

NEWS

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March 31, 1980

For Immediate Release

RELIGIOUS DIGNITARIES ATTENDING FUNERAL OF MGR. OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO
REFUTE SALVADOREAN GOVERNMENT VERSION ON ORIGIN OF VIOLENCE THAT IN-
TERRUPTED MASS, PREVENTED PUBLIC BURIAL

During the March 30th burial mass offered for San Salvador archbishop Mgr. Oscar A. Romero, killed by a professional gunman one week ago today, a bomb was thrown from the Salvadorean National Palace, sparking off a wave of violence that terrorized thousands of Salvadoreans as well as the international visitors who had gathered to pay final tribute to a religious leader nominated last year for the Nobel Peace Prize.

According to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), a religious-based human rights group, a testimony from the international ecclesiastical delegates present at the burial service for Mgr. Romero indicates that the Salvadorean government communique regarding the events presents grave falsehoods in the narration and interpretation of the fact. "The account by 22 religious representatives from various countries," said WOLA associate Heather Foote, "reconfirms once again that the Salvadorean junta is unable or unwilling to control repressive actions by military commanders, soldiers and paramilitary groups."

"Government-sanctioned provocation of this sort -- coming at such a tragic and sacred moment in Salvadorean history as the funeral for Mgr. Romero -- is unfortunately not new," continued Foote. "During the January 22 march called by the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee, sharpshooters and some government security forces fired into the crowd of 100,000 from the National Palace, the national communications center (ANTEL), the Ministry of Labor, the National Theatre, the Salvadorean Coffee Company, among others. Access to these government buildings, as well as the stationing of 24 National Guardsmen in the National Palace the day of the march, is the responsibility of the junta and the military commanders holding government positions. The National Palace has once again been used as a vantage point for provocateurs, this time acting to disrupt the final ceremonies for the man who will go down in history as the voice of the Salvadorean poor, as a defender of social justice.

more...

Last week, the Salvadorean Ministers of Economy and Education, as well as the Under-Secretary of Agriculture, resigned from the government and left the country. Until then a high-level leader in the government agency responsible for agrarian reform, Under-Secretary Villacorta said that "some garrison commanders at the rank of Colonel continue to distribute identity cards for the disbanded extreme-rightest paramilitary organization, ORDEN, against the orders of the Junta... The question to ask is to what point those groups, which move about with impunity, have ties with the Salvadorean Army."

In early March, Hector Dada (Christian Democrat), one of three civilians in the second military-civilian junta, resigned first from the junta and then from the Christian Democratic party. "The junta is incapable of acting against those whom I perceive to be the principal opponents of the process, and it is clearer with each passing day that those persons are encysted in the very structure of the government," said Dada. In January, Roman Mayorga (independent) and Guillermo Ungo (Social Democrat) had resigned from the first military-civilian junta, along with most cabinet members, citing the inability of civilians to control the military commanders and their troops.

"The U.S. Administration," concluded Foote, "persists in the illusion that the very military commanders who have in action proven their unwillingness to stop repression will change their ways if given anti-riot gear, communications equipment, vehicles, and training from the United States. The Salvadorean government -- its junta and military commanders -- bear direct responsibility for the tragic chain of events yesterday which prevented the Salvadorean people from participating in the last acts for Mgr. Romero and caused the death of an yet undetermined number of people. In tribute to Archbishop Romero, in recognition of his role in seeking and promoting non-military solutions to the problems in El Salvador, the United States government should heed the advice of this historic Salvadorean leader in his letter President Carter:

' It would be unjust and deplorable if the intrusion of foreign powers were to frustrate the Salvadoran People, were to repress it and block its autonomous decisions about the economic and political path that our country ought to follow.' "

For more information
contact:

Heather Foote
(202) 544-8045

Testimony of the Ecclesiastical Delegates at the burial of
Mgr. Oscar Arnulfo Romero in relation to the events which
occurred during the funeral.

1. We bishops, pastors of different Christian churches, superiors of religious orders, priests and laity feel obliged to rectify the communique which the Salvadorean government issued at 4:30 p.m. today, March 30th on the events which happened at the funeral of Bishop Romero. Not only are there grave falsehoods in the narration of the fact, but also in their interpretation, which can lead to serious errors, and confusion. In the same official communique, the government invites us to tell what we saw. And so that is what we are doing.

2. Our appreciation of the facts, of which we are for the most part direct eye-witnesses and hence able to prove them, leads us to state confidently the following:

- a) at no stage did anyone attempt to snatch the corpse of Bishop Romero; on the contrary, all the people and groups without exception behaved with great respect and devotion toward his remains;
- b) the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses entered the Plaza Barrios, where the Cathedral is situated, peacefully, respectfully and in orderly fashion and their leaders placed a wreath on the coffin;
- c) It is quite untrue that there was any pressure whatsoever on us from the Coordinating Committee to force us to stay inside the Cathedral. Insofar as we stayed inside, even after the aggression ceased, it was because of our Christian desire to stay alongside so many terrorized people, squeezed painfully together inside the sacred precincts.

3. What we could be sure of from the steps of the Cathedral and from its towers, as well as from the testimonies gathered from our trips through the city, is the following:

- a) suddenly we heard and saw the explosion of a big bomb which several witnesses saw thrown from the National Palace;
- b) then shots and volleys of fire were heard, which several priests present are certain came from the second floor of the National Palace;
- c) we saw or can prove the presence from the earliest hours of the morning of the security forces in the streets of San Salvador and on the access roads to the city;

- d) We can also assume that some members of the Coordinating Committee were responsible for certain actions, consisting basically in burning cars; supposedly to cover the flight of the people from the square.

4. We who came to honor the life and death of Bishop Romero have been able to experience for ourselves the truth of his words when he denounced unceasingly the repression of the Salvadorean people. We feel today more than ever in solidarity with and continuers of his prophetic mission, by echoing his last words in which he begged and ordered, in the name of God, that the repression should cease.

