

Blood and Ink

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IGNACIO ELLACURÍA, JON SOBRINO,
AND THE JESUIT MARTYRS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA

Robert Lassalle-Klein

*with a Foreword by
Jon Sobrino*

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*For Kate, Rosie, and Peter, who grew up with this story;
for Lynn, who embraced its meaning for our lives together;
and for the UCA martyrs,
whose faith, hope, and love for the crucified people of El Salvador
are a blessing for those who receive it*

Presentation

Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J.

Blood and Ink is the story of the martyrs of the University of Central America “José Simeón Cañas” of San Salvador (UCA) interpreted as a sign of the mysterious presence of God in human history. In Robert Lassalle-Klein’s telling, God has visited El Salvador in the UCA martyrs, Monseñor Romero, and various other martyrs. The memory of the UCA martyrs finally confronts the American reader with God’s appearance there.

This is a complex story whose point of departure is the historical reality of El Salvador, which includes Washington’s military intervention in Central America, the role of the church in Latin America, the theology of liberation, and the Society of Jesus. As the reader delves into this rich historical material he or she discovers why the UCA martyrs were killed and what they died for.

This is the story of six Jesuits and two Salvadoran women, mother and daughter, told with respect and admiration, inspired by lives willingly dedicated to the liberation of a people. The fact that this occurred at a Jesuit university raises interesting questions. For how could a university, without ceasing to be what it is, be inserted at the historical crossroads of the Salvadoran people and, led by its commitment to justice, help to realize salvation in history?

The spirituality of the Society of Jesus and the theology of Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría offer answers to these questions. But going beyond these theoretical formulations Lassalle-Klein emphasizes the encounter of these six Jesuits with the suffering of the Salvadoran people and with the Risen One. These encounters, which in reality comprise a single encounter with the crucified people of El Salvador, marked the lives and thought of these Jesuits. This is not a depressing story, however, for beyond the tragedy the reader perceives the hope of the resurrection of the Christ of God, which alone provides a non-illusory meaning to history. In the end, then, the question arises as to whether the follower of Jesus today is not also called to help take down from their crosses the crucified peoples of history.

Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J. is the former vice-rector for social outreach at the University of Central America in San Salvador. He and Jon Sobrino, S.J., were the two surviving members of the UCA Jesuit community.

Contents

Foreword: With Hope and Gratitude	
by Jon Sobrino	xiii
Acknowledgments	xv
Introduction: “It’s Them or Us!”	xvii

PART I

AWAKENING TO GOD IN THE HISTORICAL REALITY OF THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR: ARCHBISHOP ROMERO’S PROPHECY AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW KIND OF UNIVERSITY

1. Grasping the Historical Reality of El Salvador (1965-1969): From Development to the Option for the Poor	3
Discontent with the Unfulfilled Promises of Development	4
The Latin American Church Charts Its Own Path: A Deafening Cry	14
The Conversion of the Central American Jesuits to the Preferential Option for the Poor	23
2. Taking Responsibility for the Historical Reality of El Salvador (1969-1979): From the Option for the Poor to the UCA Coup	53
Toward a University That Serves Its People: The Presidency of Fr. Luis Achaerandio (1969-1974) and the Speech to the Inter-American Bank	56
Consolidating the New Idea of the University: The Presidency of Dr. Román Mayorga (1975-1979)	85
The Church in Defense of Civil Society	101
3. Transforming the Historical Reality of El Salvador (1979-1989): From the Agency of the Elite to the Heart of the People	121
Battle for the Soul of Civil Society: State-Sponsored Violence versus the Voice of Prophecy	121
Gradual Emergence of a New Kind of Christian University	157
Role of the UCA in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Salvadoran Civil Society	167
Conclusion	180

PART II

DOING THEOLOGY WITH THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE AND THOSE WHO LOVE THEM: IGNACIO ELLACURÍA'S FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Introduction	185
4. <i>The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Latin America's Retreat Master, Miguel Elizondo, S.J.</i>	188
A Daring Challenge	190
Theologian of the <i>Spiritual Exercises</i> of St. Ignatius	195
5. <i>Ellacuría's Philosophy of Historical Reality: Xavier Zubiri's Sentient Intelligence and Neuroscience</i>	201
Mentor and Student	201
Zubiri's Critique of the Evasion of Reality in the West	204
Free to Get Real: Sentient Intelligence and the Primacy of Reality	212
Ellacuría's Christian (or Theological) Historical Realism:	
Innovations	219
6. <i>Gloria Dei, Vivens Pauper: Archbishop Oscar Romero</i>	228
"In Santiago de María I Ran into Suffering" (1970-1977)	230
Monseñor Romero: Sent by God to Save His People (1977-1980)	243
7. <i>Mysterium Salutis: Karl Rahner</i>	253
Studies with the Great Theologian of the Council	254
Historical Reality and Holy Mystery	257
The Crucified People: Scandal and Sign of Salvation	273
Conclusion	284

PART III

BEARING THE SPIRIT TO A SUFFERING WORLD: THE CONTEXTUAL CHRISTOLOGY OF JON SOBRINO AND IGNACIO ELLACURÍA

Introduction	285
8. <i>Mysterium Liberationis: The Christian Historical Realism of Ignacio Ellacuría</i>	289
Introduction: Liberation and the Historicity of Salvation	289
History and Salvation: Two Aspects of a Larger Whole	291
Salvation History Is a Salvation in History	293
The Historical Reality of Jesus	301
Historical Soteriology and the Crucified People	303

9. <i>Analogatum Princeps of the Historical Reality of Jesus: The Crucified People of El Salvador</i>	309
Introduction	309
The Historical Reality of Jesus as Starting Point for Latin American “Saving History” Christology	313
“Rising Up” from the Historical Reality of Jesus to the Christ of Faith	324
“Raising Up” Living Signs to the Resurrection: “An Act Proper to God Himself”	333
Conclusion	335

CONCLUSION:

LIVING SIGNS OF THE RESURRECTION:

THE TRINITARIAN SPIRITUALITY OF THE UCA MARTYRS

Where Have We Been?	337
Whom Did They See?	340
Their Christological Spirituality: Recognizing Jesus in the Crucified People	342
Companions of Jesus: Bearers of Jesus’ Holy Spirit to the People of El Salvador	346
An Easter Event: Sacrament of the Mystery of God Transforming the Historical Reality of the Americas	354
<i>Index</i>	358

Foreword

With Hope and Gratitude

Jon Sobrino

This brief foreword will not attempt to introduce the contents of this book, which I think is magnificent. It is rather a word to encourage the reader, especially those who are younger, to live in a way that humanizes us all.

We have more than enough expectations and false promises today, but hope is not plentiful. In my humble experience hope has always flowered in the presence of great love; from people who have given what they have and what they are; from their time, their knowledge, and their lives. For this reason martyrs are not just witnesses, but rather witnesses of a very special kind. They are witnesses who have given their lives so that the victims and the poor might finally have life.

In the early 1980s while writing my doctoral dissertation on Jürgen Moltmann I read his *Theology of Hope*. Paradoxically, however, it was his book *The Crucified God* that gave me more hope. As he later wrote in a similar vein, “Not every life is an occasion of hope, but the life of Jesus is, who for love took upon himself the cross and death.”

In El Salvador I have been given the grace of meeting thousands of people like this Jesus of Nazareth. In March we recall Rutilio Grande and Monseñor Romero. In November we always remember the UCA Jesuits, with Julia Elba and Celina. In December we honor the four North American women, Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean, as well as many hundreds of lay people and campesino men and women like Ticha and Polín.

This book gives testimony to the lives of these people who give us hope, and each person who reads it will find their own way to respond. My hope is that we all might be moved to a desire for conversion, compassion for the victims, and a determination to work for justice and to take the crucified peoples down from the cross. Hopefully, and what is most humanizing of all, we will be grateful to them.

This gratitude (like hope) is not plentiful in our world, and perhaps that is because it does not even occur to us that we need to thank the poor and the victims. Nonetheless, as Monseñor Romero and Father Ellacuría used to say, it is the poor and victims who save us.

In the terms used here, then, they have the power to humanize us. They are sources of living water, given so that this world might overcome its insensitivity and triviality. They are living water that strengthens us in the struggle against injustice and lies.

What we have spoken about here is utopia. But without utopia there is no life. My hope is that this book will help to promote both utopia and life so that, in a word, we might be human.

March 12, 2014

Anniversary of Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J., martyr

Acknowledgments

Four years after the assassinations of his brothers and friends, Jon Sobrino, S.J., answered my request to write a dissertation on his Christology with an invitation. He agreed to serve on the committee if I would tell the story of the martyrs, and especially Ellacuría. What I did not understand was that my *yes* to this life-changing invitation would open the door to a remarkable community of scholars, friends, saints, and martyrs who would be there to help. Thus, much of what is best in this book has been given to me by others, including the martyrs themselves, while its defects must be considered solely my own.

First and foremost I am grateful to Jon Sobrino, who in directing me to Ellacuría's writings patiently explained that it was the historical reality of the people of El Salvador and their encounter with God, most especially in the presence of Monseñor Romero, where the grace of the martyrs' conversion was to be found. Dean Brackley, S.J., warmly embraced the role of spiritual godfather for this journey, providing housing in the Jesuit community, friendship, and a wry warning on a weekend bus to Jayaque (where he carried on the ministry of Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J.) that I should plan to get to know Ellacuría's mentor, Xavier Zubiri.

Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., generously read the historical sections (Part I) and provided invaluable feedback and insights without which the book would be much poorer. Charles Beirne, S.J., improved the history and provided direction to important archival materials located in the offices of the president at the University of Central America and the provincial headquarters of the Central American Jesuits. Román Mayorga and Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., provided crucial interview material and shared unpublished materials; Francisco Estrada, S.J., generously agreed to be interviewed about his time as provincial; and I will always remember traveling with Jon Cortina, S.J. to the parish at Aquilares, where he replaced Rutilio Grande, S.J., after his death.

