> Personal interview with Margarito Martínez (pastoral worker who helped recover the bodies), Copán, Honduras, March 1990. Also, Cabarrús, p. 17; Berryman, p. 66; *The United Nations and El Salvador 1990-1995*, New York: United Nations, 1995, p. 351.

<sup>65</sup> Including the torture, rape and murder of four American churchwomen by the Salvadoran Army on December 2, 1980.

<sup>66</sup> Berryman, p. 66.

<sup>67</sup> Williams and Walter, p. 95.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p. 95.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Personal observation: While disagreeing on various issues, Cristiani and Ellacuría respected each other and regularly met to discuss the country's problems and prospects for peace. Ellacuría was hopeful about Cristiani's potential to help lead the Salvadoran government in a more promising direction. He often mentioned this to us in our seminar discussions.

<sup>72</sup> Berryman, p. 88.

<sup>73</sup> Philip Bennett, "Salvadoran priests are slain, Jesuits taken from their beds, Men in uniform suspected," *The Boston Globe*, November 17, 1989.

<sup>74</sup> Dave Todd, "A long ordeal for Jesuit reformers in El Salvador," *The Toronto Star*, November 18, 1989.

<sup>75</sup> Whitfield, pp. 317-320; Berryman, p. 93.

<sup>76</sup> Berryman, p. 93.

<sup>77</sup> For example, the American Friends Service Committee (Chapters in US and Canada), Voices on the Border, CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), the Mennonite Central Committee (Chapters in US, Canada and Australia), Jesuit Volunteers International (worldwide chapters), Medecins Sans Frontieres (France, Canada, US); Quaker Overseas Volunteer Ministry; Catholic Funds for Overseas Development CAFOD (England); Caritas International (chapters worldwide) and others provided the refugee camps with volunteer teachers, healthcare providers, carpenters and other skilled professionals. Personal observation.

<sup>78</sup> Segundo Montes, "Migration to the U.S. as an Index of the Intensifying Social and Political Crisis in El Salvador," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. I, no. 2, 1988, p. 107.

<sup>79</sup> Whitfield, p. 314.

<sup>80</sup> Berryman, p. 88.

<sup>81</sup> Whitfield, pp. 160; 312-318.

<sup>82</sup> Berryman, p. 89.

<sup>83</sup> *The United Nations and El Salvador*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>84</sup> Berryman, p. 92.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Doggett, p. 32.

<sup>88</sup> Berryman, pp. 95-96.

<sup>89</sup> Berryman, 96.

<sup>90</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, "Los 100 primeros días de ARENA," *ECA*, no. 490-491, San Salvador, Agosto-Septiembre 1989, pp. 631-645.

<sup>91</sup> Berryman, p. 96; *The United Nations and El Salvador*, p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Berryman p. 96, discusses the FENASTRAS bombing and the response of the FMLN. This is also noted by Doggett, p. 6, and Carranza, pp. 93-94.

<sup>93</sup> Doggett, pp. 37-38; Whitfield, p. 346; Alder, p. 5.

<sup>94</sup> Doggett, pp. 8, 37-38.

<sup>95</sup> Personal recording of *Radio Venceremos*, November 13, 1989, San Salvador. FMLN control of these areas was also reported in "FMLN Establishes People's Power in 'Liberated' Territories," *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, November 16, 1989; and by Marcos Alemán, "Rebels Hold Large Parts in Several Districts: Battle Continues," *The Associated Press*, November 14, 1989.

<sup>96</sup> Doggett, p. 37.

<sup>97</sup> These included: Ciudad Delgado, Cuscatancingo, Soyapango, Crediticia, Escalón, Zacamil, San Bartolo, San Sebastián, Guadalupana, Prados de Venecia, Antiguo Cuscatlán, Merliot and part of the city of Santa Tecla. Personal recording of *Radio Venceremos*, November 15, 1989, San Salvador. FMLN presence in these areas was also reported by *The Inter Press Service*: "El Salvador: Fierce Fighting Rages in the Capital," November 13, 1989.

<sup>98</sup> Doggett, p. 38.

<sup>99</sup> Including the Minister of Defense, two Vice Ministers of Defense, commanders from all of the army units in the metropolitan area, Security Force chiefs, the head of the Military Press Office, members of the Joint Command and others, cited in Doggett, p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> Doggett, p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Berryman, p. 96.

<sup>102</sup> Doggett, pp. 308-309.

<sup>103</sup> While the authors of several books and articles have erroneously written that Elba Ramos worked at the home of the murdered Jesuits, in reality, Elba was the cook at the theology students' house: # 8, 2a Calle Oriente and 2a Avenida Sur, Antiguo Cuscatlán, a 15-minute walk from the UCA Jesuit residence.

<sup>104</sup> The house closest to the scene of the crime was the Jesuit residence Number 50, Calle Mediterráneo, Jardines de Guadalupe, Nueva San Salvador, El Salvador.

<sup>105</sup> Doggett, p. 50; Whitfield, p. 347; Alder, p. 5.

106 Personal observation during a group conversation with Richard Howard, S. J., November 16, 1989, San Salvador.

107 Personal conversation among the Jesuits after the killing on November 16, 1989.

108 Because Jean Marie was Black, he would be assumed a Cuban collaborator with the FMLN if captured by the Army, and would be in danger, so he was moved to a safer location. Similarly, Martin would be assumed to be a Nicaraguan collaborator, and was thus moved to a safer location.