We have been witnesses of the suffering and anguish of the Salvadorean people, but also of their courage and maturity. And on this occasion we are witnesses of the serious distortion of the facts and of their false interpretation which the government of El Salvador has given out.

March 30, 1980

(Signed by 22 ecclesiastical delegates who traveled to El Salvador to attend the funeral of Archbishop Oscar A. Romero.)

Bishop Luciano Mendez Almeida	Auxiliary, Sao Paulo; Sec-Gen, Brazilian Bishops Conf.
Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo	Cuernavaca, Mexico
Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia	San Cristobal de las Casas
Bishop Leonidas E. Proano	Rio Bamba, Brazil
Bishop Luis A. Bamberen	Peru
Jorge Lara-Braud	National Council of Churches
Bishop James o'Brien	Bishop in Hertfordshire, England
Fr. Juan Vives Suria	Venezuela
Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez	Lima, Peru
Fr. Jesus Garcia	Mexico
Luis Maria Goiochea	Lima, Peru
Angel V. Peiro	World Council of Churches
Charles Harper	World Council of Churches
Bishop Marcos McGrath	Panama
Bishop Emonn Casey	Bishop of Galway, Ireland
Sr. Regina McEvoy	Sisters of Maryknoll
Sr. Josephine Kollner	Sisters of Maryknoll
Sr. Marie Moore	Sisters of Maryknoll
Fr. Simon E. Smith, SJ	Jesuit Missions
Fr. Gerard Dupont	Brazilian Bishops Conference
Jose Antonio Perez	National Council of Churches--United Methodist Church
Victor M. Mercado	National Council of Churches--American Baptist Churches
Fr. James Connor, SJ	Jesuit Conference
Julian Filochoski	Catholic Institute for International Relations, London

Colman McCarthy

Sorrow in El Salvador

When he visited San Salvador last year, Rep. Thomas Harkin (D-Iowa) went to mass at the city's Catholic cathedral. It was Holy Thursday. The service was packed with poor peasants from the countryside.

Harkin was moved by their piety, but what he noticed most was the cathedral's state of disrepair. Birds flew in and out of the broken windows and caved-in doors. A paint job, inside and out, was needed. Construction work remained unfinished.

As a good can-do American, Harkin asked why something wasn't being done about this eyesore. He was told that San Salvador's archbishop, Oscar Romero, had begun a building and renovation program, but had had second thoughts. A sparkling cathedral was no longer a priority. It would be left unfinished as a monument to El Salvador's poor, who need homes, food, jobs and justice more than another church building needs paint.

Suddenly, a new destitution pervades the lives of El Salvador's poor: Archbishop Romero was slain by gunmen late Monday afternoon as he celebrated mass in a hospital chapel. Even at prayer, he was a threat.

When I talked with Harkin last week, he told a number of stories about the bravery of the archbishop he had come to know. All of them confirmed what those familiar with the current violence and chaos in El Salvador already understood: Romero's forceful views on social justice and a fair distribution of the wealth had made him the poor's most resolute ally. Harkin, one of the few in Congress who have taken the trouble to examine the United States' role in Latin America (Rep. Robert Drinan is another), said it was regrettable that few Americans knew about Romero.

By coincidence, the same day of my conversation with Harkin, one of Romero's assistants—a young priest—came to my office to share his thoughts about El Salvador and the archbishop. He told of Romero's letter last month to President Carter. Drop your plans to send military

aid to our country, Romero warned: "Instead of favoring greater justice and peace in El Salvador [the \$5.7 million in aid] undoubtedly will sharpen the repression."

The priest, an educated and politically sophisticated man, was aware that congressional hearings would soon be held on American policy in El Salvador. But he wondered: why does the United States reflexively send military aid to impoverished countries like El Salvador when the military is already a powerfully corrupting force?

After the priest left—he was returning to El Salvador to rejoin Romero in what were the last days of the latter's life—I spoke to a State Department official about the military aid question. The archbishop, he claimed, was operating from "a misunderstanding." It's not military aid the United States has in mind, but "security assistance." That would include police equipment.

"Suddenly, a new destitution pervades the lives of the poor: Archbishop Romero was slain by gunmen late Monday."

It would be used to "maintain order, as well as improve the professionalism of the junta's security forces so they won't go out and beat heads."

That's almost the opposite of what needs to be done, Archbishop Romero had said. In a sermon to his people last November, he stated that if the United States wants to be helpful, it should condition its aid to a "purification of the security forces," not a bolstering of them. Its aid should also help resolve the problem of the large number of political prisoners who have disappeared.

Others also reject the State Department's approach. The Washington Office on Latin America, a religious-based human rights organization, argues that "military assistance to El Salvador will only increase the tension and make more difficult a political solution to a political problem." Harkin of Iowa bluntly dismisses the fine distinctions between military aid and "security assistance." Either way, he says, "it's another signal to everyone in El Salvador that the United States sides with the military. In turn that strengthens the military in its conviction that it's all right to repress certain segments of the population, beginning with the left."

However the Carter administration and Congress resolve this, it will still have to deal with the objections raised by Archbishop Romero. He took too many stands, saw too many of his priests and parishioners killed or abducted, and risked his own life too often, for his ideas to be brushed aside now that he is dead.

American presidents may not be used to frank talk from Latin American bishops. But then again, few in Latin America—not the militarists and not the oblivious Catholic rich with like well-painted churches—were used to either. Romero, the latest in a growing number of martyred heroes in Latin America, knew the terrorists, angered by his frequent sermons on economic justice, were out to kill him. That he was gunned down during mass is an indication of how desperate the brutality in El Salvador has become and how, more than ever, Romero's vision is needed.

Colman McCarthy

When the People Are Made the Enemy

After conversations with a number of recent visitors to El Salvador—the country of 5 million and the size of Massachusetts that is a land of blood and bombs—I have become more and more suspicious of the “sudden eruption” explanation of that nation's current violence.

In truth, violence in the form of systematic and officially sanctioned terror has long been the most relied on solution to solving El Salvador's immense economic and social problems. If it is different now, it is because the recent murder of an archbishop during mass and the gun battles during his funeral were dramatic events that could be easily captured on film and wire service news copy.