The treatment of each major figure owes much to communities of scholars without whose expertise and support such an ambitious book would have been impossible. The sections on Ellacuría owe much to the groundbreaking work of Antonio González, Kevin Burke, S.J., Martin Maier, S.J., Michael Lee, José Sols, Matt Ashley, José Mora Galiana, and opportunities to discuss early drafts at the International Colloquium on Ignacio Ellacuría, the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians in the United States. The treatment of Karl Rahner's influence on Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino builds on the pioneering work of Martin Maier, S.J.; it benefitted from the generous suggestions of Peter Fritz, Ann Riggs, and Paul Crowley, S.J.;

and is indebted to Mark Fisher and the Karl Rahner Society, who allowed me to present and refine this work, and to Michael Buckley, S.J., who introduced me to Rahner and first encouraged me go on for doctoral studies. I am grateful to Antonio González and the Fundación Xavier Zubiri, who introduced me to Zubiri scholars from Europe and Latin America, for the opportunity discuss this work at meetings of the International Congress on Xavier Zubiri; to Javier Montserrat, S.J., who first introduced me to Zubiri and the significance of his work on sentient intelligence for cognitive neuroscience; and to Joel Nigg, who helped me to advance this work. Jon Sobrino, Dean Brackley, and the Centro Monseñor Romero provided crucial insights and support for the work on Archbishop Romero, including finding lost editorials from *Orientación*, the diocesan newspaper. Bernie Bush, S.J., provided spiritual support and important scholarship on the mystical foundations of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. Gene Palumbo provided perspective and an inexhaustable source of personal recollections regarding key historical events and protagonists; Raúl Fornet-Betancourt helped me to see the intercultural implications of the philosophical writings of Ellacuría and Zubiri; Francisco Mena provided important information on his father; José Antonio and Rosa Marina Zavala provided crucial testimony; and Dick Howard, Peter Hinde, O.Carm., and Cathy Cornell carefully reviewed the historical sections.

Grants, fellowships and other forms of financial support were generously provided at various times by the Santa Clara University; Holy Names University; DePaul University; the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology; the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education (Santa Clara University); the University of Notre Dame; Berchmanskolleg, Hochschule für Philosophie, Munich; Universitat Ramon Llul, Barcelona, Spain; the International Congress on Intercultural Philosophy; the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas; the Center for Liberation Theology, University of Louvain; Institut Catholique, Paris; and the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley.

Special thanks are due to Fr. Virgilio Elizondo and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P., whose constant support and wise counsel opened many doors and helped to shape the project; to the John Courtney Murray Group, whose members generously read most of the book; to Sophia Park, S.N.J.M., and our colleagues at Holy Names University; to the community of the Oakland Catholic Worker, where much of this started; and to Tom Smolich, S.J., Bill O'Neill, S.J., Steve Kelly, S.J., and Francisco Herrera, whose friendship and faith helped sustain the project.

Finally, I am grateful to my wife, Lynn, and to our wonderful children, Kate, Rose, and Peter. I thank God for the chance to love you and to share life's great adventures with each of you. Love is a gift, which grows and multiplies like the tiny mustard seed when it is freely given in the Reign of God.

Introduction

“It’s Them or Us!”

[The 1993 Commission on the Truth for El Salvador produced] a chilling Report which . . . reveals how violence and state terrorism were used mercilessly against civil society. . . . Two [cases], in particular, shook the conscience of the world: the assassination of Archbishop Romero, committed by a death squad under the command of the founder of the ARENA party [Roberto D’Aubuisson], and the assassination of the Jesuit fathers and their domestic employees, ordered by the military high command.

Pedro Nikken, President of the Inter-American
Court of Human Rights¹

It’s Them or Us!

Words of Colonel Guillermo Benavides to
Jesuit high school graduate, Lieutenant Ricardo Espinoza,
ordering him to assassinate Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J.,
President of the University of Central America²

A few minutes after 8:00 p.m. on November 11, 1989, rebel forces of the National Liberation Party (FMLN) launched the largest urban offensive of its eight-year civil war against El Salvador’s repressive right-wing government.³ The country’s

1. Pedro Nikken, *El manejo del pasado y la cuestión de la impunidad en la solución de los conflictos armados de El Salvador y Guatemala*, published in “Liber Amicorum—Héctor Fix-Zamudio,” Volume I, Secretariat of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, San José, Costa Rica, 1998, 149. Nikken was designated the United Nations independent expert on El Salvador by Resolution 1992/62 of March 3, 1992, of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and submitted his report in 1993 (see UN, E/CN.4/1993/11, February 15, 1993). With respect to the extrajudicial execution of the Jesuit priests and two domestic employees, committed in November 1989, see Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Annual Report 1999, Report No. 136/99, December 22, 1999.

2. Extrajudicial statements of Lt. José Ricardo Espinoza Guerra and Lt. Yussly René Mendoza Vallecillos, cited in Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1993), 65.

3. A CIA analysis of the offensive states, “The rebel’s principal focus was the capital, but they also initiated heavy fighting throughout much of the country, including the departments of Santa Ana, San Miguel, and Usulután.” *U.S. Declassified Documents I*, CIA, Directorate

military and its U.S. sponsors were stunned by the strength and scope of the attack. The noise of fierce gun battles erupted throughout the capital city of San Salvador, and military flares illuminated the night sky. Two thousand rebel troops occupied entire neighborhoods until aerial bombing of the civilian population by the Salvadoran Air Force forced them to retreat. From there the rebels entered the wealthy Escalón district, home of government and business elites,⁴ attacking the official and private residences of the president and the head of the Legislative Assembly and the barracks of three separate Infantry Brigades and the Infantry Police.⁵ Nearby, they provoked a standoff at the iconic Sheraton Hotel with U.S. Green Berets, who beat a hasty retreat unharmed into awaiting helicopters. Analyzing the rebels' ability to hold portions of the capital for three weeks, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "the intensity and duration of the offensive" had the "right-wing government reeling," threatened to "make the country ungovernable," and "undermined" the central claims of "a decade of U.S. counterinsurgency policy."⁶ Embarrassed by early losses and worried about continued U.S. support for its nine-year civil war against the rebels, on November 12 the government declared a state of emergency and established combat zones throughout the capital under the command of Colonel René Emilio Ponce, chief of staff of the Salvadoran Armed Forces.

At 6:30 p.m. on November 15, the fifth day of the occupation, with no end in sight, the United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador says that Colonel Ponce convened "a meeting of the General Staff with military heads and commanders to adopt new measures to deal with the offensive."⁷ The meeting took place at military headquarters (the *Estado Mayor*), and one participant described the mood as FMLN guerrillas roamed the capital just blocks away as "the most tense and desperate gathering of the country's top military commanders since the war . . . began a decade ago."⁸ Colonel Ponce states that some twenty-four officers attended the meeting "to analyze the positions we had lost since November 11 [and to determine] . . . what we needed to do to regain them," adding ominously, "We understood that we needed to take stronger measures."⁹

of Intelligence, "El Salvador: The FMLN after the November 1989 Offensive," January 26, 1990. Cited in Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 171.

4. The preceding details are from Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 152-53.

5. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador*, March 15, 1993, 49.

6. Richard Boudreaux and Marjorie Miller, "Offensive Pushed Salvador War to New, Bloodier Level," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1989, 1. Cited in Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 152-53.

7. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 50.

8. *San Francisco Examiner*, February 5, 1990. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 56; and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States, Report No. 136/99, "Ignacio Ellacuría, et al.," December 22, 1999, 128.

9. Lawyers Committee interview with Col. René Emilio Ponce, Estado Mayor, February 14, 1990. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 55.

This was evidently a euphemism for Ponce's decision to start dropping 500 to 700-pound bombs on occupied civilian neighborhoods¹⁰ and to implement long-held plans to begin murdering civilian political opponents. What followed evokes more recent images of dictators ordering troops to fire on unarmed civilians in desperate attempts to hold onto power during the "Arab Spring," which began in 2011. The United Nations states,

Colonel Ponce authorized the elimination of ringleaders, trade unionists and known leaders of the FMLN and a decision was taken to step up bombing [of civilian neighborhoods] by the Air Force and to use artillery and armored vehicles to dislodge the FMLN from the areas it controlled. The Minister of Defense, General Rafael Humberto Larios López, asked whether anyone objected. No hand was raised. It was agreed that President Cristiani would be consulted.¹¹

Emboldened by this *carte blanche* to attack civilians, Colonel Guillermo Benavides turned to General Rafael Bustillo, seated next to him, and said, according to a source who attended the meeting, "This is a chance to go after" civilian groups considered supporters of the FMLN, adding, "I have the UCA [University of Central America] in my sector." General Bustillo replied, "Well then, you know what you have to do."¹²

General Larios López states that the session broke up around 10:00 p.m.,¹³ and the United Nations says, "After the meeting, the officers stayed in the room talking in groups."¹⁴ Colonel Ponce gathered with several top-ranking officers, including General Bustillo (chief of the Air Force), Colonel Francisco Elena Fuentes (commander of the First Infantry Brigade), Colonel Juan Orlando Zepeda (vice minister of defense), and Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano (vice minister of public security). The report then asserts, "Colonel Ponce called over Colonel Guillermo Alfredo Benavides [director of the Military Academy] and, in front of the four other officers, ordered him to eliminate Father Ellacuría and to leave no witnesses," adding that he was "to use the unit from the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion."¹⁵

Within the hour, around 11:00 p.m., Colonel Benavides summoned Lieutenant Ricardo Espinoza, a young graduate of the Jesuit high school in San Salvador,¹⁶ and ordered him to assassinate Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., president

10. This detail is from Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 56.

11. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 50.

12. Lawyers Committee interview, May 25, 1991, anonymity requested. Reported in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 10.

13. Written statement of General Humberto Larios, Fourth Criminal Court, August 29, 1990; INTERJUST, Sistema Informativo de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, September 4, 1990. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 57.

14. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 50.

15. Ibid.

16. Martha Doggett states that this detail was provided by "the extrajudicial confessions of the suspects." Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 65.

of the Jesuit-run UCA, and to leave no witnesses. This implied the murder of Ellacuría's housemates, including Fr. Segundo Montes, S.J., the young man's former high school principal and teacher. Espinoza protested, saying, "this is a serious problem."¹⁷ But Benavides insisted and ordered Lieutenant Yussly Mendoza, who had been sent to fetch his former Military Academy classmate, that he must participate in the action "in order to overcome any reluctance on . . . [Espinoza's] part."¹⁸ Knowing he might face Fr. Montes, Espinoza took a bar of black camouflage grease with which to disguise himself and a little over three hours later "gave the order to kill the priests."¹⁹ Espinoza later testified that his eyes filled with tears as he hurriedly left the Jesuit university residence while his troops riddled the helpless victims with bullets.²⁰

General Larios reports that he called President Cristiani, who arrived at the military headquarters at 11:00 p.m. and stayed until about 2:00 a.m.²¹ The U.N. report confirms that President Cristiani was indeed present at the Military Academy and that he met with the high command during most of the operation on November 16.²² The report by the Lawyer's Committee on Human Rights, an official plaintiff in the case, asserts that the assassinations took place around 2:30 a.m., at which point it suggests that President Cristiani may have left the grounds of the military headquarters.²³ Thus, the Jesuit murders were ordered by the highest levels of the Salvadoran military, with possible approval by the president of the country, and were in the process of being carried out while he was closeted with the military leadership about a mile from the scene of the crime.²⁴ At the time of this writing, the Spanish National Court has reserved the right to indict former President Cristiani for involvement in the killings.²⁵

The question remains, however, why implicate virtually the entire command structure of the Salvadoran military, and possibly the president, in order to kill one priest and a handful of associates? The easy answer is that Colonel Ponce and the others understood that their ability to avoid prosecution as the intellectual authors of the assassinations would depend upon implicating all of their

17. Ibid., 65. Cited from "Narración de los hechos," prepared by the Jesuits of Central America, which appeared in *Estudios centroamericanos (ECA)* nos. 493-494 (November-December 1989): at 1125-32.

18. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 48.

19. Ibid., 47. Also Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 65.

20. Extrajudicial confession of José Ricardo Espinoza Guerra, *ECA* nos. 493-494 (November-December 1989): 1162.

21. Written statement of General Humberto Larios, Fourth Criminal Court, August 29, 1990; INTERJUST, Sistema Informativo de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, September 9, 1990. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 57; see n. 162.

22. The U.N. report offers a slightly different timetable, stating, "From 12 to 1:30 a.m. . . ., 16 November, President Cristiani met with the High Command." United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 50.

23. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 282.

24. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 45-54.

25. The Center for Justice and Accountability, "El Salvador: The Jesuits' Massacre Case"; <http://cja.org/article.php?list=type&type=84>; accessed July 31, 2011.

peers. Clearly, the decision to murder Ellacuría was by no means a last-minute decision taken in a state of near panic in the face of FMLN control of parts of the capital.²⁶ Indeed, a variety of historical, ideological, and personal factors fueled the deep-seated animosity of El Salvador's extreme right for Ignacio Ellacuría. But the most important irritant may have been the threat posed by the work of Ignacio Ellacuría and his UCA colleagues to continued U.S. support for the government of El Salvador and its suppression of Salvadoran civil society with its demands for economic, political, and social change.

Martha Doggett, in her exhaustive report on the UCA murders, explains that in light of such factors, "Some observers believe that these officers have in retrospect exaggerated the severity of the FMLN challenge as well as their despair at the time in an attempt to rationalize the Jesuit murders and extensive aerial bombardment."²⁷ Her report on behalf of the Central American Jesuits and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, the official plaintiffs in the case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, charges, "An examination of events during the year preceding the UCA murders suggests that the decision to move against the Jesuits may have been taken months earlier."²⁸ Confirming this view, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights cites a pattern of slanders and "attacks by government officials and members of the Armed Forces" against the Jesuits going back "three years before the extra-judicial executions."²⁹

Thus, Doggett concludes, "While the guerrilla offensive provided a last-minute impetus and suitable cover, hard-liners within the Army had long before resolved finally to act on their 10-year wish to silence Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría." Indeed, she says, "The decision to kill Father Ellacuría was consistent with a long-standing pattern of attacks against the Jesuits [and] . . . increasing attempts to link the Jesuits to FMLN violence and to portray the priests as apologists for guerrilla actions."³⁰

In the pages that follow we shall trace the roots of this long-held antipathy and its role in the decision to carry out the assassinations in the epoch-changing religious and political events that rocked Latin America and the Catholic Church in the decades after World War II.

Those who died included Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., university president and the country's leading public intellectual; Fr. Martín-Baró, S.J., university vice president for academic affairs and director of the University Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP), El Salvador's only functioning public opinion poll; Fr. Segundo Montes, S.J., director of the Human Rights Institute of the UCA (IDHUCA) and superior of the Jesuit community; Fr. Amando López, S.J., professor of theology and philosophy, and ex-president of the UCA in Managua;

26. See Lawyers Committee interview with Col. René Emilio Ponce, Estado Mayor, February 14, 1990. Cited and described in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 55.

27. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 55.

28. *Ibid.*, 4.

29. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Report 136/99, 13-14.

30. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 4.

Fr. Joaquín López y López, S.J., national director of *Fe y Alegría*, an education and direct service program for children in poverty; Fr. Juan Ramón Moreno, S.J., assistant director of the newly constructed Oscar Romero Pastoral Center, campus home of the Center for Theological Reflection and part of the Jesuit community; Elba Ramos, cook for one of the seminary communities; and her sixteen-year-old daughter, Celina.

Jürgen Moltmann's famous book, *The Crucified God*, was found soaked in blood by the body of Fr. Juan Ramón Moreno and is preserved in the university's museum of the martyrs, just feet from where they died. It is a visceral sign of the cost of this ultimately unsuccessful attempt to silence the voice of a university that, for almost two decades, scrupulously documented the need to take the "crucified people" of El Salvador down from their cross. The blood and ink mingled on its pages serves as a fitting symbol of the faith, hope, and love that animated them and their vision of a Christian university grounded in God's preferential option for the poor.

* * *

Part I of this book, then, tells the story of the UCA martyrs, focusing on their awakening to God's self-offer in the crucified people of El Salvador and to Medellín's call to take them down from the cross. We will follow the journey that led to the crossroads above, exploring the martyrs' vision of the Christian university and their efforts "to do in our university way what [Oscar Romero] did in his pastoral way"³¹ as archbishop of San Salvador. I will discuss a variety of factors and events, both sacred and profane, including the conversion of Archbishop Romero; relevant aspects of the social, economic, political, and indigenous history of El Salvador; the influence on the thinking and spirituality of the martyrs of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, Vatican II, and the Latin American bishops at Medellín; the post-World War II promise of development and the role of the United Nations in Latin America; U.S. Cold War counterinsurgency doctrine and foreign policy; and many other factors.

Part II treats the Latin American fundamental theology of Ignacio Ellacuría and the underlying Christian historical realism that informs it. Here I will critically explore the transformations produced by Ellacuría's dialogue with Ignatian spirituality, Xavier Zubiri's neuroscientifically informed model of intelligence and his philosophy of God, the face of Christ revealed by Archbishop Romero in El Salvador's suffering people, and Rahner's christocentric and trinitarian fundamental theology.

Part III analyzes Ellacuría's fundamental theology and Sobrino's Christology as a collaborative theological reflection on God's gracious self-offer in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its *analogatum princeps* in the crucified people of the planet. I will examine why they consider the poor and

31. Ignacio Ellacuría, "La UCA ante el doctorado concedido a Monseñor Romero," *Escritos teológicos*, III (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 2002), 104.

oppressed to be the defining sign of the times and a privileged *locus theologicus* for the encounter with God.

Finally, I will conclude by exploring the God revealed to the UCA martyrs and their companions by the suffering people of El Salvador.

This is a story of blood and ink; of writers, books, teaching, service projects, and learning dedicated to uncovering the truth about El Salvador's state-sponsored persecution of civil society funded by U.S. tax dollars. But most of all it is the tale of a university's efforts to help take El Salvador's "crucified people" down from the cross by supporting their efforts to construct a society in which all would have a chance to share a future where dignity, love, compassion, and sanity might prevail.

Part I

Awakening to God in the Historical Reality of the People of El Salvador

ARCHBISHOP ROMERO'S PROPHECY AND
THE BIRTH OF A NEW KIND OF UNIVERSITY

1

Grasping the Historical Reality of El Salvador (1965-1969)

FROM DEVELOPMENT TO THE OPTION FOR THE POOR

When I came back in 1972 I heard what had been going on in the Central American Jesuit Province at the end of the sixties . . . there had been a conversion. But what does that mean, conversion? Well, I would say it meant discovering the reality that had always been in front of us. We had it in front of our eyes, and had not seen it. . . . But all of a sudden you see things the way they are, or at least . . . a little more the way they are. And that changes everything. It is, at least, the beginning of a process of change.

Jon Sobrino, S.J.¹

The movement into a new horizon involves an about-face; it comes out of the old by repudiating characteristic features; it begins a new sequence that can keep revealing ever greater depth and breadth and wealth. Such an about-face and new beginning is what is meant by a conversion. . . . [But] conversion involves more than a change of horizon. It can mean that one begins to belong to a different social group, or, if one's group remains the same, that one begins to belong to it in a new way.

Bernard Lonergan, S.J.²

This is the story of the Jesuit martyrs and their companions at the University of Central America (UCA). Fr. Jon Sobrino, S.J., is the most important living witness to the events that form the core of our story, a survivor of the assassinations and Ignacio Ellacuría's closest friend. Looking back on forty years of teaching,

1. Robert Lassalle-Klein interview with Jon Sobrino, July 5, 1994, 2, 5.

2. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 1972; Seabury, 1979), 237-38, 269.

writing, and ministry in El Salvador since Medellín, Sobrino believes that the Central American Jesuits and their colleagues at the UCA experienced a conversion to God's preferential option for the poor brought about by their engagement with the historical reality of the people of El Salvador. The trailhead of the path that brought them face to face with this reality and the change of horizon it provoked surely begins with the renewal of the Catholic Church initiated by the worldwide meeting of Catholic bishops at Vatican II (1962-1965). Its signature document, *Gaudium et spes* (GS), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, presented the leadership of churches on every continent with the challenge "of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in light of the Gospel" (GS 4). Just three years later the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellín, Colombia, August 26-September 6, 1968, took up the Council's call, declaring, "A deafening cry pours from the throats of millions of men and women asking their pastors for a liberation that reaches them from nowhere else."³ The bishops' response to this *cri de coeur* from 1968 to the present has been their watershed discernment that God is calling the Latin American church to live out what Catholic Social Teaching calls a "preferential option for the poor."⁴

Discontent with the Unfulfilled Promises of Development

In what follows I will show that the embrace by the leadership of the church in Latin America of what they saw as God's preferential option for the poor coincided with a growing conviction that the promises of the U.N. Decade of Development had failed to adequately address the suffering and poverty of its people. I will argue that these and other factors led the bishops to subordinate the concept of *development* to a *preferential option for the poor* as the proper horizon or framework for the work of the church in Latin America. The bishops did not abandon the term "development," but tried to build on the use of "integral development" by Pope Paul VI in order to critique uses of the term "development" and developmentalist strategies that changed little and legitimated an oppressive status quo. Thus, Medellín asserts, "If development is the new name for peace, Latin American underdevelopment, with its own characteristics in the different countries, is an unjust situation which promotes tensions that conspire against peace."⁵ This criticism is further concretized in Medellín's use of

3. Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Document on Poverty in the Church" (2), in *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: II Conclusions* (Washington, DC: Division for Latin America-United States Catholic Conference, 1973).