109 Smith, p. 181.

110 Personal conversation with Rolando Alvarado and Carlos Manuel Alvares, November 16, 1989.

111 Carranza, p. 16.

112 Personal conversation with Isaiás Martínez, November 16, 1989.

113 Personal conversation with Celina Ramos during lunch with the above mentioned group, November 15, 1989.

114 Talking with Elba and Celina at lunch, November 15, 1989.

115 A slang term meaning "Guatemalan."

116 The last words I remember from Elba, spoken on November 15, 1989, about 4:30 p.m.

117 Personal conversation with John Gugliano, 6:30 a.m., November 16, 1989.

118 Todd, November 18, 1989.

119 Because the UCA Jesuits were known internationally as the leading intellectuals of El Salvador (and Central America), the assassins purposely targeted their heads, blowing out each man's brains as a sign of contempt. This was noted by Candice Hughes in "Fighting slackens, refugees flee, wake held for Jesuits," *Associated Press*, November 18, 1989.

120 Victoriano Castillo, S.J., spoken as we stood before the cadavers on the ground, November 16, 1989.

121 Personal observation, November 16, 1989.

122 This statement, photocopied and distributed among us, was written to be read at the Jesuits' funeral mass.

123 Lee Hockstader, "Central America Back in U.S. Foreign Political Spotlight," *The Washington Post*, November 19, 1989. Berryman, p. 83.

124 Author's unpublished transcripts of tapes of *Radio Venceremos*, recorded November 16, 1989.

125 A term used in El Salvador to refer to those who graduated from the Military Academy.

126 Author's unpublished transcripts of tapes of *Radio Venceremos*, recorded November 17, 1989.

127 Author's unpublished transcripts of tapes of *Radio Venceremos*, recorded November 18, 1989.

128 Grant Mine, November 17, 1989.

129 Todd, November 18, 1989.

130 Doggett, p. 34.

131 Williams and Walter, p. 157. The authors note that the United Nations Truth Commission report “described in great detail the involvement of over forty military officers in some of the most heinous human rights abuses committed in the conflict, including . . . planning the murders of the six Jesuit priests in November 1989.”

132 These proceedings were confirmed by Douglas Grant Mine in “Guerilla offensive achieves military objectives, but at high cost,” *Associated Press*, November 21, 1989.

133 Personal conversation with Mely Porras, November 18, 1989.

134 This was also reported in, “Guatemalan guerillas express solidarity with Salvadoran people,” *The Xinhua Overseas News Service*, November 18, 1989.

135 Douglas Tweedale, “Rebels pull back; Next move unclear in Salvador war,” *United Press International*, November 19, 1989.

136 Jim Anderson, “Lawmakers call for halt to military aid to El Salvador,” *Associated Press*, November 18, 1989.

137 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” April 16, 1963. Retrieved on January 15, 2003 at <http://www.nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html>.

138 Doggett, pp. 3-10; Also *The United Nations and El Salvador*, pp. 37-40.

139 Jeff Bater, “Protesters Oppose US Aid to El Salvador,” *United Press International*, November 22, 1989.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 Doggett, p. 292.

143 Doggett, pp. 212-213.

144 Whitfield, pp. 375-387.

145 “Six Priests Dead,” opinion editorial in *The Washington Post*, November 18, 1989.

146 Grant Mine, “Guerrilla offensive achieves several objectives, but at high cost,” *Associated Press*, November 21, 1989.

147 Ibid.

148 Berryman, p. 98.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 *The United Nations and El Salvador*, p. 100.

152 Berryman, p. 106.

153 Knut Walter and Phillip J. Williams, “Antipolitics in El Salvador, 1948-1994,” in *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, eds. Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies, Jr., Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1997, pp. 343-344.

154 Doggett, pp. 271-274.

155 Williams and Walter, p. 141.

156 Ibid.

157 Whitfield, p. 380.

158 *The United Nations and El Salvador*. New York: United Nations, 1995, pp. 11-12.

159 Royal, p. 301.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid.

162 San Juan, 15:13, *Biblia de Jerusalén*, p. 1532.



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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis incorporates first-hand testimony, primary sources and secondary historical documentation, to discuss the sociopolitical significance of the November 16, 1989 massacre of six Jesuits and two civilians at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in El Salvador. To shed light on the Salvadoran Army's motives for committing the massacre, Jesuit theological formation and its impact on the work of the Jesuits in El Salvador is discussed. After providing background information on the armed conflict in El Salvador during the 1980s, the paper focuses on the final offensive launched by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) on November 11, 1989, and the subsequent UCA massacre committed by the Salvadoran Army. It argues that in response to an unexpectedly strong offensive by the FMLN, the assassination of the UCA Jesuits, accused of being the intellectual backbone of the guerillas, was an attempt by the Salvadoran Armed Forces to debilitate the FMLN. However, because of the international outrage and revulsion this event evoked, it marked the beginning of the end for the unchecked power and legitimacy of the U.S. supported Salvadoran Armed Forces, and became the driving force behind the Salvadoran peace process.