But beneath the easy impressions are some other realities, ones that are less dramatic, perhaps, but are crucial to a

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full understanding of El Salvador's siege of terror.

“I was prepared for a number of things,” says Rev. William Wipfler, the director of the office of human rights of the National Council of Churches, of his recent four-day visit to San Salvador, the country's capital. “But what truly alarmed me was learning how the military indoctrinates its recruits during boot camp. During calisthenics, a chant is used: ‘Kill the people, kill the people.’ These young soldiers are fresh from the countryside themselves where the people—their own people—live. But now, their own families, friends and local leaders are pictured as the enemy.”

Karen DeYoung, a Washington Post reporter, tells of going to army boot camps in May 1979 and seeing the village priests depicted as national security threats: A priest's picture is shown. If he is wearing proper clerical clothing, he is acceptable. If he wears work clothes, plays the guitar or perhaps has a beard, then he is subversive. He, too, is the enemy.

What the innocent young are taught in the lowest levels of the military boot camps is a reflection of the government's thinking at the highest levels of policy-making. In its 1979 report on El Salvador, Amnesty International said that “the efforts of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and the Salvadoran Human Rights Committee, to publicize human rights violations have led the government to accuse

church activists of having links with communists and subversives.”

Using the specter of a Marxist takeover as a justification for the state's brutality has been a common form of violence in much of Latin America. El Salvador is almost unique because in few countries have the teachings of the church—itsself an arch-foe of Marxist communism—been so taken to heart by the poor. The distinction of the slain Archbishop Romero was that he was available to the *campesinos* from the countryside. He listened to them. He didn't stand apart. He came to understand their local organizations and their use of strikes and demonstrations.

Because Romero was in touch, his leadership had a sound base. In contrast, one of the reasons the Carter administration is currently confused—some officials have supported the plan to send military aid to El Salvador, some have opposed the plan—is that it limited its Salvadoran contacts to the supposedly safe and stable. A 1978 Defense Department statement to Congress said: “U.S. interests in [El Salvador] are derived from our larger concerns for regional stability in Central America. Through a modest security-assistance program, we are able to maintain communication with El Salvador's military establishment, which is the country's most important political force.”

It turns out that the Defense Department was wrong again. Archbishop Romero became the strongest political force. He had the power of an open mind.

Thomas Quigley of the office of justice and peace of the U.S. Catholic Conference came back from El Salvador—he spoke to Romero shortly before the assassination—fearing that “the Carter administration will continue to see the popular organizations simply as ‘leftists’ or ‘Marxists,’ rather than perceiving them as legitimate voices of the workers and the poor seeking to bring about a more just society.”

Little evidence exists that the current Salvadoran government—a makeshift operation that is beleaguered by resignations—is supported by any kind of meaningful popular base. As Romero understood, unless the leaders of local community groups are allowed to participate in reaching decisions affecting their own lives, then whatever government finds or puts itself in power—and however much it is supported by distant neighbors like the United States—is bound to fail.

In time, the Carter administration will have to overcome its fear of a “leftist takeover” in El Salvador—or, rather, its fear of being criticized for letting another Cuba “rise” or another Nicaragua “fall.” Our decades of propping up dictators and military governments in Latin America—in the name of securing our vital interests—have led to massive bloodshed in one country after another, not the “regional stability” that Pentagon analysts speak of in their delusions.

AN INFORMATION AND STRATEGY SESSION
ON CURRENT ISSUES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

- RECENT SHIFTS IN U.S. POLICY
- ARMS SALES AND MILITARY TRAINING ASSISTANCE
- ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE
- LEGISLATION BEFORE CONGRESS
- STRATEGIES FOR CITIZEN ACTION
- PHILADELPHIA GROUPS AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING

MARCH 12, 1980 7:00 TO 9:30 P.M.

RUFUS JONES ROOM - FRIENDS CENTER
1501 CHERRY STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA

PROGRAM

7:00 to 8:30 PANEL PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY: VICTIM OF THE COLD WAR?

Jack Malinowski - Director of the Human Rights / Global Justice Program, American Friends Service Committee, and Member of the Human Rights Working Group, Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Cindy Aronson - Institute for Policy Studies

~~CENTRAL AMERICA: THE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON~~

~~Heather Foote - Washington Office on Latin America~~

WHAT PHILADELPHIA GROUPS ARE DOING

Speaker to be named

8:30 to 9:30 COUNTRY AND ISSUE WORKSHOPS / STRATEGY SESSIONS

- MILITARY SALES AND TRAINING
- ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE
- U.S. POLICY, INCLUDING RENEWAL OF COVERT INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES
- EL SALVADOR
- GUATEMALA
- NICARAGUA

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL PORTIA JONES AT 382-1696 OR DICK ERSTAD AT 349-8940

suggested donation \$1.00 - proceeds above cost will go to the National Network in Solidarity with the People of Nicaragua

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P R E S S C O N F E R E N C E

Guillermo Manuel Ungo

Secretary-General of the Movimiento Nacional
Revolucionario (MNR), the social democrat party of
EL SALVADOR,

and

one of three civilian members of the first
military-civilian junta, which governed fol-
lowing the October 15 coup. Mr. Ungo was
among the many government officials who re-
signed in late December and early January when
it became apparent that the moderate military
sector was no longer in command of the security
forces and that the proposed reforms could not
be implemented.

Mr. Ungo will discuss the current political/
economic situation in his country and the
prospects for self-determination by the Sal-
vadorean people.

Tuesday, February 26

11:00 a.m.

Capitol Room, National Press Building
529--14th St., N.W.