4. Pope John Paul II *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, December 30, 1987, §42; and Pope Benedict XVI *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, Shrine of Aparecida, May 13, 2007, no. 3.

5. "Document on Peace" (1), in *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America*.

the word “liberation”⁶ to highlight and clarify its claim that fundamental social and structural “change will be essential in order to liberate the authentic process of Latin American development and integration.”⁷ Accordingly, the document insists that God’s call to live out a preferential option for the poor implies real, and sometimes drastic, economic, social, political, and cultural changes designed to promote and defend human dignity, the church’s ultimate criterion for all forms of development.

In this chapter I will tell the story of how the term *development*, which dominated the international discussion about material aid to those living in poverty and subject to marginalization, became subordinated in the Latin American church to *the preferential option for the poor*, and to the struggle for *liberation* and justice, which that commitment implies. I will also describe how these two concepts began to function as an effective historical framework or horizon that would lead the UCA Jesuits and their lay collaborators to become aware of, to take responsibility for, and finally to help transform and be transformed by the historical reality of the poor majorities of El Salvador.

In what follows, I will focus on the emergence of the development regime after World War II and its subordination to the option for the poor by the Latin American bishops and Latin American liberation theology because it is directly relevant to the response of the UCA martyrs to the “irruption of the poor” in the last third of the twentieth century. It is worth noting, however, that our approach will focus on only one aspect of the many forms of oppression to which Christian communities and churches around the globe (including Latin America) have responded during this period with critiques and prophetic calls for liberation from military rule, and serious social, cultural, and political change.⁸

President Truman, the Cold War, and Development

The end of World War II in 1945 brought a dramatic shift in the balance of power from the European countries and their colonial empires to two new competing super-states, the United States and the Soviet Union. In this new context, “development” and military aid (punctuated by occasional military interven-

6. Examples include “Document on Justice” (3-4); “Document on Education” (2, 9); “Document on Youth” (15); “Document on Catechesis” (6); “Document on Lay Movements” (2, 4, 9, 13); “Document on the Poverty of the Church” (2, 7) in *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America*.

7. “Document on Justice” (3), in *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America*.

8. While the following list is by no means comprehensive, one has only to think of the lasting contributions of Black theologies from Africa and the United States and Dalit theologies from India on the theme of race, the contributions of U.S. Latino/a theologies on the importance of culture, the contributions of Asian Christians on interreligious dialogue, the contributions of any number of groups calling for a global ethic, and the global contributions of women on the importance of gender, and of indigenous theologies on respect for the planet in fleshing out our understanding of how God has acted, stirring faith, hope, and love among followers of Jesus around the planet.

tion) would replace European colonialism as the principle tools for projecting and maintaining power abroad in the respective “spheres of influence” of the two emerging superpowers.

The stage for this post-war Cold War drama was set with the close of the Battle of Berlin, when the German General, Helmuth Weidling, surrendered to the Soviet army on May 2, 1945, while the armies north of Berlin surrendered to the Western Allies. It soon became clear that the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, who envisioned a communist Bloc allied with Russia that would provide a buffer zone in Eastern Europe against centuries of European imperialism, was not going to withdraw his armies from Berlin and Eastern Germany. Working to establish a post-war Soviet sphere of influence, Stalin soon provided Soviet support to the military wing of the Greek Communist Party in its civil war (1946-49) against the right-wing Greek government and the monarchy, and used Soviet troops to threaten Turkey in the strait linking the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. The United States, however, had a radically different vision for a worldwide democratic and capitalist alliance rooted in a united Europe (the North American Treaty Organization or NATO), and supported by overwhelming U.S. military might. The latter was epitomized by U.S. possession of the atomic bomb, which it used three months later against civilian populations in Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945) ostensibly in order to induce the August 15, 1945, “unconditional surrender” of Japan, the remaining Axis power.

A little over two years later, on March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman outlined before a joint session of Congress his plan to provide economic and military aid to Turkey and Greece in order to prevent their falling into the emerging Eastern Bloc. Truman requested \$400 million in military and economic aid for Greece and Turkey,⁹ and “American civilian and military personnel”¹⁰ in order to assist those countries in defeating what he saw as the proxy forces of Soviet expansionism in post-war Europe. The underlying logic became known as the *Truman Doctrine*, and it would shape U.S. foreign policy for the next forty years. The Cold War was on!

Shortly thereafter, on June 5, 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall outlined at Harvard University what became known as the *Marshall Plan*, which many considered the economic corollary of the Truman Doctrine. The United States would create a program for post-war reconstruction and economic recovery funded by U.S. aid for European countries threatened with Soviet expansion. Barely a month later, George F. Kennan, head of policy planning at the State Department, framed U.S. post-war foreign policy in the larger context of “firm and vigilant *containment* of Russian expansive tendencies.”¹¹ In this way

9. Harry S. Truman, “Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey,” 5, in “Address of the President to Congress, Recommending Assistance to Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947,” <http://www.trumanlibrary.org>; accessed June 1, 2011.

10. Ibid.

11. George F. Kennan (identified only as “X”), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign*

the Truman Doctrine, which was focused on U.S. military aid and Soviet containment, and the Marshall Plan, which was focused on post-war reconstruction and economic *development*, came to be seen as two sides of a single coin, providing the foundation of U.S. foreign policy at the beginning of the Cold War. The policy achieved apparent success over the next twenty years in Europe and Japan. But the often contradictory imperatives of war and economic development would undermine U.S. foreign policy and counter-insurgency efforts in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, sometimes contributing to the suffering of the poor majorities in those parts of the world.¹²

Gilbert Rist notes that two years later President Truman's January 20, 1949, Inaugural Address formally "inaugurated the 'development age.'" ¹³ The speech lists four policies that would dominate Truman's second term and define U.S. foreign policy until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The first three points essentially summarized the existing policy of U.S. support for the New United Nations, European reconstruction through the Marshall Plan, and Soviet containment through NATO. But the fourth point, which Rist says was "taken on board as a public relations gimmick," proposed "a bold new program . . . for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas."¹⁴

From "Colonization" to "Underdevelopment"

Rist explains in *The History of Development* that Truman's use of the adjective "underdeveloped" marked "the first time the term had been used in a text intended for such wide circulation as a synonym for 'economically backward' areas."¹⁵ U.S. policy makers embraced the term as the embodiment of "a new way of conceiving international relations"¹⁶ that fit nicely with the goals of U.S. post-war foreign policy. North-South relations, which before World War II had been largely cast in terms of the troubled relationships between European colonizers and their restless clients in the South and the East, soon faced national liberation struggles. With Truman's speech, however, the hierarchical subordination of colonized to colonizer was being reframed. "'Underdeveloped' and 'developed' were [recast as] members of a single family: the one might be lagging a little behind the other, but they could always hope to catch up—rather as a 'deputy manager' can always dream of becoming a manager himself . . . so

Affairs 25 (July 1947): 566-82. Reprinted in Paul F. Boller, Jr., and Ronald Story, eds., *A More Perfect Union: Documents in U.S. History*, Vol. II: *Since 1865* (3rd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1992), 186.

12. Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (new rev. and expanded ed.; New York: Zed Books, 2002), 71.

13. *Ibid.*, 69-79.

14. *Ibid.*, 71.

15. *Ibid.*, 72.

16. *Ibid.*

long as he continues to play the same game and his conception of managing is not too different.”¹⁷

Rist argues, however, that there was a darker side to the aforementioned shift.

From 1949 onwards, often without realizing it, more than two billion inhabitants of the planet found themselves changing their name, being “officially” regarded as they appeared in the eyes of others, called upon to deepen their Westernization by repudiating their own values. No longer African, Latin American or Asian . . . they were now simply “underdeveloped.” . . . Whereas the world of colonization had been seen mainly as a political space to encompass ever larger empires, the “development age” was the period when economic space spread everywhere, with the raising of GNP as the number one imperative.¹⁸

Development soon became a major focus of United Nations activities and remained so throughout the Cold War to the present. This was true in part because of strong international support for the lofty goals stated above, and in part because Cold War politics led the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to use their veto power to block the majority of U.N. initiatives “with respect to threats . . . , breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression.”¹⁹

Decolonization and Post-Colonial Critiques

Outside Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union, however, the post-war collapse of the overseas colonial empires of the Western powers constituted nothing short of a turning point in world history in the eyes of many. Between 1945 and 2000 approximately ninety countries gained independence from colonial rule, including India, Pakistan, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Congo, Angola, South Africa, and virtually the entire African continent, which saw the birth of over fifty nations between 1950 and 1980 alone. On December 14, 1960, the United Nations passed the *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*, with eighty-nine nations in favor, and abstentions by nine colonial powers (Australia, Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Portugal, Spain, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States).

Julius K. Nyerere, president of Tanzania evocatively described the spirit of decolonization as “a worldwide movement . . . to put an end to the exploitation of man by man [so that] imperialism and racialism will become . . . a chapter in the history of man we shall hear about . . . in museums.”²⁰ In this connection, Prasenjit Duara explains, “Decolonization represented not only the transfer-

17. Ibid., 74.

18. Ibid., 79.

19. Ibid., 81.

20. Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Development/Uhuru Na Maendeleo: A Selection of Writings and Speeches, 1968-1973* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1973).

ence of legal sovereignty but a movement,” with an “emancipatory ideology” driven by the emerging “national historical consciousness” of liberation movements outside Europe, and articulated in literature *written by the colonized*.²¹ This literature analyzed imperialism and decolonization from the perspective of the former colonies, allowing, in the words of reviewer Richard Gunde, those “who live in the West, in the former colonial powers—to witness the process from the other side, so to speak,” and to understand that “despite the variety of colonialisms and decolonizations, the history of decolonization in the twentieth century presents a coherent, interconnected phenomenon.”²²

It should come as no surprise, then, that political, economic, and cultural commentators from Africa, Asia, and Latin America raised increasingly serious concerns in the ensuing years about the misuse of development aid as a tool for promoting Euro-American and Soviet geo-political interests (some would say imperialism), undermining political self-determination and development among its supposed beneficiaries. While these writings are too diverse and complex to summarize here, post-colonial writers from Africa and Asia, and Latin American “dependency” theorists emblemize these trends. In this section I will briefly mention the seminal contributions of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said to post-colonial thought, and later in the chapter I will address dependency theory in association with Latin America critiques of development. My purpose is to bring forward important voices from outside the circle of the United States and its close allies, critical of what they saw as culturally and economically exploitative aspects of development.

Frantz Fanon, a black Martinican psychiatrist who devoted himself to the Algerian revolution against the French, synthesized nationalist and anti-colonial reservations about post-war imperialism in *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962). While continuing to insist on the importance of national struggles for liberation from European colonial rule, Fanon was a ferocious critic of the metamorphosis of anti-colonial African leaders after independence in the late 1950s into what he saw as a regressive neo-colonial force “that serves to immobilize the people.”²³ Rejecting all forms of neocolonialism, Fanon also argued against the Marxists that race had ultimately trumped class in African colonialism, insisting, “When you examine . . . the colonial context, it is evident that . . . you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.”²⁴ Writing during the transition “between colonial-

21. Prasenjit Duara, *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then* (Routledge, 2003); cited by Richard Gunde, “Decolonization: A Postcolonial Perspective,” UCLA International Institute (February 2, 1994); <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=7158>; accessed May 10, 2011.

22. Ibid.

23. Franz Fanon, “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” (1963), 171; cited in Neil Larsen, “Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism,” in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 35.

24. Franz Fanon, “Concerning Violence” (1963), 40; cited in Larsen, “Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism,” 36.

ism and the establishment of the postcolonial (or, more accurately, neocolonial) national state,”²⁵ Fanon argued that race had become just another Cold War ideology, uniting former colonizers with the new African elites in a common effort to protect ill-gotten privilege.

Shawn Copeland, a contemporary African American Catholic theologian interested in the psychological trauma inflicted by racism, observes, “Perhaps no thinker exceeds Fanon’s ability to signify racial alienation, to explicate its crushing objectification, to diagnose its ruthless hurt, and to evoke its shock and shame.”²⁶ Speaking from within the racialized identity imposed on him as a child in a racist society, Fanon chillingly writes,

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it’s cold, the nigger is shivering . . . shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger . . . I sit down at the fire and I become aware of my uniform. I had not seen it. It is indeed ugly. I stop there, for who can tell me what beauty is.²⁷

Here and elsewhere Fanon gives eloquent voice to the dehumanizing consequences of internalized racism for its colonialized victims.

The defining work of post-colonial thought, however, is widely considered to be *Orientalism*, written by Edward Said in 1978. The book unites literary and cultural criticism with Cold War political analysis, demonstrating how cultural specialists on “the Orient” functioned as sometimes innocent collaborators with European colonialism, and later with U.S.–Soviet Cold War politics. The book begins with a famous quote from Karl Marx, “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented,”²⁸ which the author uses to critique both Soviet and Western cultural imperialism. Said shows how centuries of *Orientalists* from Europe and elsewhere constructed the “Orient” (or East) in opposition to the *Occident* (or West) as an object of study and fascination for consumption at home, thereby defining and controlling its meaning, and silencing Asian voices in whose name they claimed to speak. The Orient was said to be premodern, irrational, and traditional in opposition to the superior West, which was typically portrayed as modern, rational, and civilized. Interestingly enough, the post-colonial critiques of Marxism by Fanon and Said helped them to gain exposure among scholars in the United

25. Anthony C. Alessandrini, “Humanism in Question: Fanon and Said,” in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 435.

26. Shawn N. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 15.

27. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967), 113-14; cited in Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 16.

28. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1979), xiii.

States and the Europe during the Cold War, allowing them to become part of the canon for those studying post-colonial and liberation movements in Western universities.

The Non-Aligned Nations Endorse Development

Despite the importance of decolonization and various theoretical critiques of development as a vehicle for Western imperialism, however, international relations in the 1950s continued to be dominated by Cold War politics. Indeed, national liberation movements throughout the “developing world” became political and ideological battlegrounds for influence among the major powers. For the United States, General MacArthur led American and U.N. member troops in a “police action” when Soviet-supported North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950 (Korean War 1950-53). In Russia, Joseph Stalin died on March 5, 1953, and was replaced by Nikita Khrushchev, under whom the Soviets invaded Hungary and Poland in 1956 in order to consolidate control over the “Eastern Bloc,” which included East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Albania, and Yugoslavia. France was faced with the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), and its efforts to hold on to Vietnam were defeated in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu under president Ho Chi Minh. In July 1955 the Geneva Accords divided independent Vietnam at the 17th parallel into the communist North, and the U.S.-supported Diem government in the South. U.S. troops began combat operations in Vietnam shortly thereafter, on November 1, 1955, and the Vietnam War lasted until the fall of Saigon and the South to communist North Vietnam on April 30, 1975. When Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, the Franco-British-Israeli Suez military operation ensued, which succeeded militarily and reopened the canal to Israeli shipping, but ultimately failed to regain control of the precious waterway for the former colonial power, England, because of U.N. intervention.

In this dynamic and rapidly evolving post-colonial context, the governments of Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan called a conference of twenty-nine new African and Asian nations, April 18-24, 1955, in Bandung, Indonesia. Its stated aims were to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation, and to oppose colonialism and neocolonialism by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other imperial powers. The final communiqué outlined ten principles found in the U.N. Charter condemning colonialism as “a denial of the fundamental rights of man” and “a means of cultural suppression,” and promoting economic, technical, and cultural cooperation among the new states.²⁹

The meeting also famously initiated the “non-aligned nations” movement, voicing the demands of the developing or “Third World” nations to the emerging post-war international order. Rist notes, however, that the final communiqué also offered powerful legitimation for the goal of economic development being promoted by the United States and the United Nations.³⁰ Indeed, it called

29. Rist, *The History of Development*, 82-83, 86.

30. *Ibid.*, 86.

for the creation of institutions and key elements included in the economic and political agenda already agreed upon at the U.N. Monetary and Financial Conference attended by the forty-four Allied Nations at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, July 1-22, 1944, laying out rules for the post-war monetary system. Thus, from one perspective, Bandung can be said to symbolize what might be called the “critical” embrace of Truman’s notion of development by the non-aligned nations of the Third World outside of Europe, the United States, the Soviet Union, and their allies.

The Catholic Church Critically Embraces Development

In every age, the church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. . . . We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live (Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (§4).

If there was any doubt that the concept of development would play a key role in international relations for the rest of the century, it was erased in December 1961 when the U.N. General Assembly launched its first Decade of Development. The document called on all member states “to mobilize support for measures required to accelerate progress toward self-sustaining economic growth and social advancement,” with a goal of at least 5 percent GNP growth in the developing countries.³¹ In response, the Catholic Church under the leadership of Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), his successor Paul VI (1963-1978), and Vatican II (1962-1965) embraced the notion of development, integrating it into the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

The term received its first extended treatment, outside a brief mention by Pius XII (1939-1958),³² in *Mater et magistra* (1961) by John XXIII under headings such as “Balancing Economic Development and Social Progress” (§§73-81), “Aid to Less Developed Areas” (§§150-152), “Requirements of Justice as Between Nations Differing in Economic Development” (§§157-184), “Population Increase and Economic Development” (§§185-199), etc. The term appears twenty-four times John’s *Pacem in terris* (1963), issued during the Council, with a section explicitly dedicated to the United Nations (§§142-145) and treatments associated with human rights and duties (§§11, 13, 19, 36), the status of women (§41), participation in public life (§§73, 74), truth (§86), the rights and duties of states (§§64, 86, 92), the treatment of minorities (§97), race relations

31. United Nations, “Economic and Social Development—First UN Development Decade,” *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations/Economic-and-Social-Development-FIRST-UN-DEVELOPMENT-DECADE.html#ixzz0wVhwjTip>; accessed March 27, 2014.

32. Pius XII, Radio Message, August 24, 1939. *Acta apostolicae sedis* 34 (1942), 16-17. Quoted in John XXIII, *Pacem in terris* §124.

(§100), the arms race (§109), underdevelopment (§§121-124), and salvation and justice (§162).³³ The term also runs through a variety of documents issued by the Council, including *Lumen gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964), which emphasizes how gospel values complement the “genuine development of human persons” (§46); *Gaudium et spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965), which offers norms on how to avoid the imposition of Western-style development on the Third World (§86);³⁴ and thirty-eight occurrences in *Gravissimum educationis* (the Declaration on Christian Education, 1965).

By the late 1960s, however, the optimistic tone of these earlier documents had been replaced by a more critical attitude embodied in Paul VI’s addition of the qualifier “integral” (§14) to his treatment of development, the central theme of his 1967 encyclical, “On the Development of Peoples” (*Populorum progressio*). In a famous passage summarizing the meaning of this term the Pope wrote, “The fullness of authentic development . . . is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human.” He says that humanizing development involves

the passage from misery towards the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture . . . , increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace . . . [, and] the acknowledgement by human beings of supreme values, and of God as their source and their finality. Conditions that, finally and above all, are more human. . . . (§§20-21)

In passages such as these, therefore, the term “integral development” began to function in Catholic Social Teaching as a way to criticize “developmentalist” schemes benefitting the superpowers, but doing little to seriously advance the quality of life and the standard of living for peoples in the “underdeveloped” or “developing” world.

Such reservations were soon confirmed by events on the ground. As the United Nations itself later observed, “Throughout the . . . 1960s . . . the growth rate in the economically advanced market economies accelerated, [while] . . . the gap between the per capita incomes of the developing countries and those of the developed countries widened.”³⁵ The net result was that by the end of the decade, “Two-thirds of the world’s population living in the less developed regions . . . still had less than one-sixth of the world’s income.”

The first U.N. Development Decade ended in 1970 with its major goal unattained, and little improvement from 1962 when “annual per capita income in those regions averaged \$136, while that of the economically advanced market

33. John XXIII, *Pacem in terris* §§64, 121-25, 131.

34. Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes* §§35, 44, 53-56, 60, 64-72, 85-86.

35. United Nations, “Economic and Social Development—First UN Development Decade.”

economies in North America and Western Europe averaged \$2,845 and \$1,033.” Even during its most productive years, 1960-1967, “the increase in their per capita gross product was only about 2%.” Such results did little to discourage growing suspicion that Truman’s program of “development” was nothing more than a tool of Cold War Soviet containment, ultimately designed to advance the economic self-interests of the United States in emerging markets, and to reduce hostility and promote further economic and political dependency on the United States and other “First World” economic institutions and nations.