For further information: Heather Foote
544-8045

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The Washington Office on Latin America invites you to attend a press conference about the current situation in El Salvador on Monday, March 17, at 11:00 a.m. in the Capitol Room of the National Press Club (529--14th Street, N.W.), with:

- Hector DADA Engineer and economist
Foreign minister under the first Salvador-
ean military-civilian government
Member of the junta under the second Sal-
vadorean military-civilian government
(Resigned from the government on March 3, '80)
- Ruben ZAMORA RIVAS Lawyer and political scientist
Minister to the Presidency under the first
Salvadorean military-civilian government
(Brother of Mario Zamora Rivas, Attorney
General of Welfare, recently assassinated)
- Alberto ARENE Economist
President of a public institution for the
development of cooperatives under the
first and second Salvadorean military-
civilian governments
(Resigned from the government on March 11, '80)

In a letter dated March 10, 1980, these three Christian Demo-
crat leaders and four other party members announced their resigna-
tion from that political organization, charging:

- 1) Violation of all points in the political pact adopted by the Salvadorean armed forces and the Christian Democrat Party regarding joint participation in government, in particular,
 - ...respect for human rights
 - ...exercise of general control over the armed forces by the junta
 - ...structural reforms accompanied by democratic freedoms and popular participation
- 2) Governmental complacency with and support of plans for North American military intervention

U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO EL SALVADOR

House Appropriations Committee

Subcommittee on Foreign Operations

Rep. Clarence Long, Chairman

March 25, 1980

Heather Foote

Washington Office on Latin America

Members of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations:

In the wake of the brutal assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero yesterday, March 24, 1980, I believe it is fitting to recall his position regarding military aid, the subject of today's hearing. Last February, when the Archbishop first learned of United States plans to send military assistance, including military trainers to El Salvador, he sent a letter to President Carter registering his concerns:

"I am very worried," he said, "by the news that the government of the United States is studying a form of abetting the arming of El Salvador by sending military teams and advisors to 'train three Salvadoran battalions in logistics, communications, and intelligence.' If this information from the newspapers is correct, the contribution of your government instead of promoting greater justice and peace in El Salvador will without doubt sharpen the injustice and repression against the organizations of the people which repeatedly have been struggling to gain respect for their most fundamental human rights.

The present junta government and above all the armed forces and security forces unfortunately have not demonstrated their capacity to resolve, in political and structural practice, the grave national problems. In general they have only reverted to repressive violence producing a total of deaths and injuries much greater than in the recent military regimes whose systematic violation of human rights was denounced by the International Committee on Human Rights."

characterize present U.S. policy toward El Salvador, a country always placed on the "back burner" until escalating repression under the government of former president General Carlos Humberto Romero catapulted this Central American republic of 4.8 million to the international spotlight. Now, five months following the October 15th coup that ousted Romero, the United States plans to provide additional military assistance credits to a country whose political power no longer lies with the young officers responsible for the coup but with old-line military leaders in government positions who practice a policy of "reform with repression."

In off-the-record conversations in September 1978, a mid-level State Department official stressed the need for greater U.S. government focus on El Salvador. That country's problems, he assured, would present far greater challenges for U.S. policy than the situation in Nicaragua. Such urgency did not find expression in actual policy formulation, for the United States continued to call for free elections under the internationally-discredited General Romero until as late as September 1979, just one month before the coup d'etat.

Except for a brief period in the early 1960's, the United States consistently aligned itself with the small Salvadoran economic elite, whose political control over the country was guaranteed for nearly five decades by a succession of military governments unaccustomed to democratic procedures. The U.S. Congress began to take a closer look at El Salvador in March 1977 when the Subcommittees on International Organizations and Inter-American Affairs held hearings on fraud in that year's presidential elections in El Salvador. Four months later, the Subcommittee on International Organizations called hearings on the religious persecution

in El Salvador.

But such initiatives by the Congress did not lead to any major shifts in U.S. policy during the years when the traditional Salvadoran political parties found themselves increasingly neutralized by both military manipulation of elections and repression against attempts to organize in the rural sectors.

In its December 1978 report, a British Parliamentary delegation, one of many groups to make investigative trips to El Salvador, summarized well the attempts to use traditional democratic channels to promote change in that country in the 1970's: "In terms of the progress towards democracy, the 1972 elections were clearly a watershed. The massive fraud of those elections has by all accounts been repeated: in congressional and municipal elections in 1974, when no figures were issued by the Central Electoral Council to substantiate their list of successful candidates; in the congressional and municipal elections two years later, when the UNO (United National Opposition) withdrew from the contest following widespread intimidation, manipulation and disbarment of opposition candidates in the pre-election campaign; and in the 1977 presidential elections, in what was tantamount to a final attempt by the opposition parties to make the democratic system work."

Their principle leaders exiled and their methods of political organizing rendered ineffective under conditions of severe repression, the traditional political parties (social democrats, christian democrats and communists) were unable to produce many concrete results for the people of El Salvador despite repeated efforts to make the electoral process work in a democratic fashion under military rule. Numerous peasant and workers' groups developing the early to mid-1970's began to join together

in several mass organizations in an effort to provide a stronger voice for the rural population, which forms the majority of the Salvadorans. Able and willing to work under the more restrictive and hazardous conditions of military rule, these mass organizations--commonly called "popular organizations"--grew in strength, gradually occupying much of the political space previously held by the traditional political parties. Repression by government security forces against these emerging popular organizations and especially against peasants associated with such groups intensified, leading the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to recommend to the government of El Salvador, in November 1978, "that the campesino (rural worker) sector be permitted to resort to every means of organization existing in a democratic society, on the basis of the exercise of the rights, among others, of assembly, of association, and of union organization. For this purpose, the government should also encourage and protect the campesinos--and those who cooperate or wish to cooperate with them, such as the churches, particularly the Catholic church--in their efforts to organize themselves to exercise their rights and to affirm their dignity." Salvadoran Catholic church statistics indicate that in the first half of 1979, in the months immediately following the OAS-IACHR recommendation, 107 campesinos died in politically-motivated killings by the Salvadoran security forces, in particular the National Guard and National Police.