The Latin American Church Charts Its Own Path: A Deafening Cry

Inspired in part by liberation movements in Africa and Asia and post-colonial critiques of development as an instrument of continued imperialism, pressures continued to grow throughout Latin America during the 1950s and '60s for governmental and economic reforms of U.S.-supported military dictatorships controlled by local elites. Indeed, U.S. policy makers were shocked by the broad popular support in Latin America for the successful Cuban revolution of 1959. For this and other reasons, the United States turned from blatant military subversion and support for military dictatorships toward a new approach, President Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress, built on promises associated with international development. The Alliance adopted the earlier two-pronged strategy of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, hoping to counter Cuba’s revolutionary influence by coupling intensive military subversion with civilian economic development and political reform. However, while U.S. policy makers and their partners promoted gradual change through *development*, the word *liberation* gained currency in Latin America as a euphemism for the immediate end to military rule and rapid transition to large-scale political and economic reform, whether by voluntary elections or by coup.

Latin American Critics of Development

Most Latin American nations gained formal independence from Spain and Portugal during the nineteenth century, so twentieth century struggles to end military rule and oppression by local elites did not follow the pattern of independence movements in Africa and Asia. However, the spirit of decolonization nonetheless infused the thinking of movements mobilizing literally millions of people in Latin American civil society behind demands for elections and economic reform. Frequently chaotic, driven by nationalistic concerns, and sometimes backed by armed rebellions, these movements nonetheless eventually succeeded in bringing an end to military rule in Argentina in 1983, Bolivia in 1982, Brazil in 1985, Chile in 1990, El Salvador in 1984, Guatemala in 1986, Haiti in 1990 and 1994, Honduras in 1982, Nicaragua in 1979, Panama in 1989, Paraguay in 1993, Peru in 1980, and Uruguay in 1985. In this context, the emergence of a powerful critique of U.S.-sponsored development regimes known

as “dependency theory” provided an important argument delegitimizing Latin American military regimes by characterizing their economic policies as systematically distorted by neo-colonial U.S. interests imposed on its military clients. In what follows I will briefly describe these theories and their role in our story.

Latin American dependency theory had its origin in the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), founded in Chile in the 1950s and headed by Paul Prebisch, who became first secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964.³⁶ Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a professor of political science and sociology at the University of São Paulo, who taught abroad following the right-wing-backed military coup of 1964 (and who later became two-term president of Brazil, 1995-2003), developed his own version of “dependency theory,” which proved to be very influential in Catholic circles pressing for change. In 1967 Cardoso published an influential text proposing corrections to the model for “development” guiding U.S. projects in Latin America through the Alliance for Progress based on the theory of dependency.³⁷

Commentators distinguish Cardoso’s relatively more “nuanced form of dependency analysis,” which informed the work of Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Latin American bishops, from the more Marxist analysis of Andre Gunder Frank, who argued that “Europe and the United States financed their own development by exploiting poor nations and draining off profits (surplus value),” thus keeping “Latin America . . . from developing, by drawing off the capital needed for development, and imposing their own technology and controls.”³⁸ Cardoso accepted the influence of foreign investors, but also paid attention to the autonomy of economic and socio-political forces operating within Latin America itself. Later, as the Cold War drew to a close, Cardoso contributed important reflections on the role of civil society in the Latin American transition from military to civilian rule, which fit well with the role played by the church.³⁹ Commentators on Cardoso’s many contributions to Latin American political and economic theory during his long career as a scholar, finance minister, and later president of Brazil note that he consistently advocated economic and political movement toward globalized social democracy over other, more

36. Gilbert Rist, “The Latin American *Dependentistas*,” *The History of Development*, 113-18.

37. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina* (mimeo, Santiago de Chile: ILPES, 1967; Mexico, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1969); translated as *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

38. Arthur McGovern, S.J., “Dependency Theory, Marxist Analysis, and Liberation Theology,” in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds., *The Future of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 274.

39. F. H. Cardoso, “Associated Dependent Development and Democratic Theory,” in Alfred Stepan, ed., *Democratizing Brazil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

isolationist, anti-globalization approaches, though always in a form designed to protect and promote Latin American interests.⁴⁰

Cardoso eventually became very critical of dependency theorists, proponents of the very school of thought he had helped to create. He argued that they tended to take “refuge in affirmations of the principle of Revolution without managing to light up the way towards it . . . [insisting] there can only be a radical way out, even though the class or classes that might deal a final blow to the existing order are never really delineated.”⁴¹ Cardoso’s point was that dependency theorists (himself included) offered few solutions to the problem they posed, substituting an unsubstantiated belief that a “revolutionary explosion” was about to take place. Many Latin American church leaders who were influenced by Cardoso’s version of dependency theory in these early years, eventually abandoned it for this and other reasons, but his contributions were significant. Cardoso won the John W. Kluge Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Humanities and Social Sciences in July 2012 (considered by some the Nobel Prize for the humanities), and was described by James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, as “the outstanding political scientist in late-twentieth-century Latin America.”⁴² His influential 1969 book is still well regarded for detecting new possibilities for growth among the “periphery” countries in the early glimmerings of globalization. As president of Brazil from 1995 to 2002 he is regarded as the primary architect of Brazil’s rise past Britain and Italy to become the sixth largest economy in the world.

***The Latin American Bishops Change the Conversation
at Medellín, Colombia, 1968: God’s Preferential Option for the Poor***

Just as such critiques were gaining greater traction, the Latin American bishops (CELAM) met in Medellín, Colombia, August 26-September 6, 1968, the first episcopal conference to respond to the call of Vatican II (1962-1965) to read the signs of the times in light of the gospel. CELAM held its first general meeting in 1955, and reconvened thirteen years later for the express purpose of promoting the conversion and renewal (*aggiornamento*) of *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*. The bishops chose an anguished phrase to capture their reading of pastoral situation of the church in Latin America in 1968, stating, “A deafening cry pours from the throats of millions of men and women asking their pastors for a liberation that reaches them from nowhere else.”⁴³ Linking this cry to the ongoing debate about

40. Gerardo L. Munck, “Democracy and Development in a Globalized World: Thinking about Latin America from Within,” *Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID)* 44, no. 4 (December 2009): 337-58.

41. F. H. Cardoso, “Les idées à leur place” (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1984), 179; cited in Rist, *The History of Development*, 117-18.

42. Larry Rohter, “Brazil’s Ex-Leader Honored as Scholar,” *New York Times*, May 14, 2012, C1-2.

43. Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, “Document on Poverty in the Church” (2), *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the*

development outlined above, the bishops asserted, “Latin America appears to live beneath the tragic sign of underdevelopment.” In response, the bishops sought to formulate “a global vision of humanity, and the integral vision of Latin America’s development” that “does not pretend to compete with the attempts for solution made by other national, Latin American, and world bodies,” but rather tries “to encourage these efforts, accelerate their results, deepen their content, and permeate all the process of change with the values of the gospel.”⁴⁴

It would take us too far afield to review the renewal of the Latin American church outlined in Medellín’s sixteen documents. What is important is that here and elsewhere the bishops insisted on the priority of *liberating* development, and in their own words a decade later, sought to “affirm the need for conversion on the part of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation.”⁴⁵ With this epoch-changing discernment the Latin American bishops at Medellín became the first episcopal conference, three years after the close of Vatican II, to officially respond to the call to read the signs of the times in light of the gospel. Their prayerful conclusion was that the growing aspirations of the continent’s poor majorities for liberation was a sign that God was calling the Latin American church to embrace a “preferential option for the poor” as an appropriate horizon for its renewal after Vatican II.

Years of controversy, debate, and clarification followed these statements at Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), but Pope John Paul II eventually incorporated the preferential option for the poor into the heart of Catholic Social Teaching during his long pontificate (1978-2005). In his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus annus*, the pope unambiguously affirms what he describes as “the continuity within the Church of the so-called ‘preferential option for the poor,’ . . . which I defined [in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §42] as a ‘special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity’” (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus* §11).

Further, in his encyclicals *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987) and *Redemptoris missio* (1990) Pope John Paul II explicitly ties the salvation brought by Jesus to action for liberation when he asserts, “Jesus came to bring integral liberation,” and “the liberation and salvation brought by the Kingdom of God come to human persons in [both] their physical and spiritual dimensions” (*Redemptoris missio* 14). Assessing the teaching of John Paul II, the Irish social ethicist Donal Dorr writes, “there is no ‘backtracking’ [in the writings of John Paul II] from the position of Paul VI or John XXIII. Indeed, on this issue he has taken much stronger stands against injustice and in defense of human rights [and] . . . on the

Light of the Council: II Conclusions (2nd ed.; Washington, DC: Vision for Latin America—United States Catholic Conference, 1973), in Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 114.

44. Latin American Bishops, “Message to the Peoples of Latin America,” in Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 91.

45. Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Puebla: Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America: Conclusions* (London: St. Paul and CIIR, 1980); cited in Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (rev. and enlarged ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 210.

two key issues of liberation and the ‘option for the poor.’”⁴⁶ While not all would agree with this assessment, there is no question that the preferential option for the poor has become official Catholic Social Teaching, and been continually affirmed by the Latin American church. Likewise, it was explicitly and energetically affirmed at the most recent meeting of the Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops in Aparecida, Brazil, in May 2007, some forty years after Medellín. Indeed, Pope Benedict XVI insisted in his opening address at the Conference that “the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).”⁴⁷

But what sort of action and what sort of society does Medellín envision? Some find evidence of “two conflicting models of restructuring Latin American society . . . in the Medellín documents.”⁴⁸ On the one hand, the bishops criticize “neocolonialism” in the *Document on Peace* (§§8-10) and explicitly concede that “revolutionary insurrection can be legitimate in the case of evident and prolonged ‘tyranny,’” while cautioning with Paul VI that “‘armed revolution’ generally ‘generates new injustices, introduces new imbalances, and causes new disasters’” (*Document on Peace* §19, citing Paul VI, *Populorum progressio* §31). On the other hand, the *Document on Justice* outlines what one author calls a *quasi-corporatist* approach to development⁴⁹ that includes an appeal to “business leaders, to their organizations and to the political authorities” (*Justice* §10). It envisions a network of “intermediary structures” between the individual and the state (*Justice* §7) that play an essential role in mediating participation from all sectors of society in the process of development (*Justice* §§7-15). Thus, the development and mobilization of a vigorous and flourishing Latin American “civil society” emerges as the key to the bishops’ vision for the promotion of peace and justice on the continent.

Rather than interpreting these divergent views as representing contradictory models, however, I would suggest that the bishops are struggling to integrate long-standing themes in Catholic Social Teaching that stand in creative tension (i.e., rights based vs. corporatist approaches). The bishops offer principles for a flourishing civil society, envisioning a path toward real change that avoids the extremes of both laissez-faire capitalism and Marxism, which they seek to avoid (*Justice* §10), while at the same time lending support to processes of social change with liberating effects on the “downtrodden of every social class” (*Justice* §20). Thus, they write,

46. Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 361.

47. Pope Benedict XVI, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Shrine of Aparecida, May 13, 2007, no. 3, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070513_conference-aparecida_en.html; accessed March 24, 2009.

48. William T. Cavanaugh, “The Ecclesiologies of Medellín and the Lessons of the Base Communities,” *Cross Currents* (Spring 1994): 71.

49. *Ibid.*, 72.

The system of liberal capitalism and the temptation of the Marxist system . . . both . . . militate against the dignity of the human person. One takes for granted the primacy of capital, its power and its discriminatory utilization in the function of profit-making. The other, although it ideologically supports a kind of humanism, is more concerned with collective humanity, and in practice becomes a totalitarian concentration of state power. Thus, we must denounce the fact that Latin America sees itself caught between these two options and remains dependent on one or another of the centers of power which control its economy. (*Justice* §10)

Drawing on the church-sect theory of Max Weber, the prelates explicitly opt for an inclusive understanding of the church and its membership, stating, “The Church is faced with the dilemma of either continuing to be a universal Church or, if it fails to attract and vitally incorporate such groups, of becoming a sect.” Rejecting the latter path, the bishops insist that “because she is a Church rather than a sect, she must offer her message of salvation to all men . . .” (“Pastoral Care for the Masses,” §3).

This leads the bishops to argue that salvation entails the “authentic liberation” of all peoples, communities, families, and persons from death-dealing oppression (whether Christian or not). They say this entails the creation of “new human beings who know how to be truly free and responsible” in the modern world (*Justice* 3), and are the artisans of their own destiny. This in turn requires that the church’s religious commitment to God’s preferential option for the poor be realized through responsible participation in secular struggles for liberation from economic, political, and cultural oppression. Thus, on the one hand, the church is obliged to take sides on the issue of the poor, and cannot stand apart from the world in this regard. On the other hand, however, the church must find ways to live out and to explain how its preferential option for the poor functions as a part of God’s plan of the salvation, not just for some, but for all.

***Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Latin American Liberation Theology,
and the Irruption of the Poor***

No figure is more closely identified with the emergence of a theology of liberation and its defining concept, the preferential option for the poor, than Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P. Born June 8, 1928, and raised amid genuine poverty in a loving mestizo family (part Hispanic and Quechua Indian) in Lima, Peru, Gutiérrez was bedridden by osteomyelitis from age twelve to eighteen. After three years as a medical student at the University of San Marcos, he entered the local seminary and was ordained a priest in 1959 by the Archdiocese of Lima after studies (1951-1959) in philosophy and psychology at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium), and in theology at the University of Lyon in France and the Gregorian University in Rome. Gutiérrez returned to Peru in 1959 as advisor to the National Union of Catholic Students and a professor of

theology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. There he observed the growing unrest and dissatisfaction with the first U.N. Decade of Development (1961-1969), fueled in part by the emphasis on justice and the modern world at Vatican II (1962-1965), which he attended in its fourth and final session as theological assistant to Bishop Manuel Larraín of Chile.

As a close observer of the powerful transformations reshaping Latin American society and the church, Gutiérrez concluded they were being driven by what he would later call the “irruption of the poor” from the status of non-actors to agents of their own history.⁵⁰ Reflecting on this “new presence” of the poor and oppressed as significant actors in liberation movements across Latin America and around the globe, Gutiérrez offered what many consider the first proposal for a “theology of liberation” at a gathering of priests and lay people in Chimbote, Peru, in July 1968, one month before Medellín. Three years later in 1971 he published *A Theology of Liberation*. In the revised Introduction to this book Gutiérrez identifies three “basic” or “primary” claims of Latin American liberation theology: (1) human history is being reshaped by the irruption of the poor as agents of their own liberation, and by the “option for the poor” of Christians living their faith through solidarity and support for those liberation struggles; (2) liberation theology is critical reflection on this Christian praxis of a “preferential option for the poor” in light of the word of God, which constitutes a “new stage” in the history of Christian theology;⁵¹ and (3) the irruption of the poor as actors for their own liberation, and the church’s option for the poor expressed in Christian solidarity with their struggles for liberation, constitute an authentic proclamation of the Kingdom of God to the modern world.

Building on what we have discussed, we can locate Fr. Gutiérrez as part of an influential and growing number of Catholic leaders in Latin America who had concluded by the end of the 1960s that President Truman’s “developmentalist approach has proven to be unsound and incapable of interpreting the economic, social and political evolution of the Latin American continent.”⁵² As noted earlier, Gutiérrez was careful to endorse the use of “integral development”⁵³ by Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* as capturing how “the term ‘development’ has synthesized the aspirations of poor peoples during the last few decades,” while simultaneously critiquing “developmentalism,”⁵⁴ which Gutiérrez understands as an “ideology of modernization” that has “sanctioned timid and in the long run deceitful efforts.”

Instead of focusing on development, however, Gutiérrez emphasizes what he

50. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 191; Spanish, *La fuerza histórica de los pobres* (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1979).

51. Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View,” in *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (rev. ed. with new intro.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), xlv.

52. *Ibid.*, 51.

53. Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, §14.

54. Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 16.

sees as the more fundamental phenomenon of the “irruption” or “new presence” of the poor and oppressed as actors on the stage of history. He asserts, “The most important instance of this presence in our times, especially in underdeveloped and oppressed countries, is the struggle to construct a just and fraternal society, where persons can live with dignity and be the agents of their own destiny.” He concludes, “Therefore, it is my opinion that the term *development* does not well express these profound aspirations. *Liberation*, on the other hand, seems to express them better.”⁵⁵

But liberation from whom or what? Gutiérrez asserts, “The building of a just society . . . in Latin America . . . revolves around the *oppression-liberation axis*.” Thus, on the one hand, the demands from poor or otherwise marginated groups for structural change “may seem difficult or disturbing to those who wish to achieve—or maintain—a low-cost conciliation” in order “to keep living off the poverty of the many.”⁵⁶ On the other hand, however, he asserts “that the Latin American peoples will not emerge from their present status except by means of a profound transformation, a *social revolution*, which will radically and qualitatively change the conditions in which they now live.”⁵⁷ This observation would be confirmed over the next twenty years by a series of painful, but largely successful, campaigns to bring an end to military rule in various countries in Latin America, and by less successful efforts to promote political and economic reforms.

Gutiérrez, however, eventually revised his early position that “dependence and liberation are correlative terms,”⁵⁸ which he said implies “that there can be authentic development for Latin America only if there is liberation from the domination exercised by the great capitalist countries, especially by the most powerful, the United States of America.”⁵⁹ He changed this position in 1988 when he stated, “It is clear . . . that the theory of dependence . . . is now an inadequate tool, because it does not take sufficient account of the internal dynamics of each country or of the vast dimensions of the world of the poor,” and because “the world economy has evolved.”⁶⁰

What has remained consistent, however, is his position that “the social praxis of contemporary humankind has begun to reach maturity. It is the behavior of a humankind ever more conscious of being an active subject of history, . . . determined to participate both in the transformation of social structures and in effective political action.”⁶¹ Thus, in the *Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez goes on to cite Max Weber’s claim that “nothing lies outside the political sphere”⁶² for the modern person, arguing that this now includes the poor, once they have irrupted into the modern world as agents of their own history. And he insists

55. Ibid., xiv.

56. Ibid., 31.

57. Ibid., 54.

58. Ibid., 49.

59. Ibid., 54.

60. Ibid., xxiv.

61. Ibid., 30.

62. Ibid., 30-31.

that this irruption constitutes an epoch-changing reality, for it is precisely as a responsible agent in the political sphere “that a person emerges as a free and responsible being, as a person in relationship with other persons, as someone who takes on a historical task.”⁶³

It should not surprise us, then, that Gutiérrez believes that the preferential option for the poor is the source and the driving insight of Latin American liberation theology, as well as its primary contribution to the universal church. He writes,

The vision of Christian life manifested in this statement [of the preferential option for the poor] and in the practice of this commitment is, in fact, the most substantial part of the contribution from the life and theological reflection of the Church in Latin America to the universal church. The option for the poor took its first steps in the years before Medellín, was affirmed in the period after that conference, and was invoked in subsequent episcopal conferences and in the recent teachings of Benedict XVI and [the bishops’ conference in 2007 at] Aparecida, which have given it an impact and a place it would not have had without them.⁶⁴

He argues, therefore, that action for liberation is a secondary or derivative contextual commitment that makes the disciple’s embrace of God’s preferential option for the poor historically effective. Thus, from the perspective of the theologian most often considered the founder of Latin American liberation theology, the emphasis on the religious and social significance of the “irruption of the poor” as actors on the stage of world history and the church’s “preferential option for the poor,” first stated at Medellín in 1968, are the principle contributions of Latin American liberation theology to the universal church.

Despite this insistence on the priority of the option for the poor, however, Gutiérrez is probably best known for having formulated the basic methodology of Latin American liberation theology, which has served as a paradigm for a global family of theological approaches inspired by the mandate from *Gaudium et spes* “of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in light of the Gospel” (*Gaudium et spes* §4). As Gutiérrez himself notes, “One of the first statements of my way of understanding the theological task was that liberation theology is ‘a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God.’”⁶⁵

The key to this definition was that it shifted the focus of reflection from ambiguous “signs of the times” to the actual faith-based solidarity of Christian disciples with the liberating struggles of the poor. Gutiérrez says this better reflects the message of the Bible, which “shows us that the doing of God’s will is the main demand placed on believers,” and fulfills the prophetic tradition in

63. Ibid.

64. Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ,” *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 318.

65. Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, xxix.

twentieth-century theology that originates with “Karl Barth . . . when he said that ‘the true hearer of the word is the one who puts it into practice.’”⁶⁶ Gutiérrez argues that this generates a “hermeneutical circle”⁶⁷ that moves between two poles: the living word of God and the present historical reality of its interpreters, which he says should involve solidarity with the irruption of the poor into history as actors on their own behalf.

Thus, Gutiérrez concludes, “The historical womb from which liberation theology has emerged is the life of the poor and . . . the Christian communities that have arisen within the bosom of the present-day Latin American church.” For its part, this “theology tries to read the word of God and be alert to the challenges that faith issues to the historical process in which that people is engaged.”⁶⁸ For Gutiérrez, this approach amounts to an updating of the famous definition of theology by St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) as “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*).⁶⁹ In the hands of Gutiérrez, Anselm’s definition refers both to the faith of the poor and to that of the church, which makes the preferential option for the poor that theology seeks to articulate and understand.