It is against this political backdrop that U.S. policy towards El Salvador must be reviewed. In his "Central America at the Crossroads" testimony before the House of Representatives Inter-American Affairs Subcommittee on September 11, 1979, then Assistant Secretary of State Viron Vaky presented a U.S. government overview of the region, indicating that "if there is any one central motif that characterizes Central America

today...it is this intense--and essentially inevitable--pressure for change which has swept into the region. This central issue, in turn, is not whether change is to occur, but whether that change is to be violent and radical--or peaceful and evolutionary and preserving individual rights and democratic values." Few will disagree on the desirability of 'peaceful and evolutionary change.' But many will agree that 'peaceful and evolutionary change' was repeatedly attempted in El Salvador in the early and mid-1970's, a period in which the United States government did not take a decisive public stance against rule by the economic elite in favor of some more democratic alternative. Always hoping to use economic and military assistance as "leverage" towards reform, the United States sent positive signals to the military governments of a country whose land and wealth concentration are among the most severe in all Latin America.

According to studies by the Institute for Policy Studies:

Security assistance from the United States to El Salvador between Fiscal Year 1950 and Fiscal Year 1979 has totalled \$4.97 million in Military Assistance Program grants, \$3.479 million in Foreign Military Sales Agreements, \$2.454 million in Excess Defense Articles, and \$5.814 million in International Military Education and Training Program grants, all for a total of \$16.72 million. The United States has trained a total of 1971 Salvadoran officers, including at least 17 in Urban Counterinsurgency, 14 in Military Intelligence, 108 in Basic Combat and Counterinsurgency, and 124 in Basic Officer Preparation. According to the Pentagon in 1977, "...our security assistance program facilitates our overall relations with the government of El Salvador and fosters useful professional contacts with key members of the Salvadoran armed forces."

By the fall of 1979, General Romero's name was associated widely with systematic human rights violations, and his disrepute internationally made him dispensable for both a majority in the Salvadoran armed forces and the U.S. government. Just prior to General Romero's forced departure in October 1979, two coups from opposing military sectors had been in the offing. While proponents of both hoped to repair the tarnished image of the military, only the young officers planned to implement major structural

reforms. The appointment of military officials to the various government positions following the coup represented a compromise between opposing views, with military command positions outside the junta going to old-line officials uncommitted to substantial change. This was to prove of critical importance in following months.

Despite the present critical situation in El Salvador and the need to devote energies to the future, it is as important to review U.S. policy failures in the recent past, as they can provide guidelines in developing a new and more realistic policy towards El Salvador. As mentioned above, the U.S. government in September 1979 continued to insist on the viability of free elections under General Romero, despite frustrating Salvadoran experiences with government electoral fraud under far less repressive circumstances earlier in the decade, despite the OAS-IACHR conclusion that "there is widespread skepticism among the citizenry regarding the right to vote and to participate in government...(and that)...the political parties of the opposition, in this connection, come to have no confidence in the possibility of having free and honest elections." In this same period, as in earlier years, the U.S. failed to recognize the growing political importance of the popular organizations and of their disbelief in elections under repressive military rule, an attitude shared by the political parties.

Following the resignations of civilian junta members Guillermo Ungo (social democrat) and Roman Mayorga (independent) along with most progressive cabinet members in early January 1980, the U.S. expressed first surprise and then irritation that the social democrats refused to rejoin the government once again. Eager to move ahead with the second (Christian Democratic) attempt at military-civilian government, U.S. policy-makers did not hear the message of those who resigned: that old-line military in key command positions prevented civilian control of the security forces and blocked serious attempts at reform. The junta members who resigned were dismissed

as poor managers.

Nor did the U.S. policy-makers seem to understand the political significance, let alone the timing, of the early January unification of the three popular organizations and one political party into a central coordinating body, with sympathetic ears lent this entity by the social democrats, the left-wing of the Christian Democratic party, the two universities, independent professionals, and the progressive Catholic Church.

Closer to home for the United States was the mid-March resignation of prominent Christian Democratic leader Hector Dada from both his political party and the five-man junta. "If it is true that obstacles found along the way have been enormous," he said in his resignation letter to the junta, "it is no less certain that there is an inability on the part of the junta to take actions against those whom I see as the principal opponents of the process, and that every day it becomes more and more clear that these individuals are to be found within the government itself." Dada cites as an example the refusal of the Minister of Defense to take punitive actions against those military officials who participated in a coup attempt against the government in late February.

In his resignation statement to the secretary general of the Christian Democratic Party, Dada, who as Foreign Minister had represented the newly-formed Salvadoran government at the October 1979 meeting of the O.A.S. general assembly in Bolivia, said: "The two criticisms we have made concerning the actions of the Government in which the Party claims to participate--the maintenance of repression and complacency in the face of interventionist foreign plans--constitute the gravest accusations of behavior absolutely contradictory with the posture our Party has maintained throughout twenty years of struggle on behalf of the Salvadoran people.

To accept this course of action in return for a share of the power--more formal than real--constitutes unacceptable lameness which allows the governmental process to degenerate into something neither democratic nor Christian."

Under the Christian Democratic-military government in power since the first week of January, repression, including killing by security forces, has increased to levels unknown under General Romero. In the first week of March alone, 156 persons were killed by security forces during a period of no confrontations. According to a March 17 release of Amnesty International,

"The government's announcement of agrarian reform...was coupled with a state of seige censoring the news media, Amnesty International said. Since then, it has received reports of 80 people, including at least 28 children, killed in Cuscatlan Department alone. In Chalatenango Department, a circle of fire was lit around a village to prevent local people escaping: troops then entered the village, killing some 40 people and abducting many others, according to reports received by Amnesty International.

Troops operating in open coordination with the paramilitary organization ORDEN have shot or abducted peasants, razed villages and destroyed crops in Suchitoto and Morazan Department, as well as in Cuscatlan and Chalatenango, the organization said.

The authorities said troops were ordered to occupy plantations to be expropriated under the agrarian reform. Under these orders, Amnesty International said, they attacked villages supporting opposition peasant unions, the Christian Federation of Salvadorian Peasants, and the Union of Rural Workers. Land seized has been handed over to members of ORDEN, a movement organized by El Salvador's previous government to use clandestine "guerrilla-style" terror against government opponents and now re-named the Frente Democratico Nacionalista (Nationalist Democratic Front).

In this resignation letter, signed by seven Christian Democrats, reference is made to the agrarian reform implemented March 6th: "How can the present process succeed if the peasants are repressed on a daily basis merely for organizing themselves? How can this process hope to reach fruition when the organizations representing thousands of peasants have not even been consulted while, to the contrary, the daily and growing repression against those organizations renders impossible any dialogue with them? How can this process serve democracy if, far from the democratic framework in which the Party envisioned it taking place, it is carried out under a state of seige?"

The U.S. government continues to believe that in El Salvador reform can precede control over the security forces involved for the past three months in massive killing. The U.S. government continues to believe that "the center" can be fortified during a state of seige, during a period of severe repression, under a government with little social base or support. The U.S. government continues to support actively a government that has not complied with OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommendations on the dissolution of the paramilitary group ORDEN, the right of campesinos to form and join organizations and the right of the Catholic church to assist in those organizational efforts. The U.S. government plans to send additional military assistance to an armed forces whose command positions are in the hands of old-line military shown to be unwilling to stop this repression. The U.S. government continues to seek a military solution for political problems.

To avoid any further contributions on its part to the militarization of Central America, the U.S. government should make an immediate review of present policy towards El Salvador. The U.S. government should heed the words of Archbishop Oscar Romero that "it would be unjust and deplorable if the intrusion of foreign powers were to frustrate the Salvadoran people, were to repress it and block its autonomous decisions about the economic and political path that our country ought to follow." Monsignor Romero has been the greatest leader and moral leader of the Salvadoran people. He will not now pass into history; he will live on always as a national hero, a symbol of the struggle for the poor, the struggle for human rights and peace. The burial and the attendant acts will see the largest popular outpouring in the history of El Salvador: all political, democratic, labor guild and religious organizations; tens of thousands of unaffiliated persons; and hundreds or representatives of international organizations will be on hand to pay tribute to this hero of justice and of peace. This same man who will

receive both national and international recognition, took a public stand against military aid, in an open letter to President Carter. Approval of this military aid will be transformed for the United States government and people into the repudiation and indignation of hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans, Central Americans, and members of the world community.

- ANNEX I: Statement by Fr. Simon Smith, S.J.. Executive Secretary, Jesuit Missions, on the occasion of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of San Salvador
- ANNEX II. Reprints from Washington POST
- ANNEX III. Resignation letter to junta from Hector Dada (foreign minister under first military-civilian junta and member of the junta under second military-civilian junta)
- ANNEX IV. Resignation letter to secretary-general of Christian Democratic party from seven party members

TESTIMONY OF FR. SIMON SMITH, S.J., EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, JESUIT
MISSIONS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ASSASSINATION OF
ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO OF SAN SALVADOR

MY NAME IS FATHER SIMON SMITH, A CATHOLIC PRIEST OF THE
SOCIETY OF JESUS. I AM COORDINATOR OF ABOUT 900 U.S. AND
CANADIAN JESUIT MISSIONARIES IN OVER FIFTY COUNTRIES (NONE OF
WHICH, BY THE WAY, ARE IN CENTRAL AMERICA AT THIS TIME).

BECAUSE OF THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE POOR WHICH MY JESUIT
PEERS AND OTHER CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS HAVE MADE IN EL SALVADOR,
SOME OF US HAVE PAID WITH OUR LIVES.

LAST EVENING, AS YOU KNOW, THE ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR,
OSCAR ROMERO, WAS ASSASSINATED WHILE CELEBRATING MASS.

YOU HAVE ALL READ, I AM SURE, HIS ELOQUENT PLEA TO PRESIDENT
CARTER IN A LETTER OF FEBRUARY 17, IMPLORING THE U.S. NOT TO SEND
MORE MILITARY AID TO EL SALVADOR. NOW HE HAS BEEN TREACHEROUSLY
ASSASSINATED BY THE VERY MEANS OF VIOLENCE HE HAS SO OFTEN OPPOSED
AND PUBLICLY BEGGED US TO OPPOSE.

IN THE NAME OF HIS BLOOD, GENTLEMEN, IN THE NAME OF THE JUSTICE
HE WITNESSED TO AND HAS NOW SACRIFICED HIS LIFE FOR, IN THE NAME
OF THE MASSES OF EL SALVADOR WHOSE PRIMARY SPOKESPERSON HAS NOW
BEEN PERMANENTLY SILENCED.....IN THE NAME OF GOD, GENTLEMEN, STOP
THIS MAD MILITARIZATION OF THE FORCES OF VIOLENCE AND REPRESSION
IN EL SALVADOR. YOU SURELY HAVE BEEN MADE AWARE THAT ANY MILITARY

AID YOU SEND TO EL SALVADOR, AUTOMATICALLY AND INELUCTABLY ENDS UP IN THE HANDS OF THE MILITARY AND PARA-MILITARY RIGHTIST GROUPS WHO ARE THEMSELVES AT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY.

THE FUNAERAL THIS THURSDAY OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE THE LARGEST GATHERING OF HUMAN BEINGS EL SALVADOR WILL EVER HAVE KNOWN. AT A MOMENT WHEN THE COUNTRY WILL BE HONORING ITS LATEST MARTYR, ITS GREATEST HERO OF THE PEOPLE TO DATE, IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY GROSS FOR US TO BE VOTING FURTHER MILITARY AID. SUCH AN ACTION COULD BEING UPON US ONLY THE GRAVEST OPPROBRIUM AND SCORN -- SOMETHING WE CAN ILL AFFORD TO RISK RIGHT NOW IN EL SALVADOR.

Boredom and Alarm

PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY swing from boredom to alarm at the prospect of coups or revolutions in Central America. The ho-hum reaction is a traditional North American response to turgid developments south of the border. The alarm follows when the inadequacies of ho-hum start to be recognized. Until last fall, the United States remained indifferent to El Salvador, the hemisphere's most active volcano. Then, the administration got scared. It decided that the risks of a "second Nicaragua," a second Central American revolution that might go Cuba's way, outweighed the comforts of its preferred non-intervention policy. It started intervening, in a political sense, to an extent that has made El Salvador the most interesting laboratory of American policy anywhere in the world.

The scene could hardly have been less inviting. For more than four decades the United States had contributed to the building of a vast social explosion, which was already coming, promising a terrible civil war and a geopolitical calamity. Then the administration began trying to muffle or channel that explosion. Military intervention, Vietnam style or any style, plainly was out, although it had its partisans in the Pentagon and among the unreconstructed Salvadoran right. The classic liberal response, to bring along social reform and popular participation by easy stages, was no less irrelevant in the context of El Salvador's advanced deterioration.

The policy finally chosen, or partly chosen, was to make an audacious gamble on the Salvadoran military: to transform key elements of it from custodians of a rotting, violent status quo to caretakers of reform. This has involved a delicate appeal to the patriotism and institutional interest of the armed forces by providing supplies (and the prospect of training) and by seeking their commitment to truly vast efforts at social redress, centering on land reform. The risk of this policy lies in the corruption of substantial parts of the military and their identification with repression. The promise of the policy lies in its readiness to deal with a real center of power, one with important elements interested in modernization, and to harness those elements to change.

Many of the broadly based political groups that will have to be brought into the new order to make it work are frankly skeptical, if not contemptuous, of the idea that the military includes potential allies, not just assured foes. A deep pessimism inclines many citizens to feel that progress can come only by cataclysmic violence. This puts an extraordinary burden on the military to earn popular confidence by limiting violence and making land reform work. It puts a special burden on the United States to continue its wager on the armed forces only if they show themselves worthy of it.

By CYNTHIA ARNSON

Wrong way to help

Even before the last shots of the Nicaraguan revolution were fired, US officials carefully began planning a long-overdue policy toward Central America. Acutely aware that, in the words of then-Assistant Secretary of State Viron Vaky "... deep grievances, legitimate needs for reform ... and basic demands for equity ... are so fundamental that change cannot be avoided," policymakers began a search for solutions to the region's problems that would ensure that change in Nicaragua's neighbors was "peaceful and evolutionary" rather than "violent and radical."

Today, all eyes are on El Salvador, a tiny country ruled for decades by a brutal military on behalf of a tiny land-holding elite. Now governed by the second of two civilian-military juntas to rule since last October's ouster of Gen. Carlos Humberto Romero, El Salvador is beset by violence that could lead to civil war. The lack of popular support for the current junta, coupled with soaring repression by government security forces and paramilitary groups that exceeds that even under Romero, is the central feature of El Salvador's political landscape.

Last week, leading Christian Democrat Hector Dada Hirezi resigned his post in the five-man junta, renouncing both his government and his party. Dada joined seven other leading Christian Democrats in denouncing government-sponsored human rights violations, as well as the junta's plan to carry out an agrarian reform under conditions of a state of siege and without the participation of peasant organizations.

Despite this assessment by leaders the US once backed, policymakers in Washington have devised a package of economic and military assistance for El Salvador to promote the classic combination of "reform with repression."

Immediate US proposals to send \$5.7 million in arms credits to purchase transport vehicles, communications equipment

and riot control gear can only give the security forces a greater capacity to engage in their campaigns of terror. If Congress approves this money, along with \$5.5 million slated for next year, the US will be deeply implicated in repression that has already claimed over 700 lives this year.

Symbolically, this aid appears to pledge US support to a faltering regime that is isolated from the population and that is unable to control the very repression that helps keep it in place. In practice, military aid, though "non-lethal," increases the efficiency and tactical maneuverability of military units who have proven unresponsive to US pressures to cease their ruthless tactics.

Last November, in a "humanitarian gesture," the US sent El Salvador \$205,000 in riot control gear and a six-man mobile training team to train the security forces in riot control. The result, noted Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, in a poignant letter to President Carter, was that "the security forces, with greater personal protection and efficiency, have repressed the people even more violently using deadly weapons."

Equally troubling are proposals to send more Pentagon personnel to El Salvador to train Army units in intelligence, communications and logistics. Having managed to circumvent congressional oversight, the Carter Administration now has \$300,000 in military training funds from which to finance this provocative measure.

Had the US sought many years ago to promote peaceful reform in El Salvador, military repression and poverty might not have led to such deep popular dissatisfaction with the traditional political process. The US may not be able to stop civil war in El Salvador, but at least it could choose not to be on the wrong side.

Cynthia Arnson is an associate of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington.

San Salvador, March 3, 1980

ILLUSTRIOUS GOVERNMENT JUNTA

Gentlemen:

On January 6 last, the National Convention of the Christian Democratic Party nominated me to serve as its representative in the illustrious Revolutionary Government Junta, and ordered me to work towards the strict fulfillment, in spirit and in letter, of the program it had presented to the Armed Forces as a condition for Christian Democratic participation in the government. When the Armed Forces accepted a clear commitment to honor that platform, and upon the decision of the illustrious Junta to accept me as a member, I assumed my post under an explicit pledge to fulfill the Party mandate in a disciplined manner.

While it is true that the obstacles along the road have been enormous, it is equally true that the Junta is incapable of acting against those whom I perceive to be the principal opponents of the process, and it is clearer with each passing day that those persons are encysted in the very structure of the government. The democratic government to be developed is travelling a road towards total perversion.

I will not enter into the details behind my interpretation of events. The events themselves offer both overwhelming and unquestionable proof of my assertion. We have not been able to stop the repression, and those committing acts of repression disrespectful of the authority of the Junta go unpunished; the promised dialogue with the popular organizations fails to materialize; the chances for producing reforms with the support of the people are receding beyond reach; etc. And, if there were need of another example, it would be served by the prepotent statements of the Minister of Defense contradicting a military member of the Junta and mocking the demands of the Christian Democratic Party by averring, prior to any ruling by the Military High Court of the Revolutionary Government Junta, that there would be no changes in the command of the military; this,

...more

in addition to denying the existence of a planned coup d'etat of which you are well-aware. This posture, like that of the perpetrators of the planned coup, will once again enjoy complete impunity.

I do not believe it necessary to expand further on the causes underlying the decision set forth at the end of this letter. In a note to the Christian Democratic Party, I have already elaborated the reasons for which I can no longer serve as a representative of that political institution at the highest level of government. If my interpretation of the facts is in fundamental contradiction with the line set forth by the present high leadership, my political ethic impedes me from going on while I know that that line will not prevent the perversion of the process, as I have mentioned. For this reason, gentlemen, I find myself faced with an unavoidable obligation to render my irrevocable resignation from the post honorably entrusted to me by the illustrious Junta. I do this with the conviction that it is the best way for me to serve the most authentic interests of the Salvadoran people.

I wish to make known to you that my decision implies no judgment whatsoever on your personages. Facts, not good intentions, determine political reality. And so, in taking my leave, I wish to offer you my thanks for the human solidarity you have always showed me.

Most respectfully yours,

Héctor Miguel Antonio Dada Hirezi

To the attention of
the Secretary General of
the Christian Democratic Party

Mr. Secretary General:

We, the undersigned members of the Christian Democratic Party, believe that our years of membership in the Party and our broad participation in Party activities bear witness to our commitment to the principles of democracy and of social teachings of Christianity.

It is precisely because of our fidelity to these principles that we have attempted, through all means within our grasp and at all levels of the Party structure including the National Convention, to promote awareness of the urgent need for rectification of the Party's present direction; but our efforts have not borne satisfactory results.

Our present posture results from the following considerations:

I. We believe that the conditions demanded publicly of the Armed Forces by the Party as prerequisite to participation in the Government -- conditions publicly accepted by the Armed Forces -- were meant to encompass, above all else, respect for the human rights of the peoples of the Republic. This respect for human rights is incompatible with the exacerbated and growing repression exercised against the popular organizations and against the people in general. In truth, the attitude of a sector of the Armed Forces, including those officers presently occupying key positions within the operative mechanism of the army and the public security bodies, implies not only actions contrary to even an elemental respect for the most fundamental human rights -- such as the right to life and personal security -- but even actions at variance with the traditional military discipline of obedience to the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces which is presently constituted by the Revolutionary Government Junta. Continued toleration of this state of affairs by the Party and its high officials necessarily entails a measure of responsibility for those activities. The Party and its officials thereby render themselves morally-accountable accomplices to the repression unleashed daily against the Salvadorean people. Furthermore, the program of structural reforms, with which we have always been in agreement, loses all effectiveness if not implemented in a climate of freedom: which is to say, unless accompanied by the cessation of all repression and the democratic participation by the organizations representative of the people.

II. Although there has as yet been no official declaration accepting the interventionist intentions of foreign governments, such as the intention of the United States, it is a fact that both this Government's and this Party's attitude has been characterized by complacency. This includes the attitude towards the United States' offer to send a large quantity of military material and 36 counter-insurgency instructors to El Salvador to implement a "special, anti-subversive war." Failure to reject such proposals transforms us, within the context of foreign countries' plans, into a battlefield for the struggles of the Superpowers, thereby exposing our people to suffer the attendant consequences. Lending oneself to a foreign intervention under any circumstances whatsoever is, plainly speaking, treason. This condemnation applies equally to all forms of foreign intervention, regardless of origin. We will equally condemn intervention by any country, capitalist or socialist, should such occur during the civil war today threatening to engulf our country.

III. Regarding the program of structural reforms proposed by the Party, we wish to make clear our complete agreement with and decided support for such reforms. Nonetheless, as we have also clearly stated, a program of "reforms with repression" runs contrary to the fundamentals of Christian Democracy. Agrarian reform must encompass not only the taking of lands from the major estate owners, but, above all, the economic and political participation of peasant organizations.

This has always been the position of the Christian Democratic Party. Elsewise, there is no explanation for our Party having condemned the agrarian transformation program of the National Conciliation Party as exclusionary of free and organized peasant participation, lacking of any support from organized peasant groups, and, in fewer words, technocratic and authoritarian. How can the present process succeed if the peasants are repressed on a daily basis merely for organizing themselves? How can this process hope to reach fruition when the organizations representing thousands of peasants have not even been consulted while, to the contrary, the daily and growing repression against those organizations renders impossible any dialogue with them? How can this process serve democracy if, far from the democratic framework in which the Party envisioned it taking place, it is carried out under a state of seige?...It is because of these inconsistencies that we have struggled within the Party for an end to the repression and to reject the special war of counter-insurgency. However, given the present Party leadership, none of our pleas has been accorded any importance.

IV. The two criticisms we have made concerning the actions of the Government in which the Party claims to participate -- the maintenance of repression and complacency in the face of interventionist foreign plans -- constitute the gravest accusations of behavior absolutely contradictory with the posture our Party has maintained throughout twenty years of struggle on behalf of the Salvadorean people. To accept this course of action in return for a share of the power -- more formal than real -- constitutes unacceptable lameness which allows the governmental process to degenerate into something neither democratic nor Christian. Incredible as it may seem, even the National Conciliation Party, which for nearly twenty years scourged our country with unwanted governments knelt in supplication before North American imperialism, today has replaced our party as the voice of reason in these events.

It is for reasons such as the aforementioned, all of which have been discussed, that companero Hector Dada Eirezi resigned from the Revolutionary Government Junta and left for Mexico, where he remains to this day.

For all of the reasons set forth in this letter, and with an energetic condemnation of both the continuous repression and the proposed foreign intervention, we hereby inform the Christian Democratic Party of our irrevocable resignation from its ranks. We wish to make clear that we continue believing in the principles of democracy and the social teachings of Christianity and will continue to support those principles for the remainder of our lives; but we take leave of this political body because we cannot accept the behavior of a lame and subservient leadership.

Respectfully,

ROBERTO LARA VELADO

FERNANDO DIAZ RODRIGUEZ

HECTOR DADA EIREZI

RUBEN ZAMORA

ALBERTO ARENE

FRANCISCO PANLAGUA

HECTOR R. SILVA E.

(translation from the original in Spanish)