The Conversion of the Central American Jesuits to the Preferential Option for the Poor

Reflecting some of the same sensitivities discussed above, in El Salvador Archbishop Luis Chávez y González brought a consistent concern with poverty to the diocese of San Salvador over which he presided from 1939 to 1977, when he was replaced by Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. In the early 1950s Archbishop Chávez encouraged the peasant-based cooperative movement, sending priests to Canada to learn how to form cooperatives, and setting up the Pius XII Institute to impart these skills in the context of Catholic Social Teaching.⁷⁰ As noted above, the Catholic Church of the early 1960s under the leadership of John XXIII (1958-1963), Paul VI (1963-1978), and Vatican II (1962-1965), embraced the concept of development being promoted by the United Nations and other secular organizations, integrating it into the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas (archbishop 1983-1994) remembers that Archbishop Chávez was very “anxious to put into practice the social doctrines that came out of the Council and to have them diffused and practiced.”⁷¹

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., xxxiii.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., xxxiii-xxxiv.

70. Interviews with José Inocencio Alas (January 1982) and Hector Dada (February 1982) by Phillip Berryman, summarized in Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 100.

71. Interview with then Bishop Arturo Rivera Damas by Tommie Sue Montgomery; cited

***Development, the Church in El Salvador,
and the Founding of the UCA***

On August 6, 1966, Archbishop Chávez issued a pastoral letter, "The Responsibility of the Laity in the Ordering of Temporal Life," which attempted to relate some of the teachings of the Council to the need for economic and political development in El Salvador. Rivera Damas recalled that the letter aroused the animosity of both the government and the oligarchy for its perceived "criticism of capitalism" and its possibilities for encouraging the potential threats embodied in the nascent Christian Democratic Party and the organization of voluntary grassroots movements.⁷² Through these and other activities, during the 1960s the notion of development began to guide the application of the church's social teaching to the historical realities of El Salvador. Not surprisingly, development also framed the documents and ecclesial perspectives that shaped the founding of the University of Central America (UCA).

On August 24, 1964, the six bishops of El Salvador officially petitioned the papal secretary of state for permission to open a Catholic university in their country.⁷³ The letter presents the Catholic university as a much-needed alternative to the perspective of the National University of El Salvador, which they believed was characterized by a "position and focus that was friendly to Marxism."⁷⁴ Later that year the Jesuits of Central America put their own stamp on the proposed university, subordinating the bishops' anti-communism to a commitment to development as a horizon more consonant with the church's social teaching and adequate to the project of a Christian university. Indeed, the document makes Third World development a founding premise for the work of the university, suggesting, "All academic faculties should be set up with a

in Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 86.

72. Ibid.

73. This section draws on the following studies of the founding of the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (in order of publication): Román Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1976); Ignacio Ellacuría, "Sobre la fundación de la Universidad 'José Simeón Cañas,'" September 30, 1982, appendix to Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, October 11, 1982 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America); Charles Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 47-87.

74. Letter from the bishops of El Salvador to Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, August 24, 1964 (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus of Central America). Copy in the UCA El Salvador file. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 73. Note that the Jesuit curial staff of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus has decided that sensitive correspondence in its archives dating from this period shall remain confidential until an undetermined future date. Fr. Beirne was a high-ranking official of the university shortly after the assassinations, and before the province's decision to close these files, and therefore had a unique opportunity to study this correspondence. Where I must rely on his description of a document, it is cited in the form above.

sense of absolute priority on university graduates with a development mentality not only in the economic arena but also in the social realm. This priority is presented not only because of the evident danger from communism but also in the light of social justice.”⁷⁵

Thus, on September 15, 1965, Fr. Florentino Idoate, S.J., the UCA’s first president,⁷⁶ would inaugurate the University of Central America José Simeón Cañas with a speech celebrating the university’s role in forming professionals who would contribute to El Salvador’s future “socio-economic development.”⁷⁷ And five years later in a speech written by Ignacio Ellacuría and Román Mayorga celebrating the signing of the first loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, university treasurer Fr. José María Gondra, S.J., recalled, “When our university began its foundational labors in 1965, it believed its service should be focused around the concept of development.”⁷⁸ As we have seen, however, by 1970 a decade of experience with the concept of development had brought the Latin American Conference of Bishops, together with many other important leadership and grassroots groups, to seriously question the adequacy of this horizon as a framework within which to interpret and respond to the historical realities of Latin America.

As a result, the decades of the 1970s and ’80s would find the Jesuits of Central America and the UCA at the center of a deadly serious national struggle to define a new horizon for a national vision including the hopes and aspirations of the majority of El Salvadorans. The UCA and many others would insist with Archbishop Romero and the Latin American bishops that development should be subordinated to the preferential option for the poor and the struggle for liberation it implies, metaphors chosen to capture the social-political-economic transformations considered necessary to achieve truly “integral” development.

The Early Years of the UCA: 1965-1969

Fr. Charles Beirne, S.J., describes 1965 to 1969 as “the founding years” of the UCA.⁷⁹ The aforementioned “development mentality” favored by the UCA team

75. “Estudio preliminar para la creación de una universidad privada en El Salvador” (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus of Central America, 1964), 38. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 75.

76. Though the UCA uses the term “rector” to refer to its legal and titular head, I will translate this with the more familiar term “president” throughout this chapter.

77. Florentino Idoate, S.J., “Discurso del rector de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, Florentino Idoate, con motivo de la inauguración de la Universidad,” *Planteamiento universitario 1989* (San Salvador: UCA, 1989), 136.

78. José María Gondra, S.J., “Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la firma del contrato con el BID,” *Planteamiento universitario 1989* (San Salvador: UCA, 1989), 10.

79. My description of the Universidad Centroamericana during these years again draws on the following studies: Román Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, esp. 21-37; Ellacuría, “Sobre la fundación de la Universidad ‘José Simeón Cañas’”; Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, esp. pp. 71-87.

in El Salvador would characterize their work until Medellín, a 1968 meeting of the Jesuit provincials of Latin America in Rio, Brazil, and the emerging theology of liberation shook the Central American Jesuits to their roots at the province retreat in December 1969. In the meantime, however, the structural foundations for a truly modern, if conventional, Catholic university were being laid.

Drawing on research from the Jesuit archives, Fr. Beirne has traced the development and implementation of the idea for a Jesuit Central American university from the original proposal by Jesuit General Fr. John B. Janssens to Central American provincial Fr. Miguel Elizondo on April 21, 1958 through 1994. Fr. Beirne highlights two key structural decisions taken while the university was “still on the drawing boards.”⁸⁰ First was the implementation of the recommendation by Fr. Janssens,⁸¹ based on the advice of his education consultant, Fr. Paolo Dezza, S.J., to establish one university with campuses in Managua (Nicaragua), Guatemala City, and San Salvador (this was added later) so that “cooperation and help from various nations would be made easier, and cultural and economic bonds encouraged.”⁸² Fr. Beirne notes, “Although the Roman Jesuit curia would raise the issue from time to time, and consider each of the universities as ‘branches,’ the one UCA never came into existence. Separate institutions developed in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.”⁸³

Second, and more significant, is the unanticipated singular importance of the Private School Law passed by the Salvadoran legislature on March 24, 1965.⁸⁴ This law essentially pre-empted seven years of sometimes difficult negotiations among Jesuit, diocesan, and Vatican officials by mandating “a legally separate entity, a special kind of not-for-profit corporation (*corporación de utilidad pública*),” in which “neither the church nor the Society of Jesus would be its owner,” but rather “its Board of Directors, who were to administer it according to its ‘public’ or ‘societal’ purposes.”⁸⁵

Fr. Beirne says the new arrangement “essentially changed . . . [the UCA] from the type of university envisioned at the meetings with the hierarchy . . . when a ‘Catholic’ university was being planned,” to a structure that “would protect the university from intervention by the Salvadoran and Vatican hierarchy.”⁸⁶ Fr. Luis Achaerandio could not have imagined how the new university’s legal autonomy would protect its implementation of the Central American Jesuits’ option for the poor from being crippled by those very forces during the 1970s

80. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 71.

81. Letter from John B. Janssens to Miguel Elizondo, April 21, 1958 (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus of Central America, 1958). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 87-88.

82. Letter from John B. Janssens to Miguel Elizondo, October 11, 1958 (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus of Central America, 1958). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 71-72.

83. *Ibid.*, 74-75.

84. *Ibid.*, 76.

85. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

86. *Ibid.*

and 1980s. But it seems clear that he intended to create a truly modern Catholic university; one with sufficient religious and secular autonomy to fully engage the new Latin America emerging during the 1960s.⁸⁷ As Fr. Beirne notes, after Medellín and the Central American Jesuits' option for the poor, everything would look different.

Luis Achaerandio and his team built independence and autonomy into the model: a special kind of "public," not an official Catholic, university. In 1965 the Salvadoran bishops and the oligarchy wanted a Catholic haven within which their charges could be protected from noxious influences outside. If the UCA had been an official Catholic university from the beginning, it is not hard to imagine how the bishops might have intervened, even dramatically and as early as 1970, when the university began to define itself as an agent for social change, and as a creative and critical conscience for the nation.⁸⁸

Thus, exactly one month after the initial August 15, 1965, meeting of the all-Jesuit Board of Directors,⁸⁹ Fr. Idoate would officially inaugurate the university's efforts in "the preparation of citizens well equipped to lead the intense development which is coming."⁹⁰ The issues that would arise in the remaining years of the decade are appropriately described by Fr. Ibisate (who joined the Board with Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría at the beginning of the second academic year) as focused on the process of the UCA's "being born,"⁹¹ and by Fr. Beirne as "growing pains,"⁹² terms that connote a period of establishing foundations in continuity with the founders' development-oriented original vision.

During the university's first few months, deans of engineering and economics were appointed, and negotiations were completed with the Salesians to establish the campus temporarily on their Don Rua property. Jon Sobrino, then a Jesuit seminarian (who would describe his apostolic vision in 1966 as "helping the people to . . . become a little bit more like Spaniards, Europeans, or North Americans"⁹³), was assigned to teach engineering.⁹⁴ And Fr. Idoate took

87. Fr. Luis Achaerandio has indicated to Fr. Beirne that "UCA staff members had a major role in formulating the law in the first place." See Charles J. Beirne, "Conversations with Luis Achaerandio, S.J., December, 1990." Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 192.

88. *Ibid.*, 233.

89. The first Board included Florentino Idoate (president), Segundo Azcue (vice president), Joaquín López y López (secretary), José Ignacio Scheiffler (pro-secretary), and Jesús de Esnaola (member). See Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 77.

90. Idoate, "Discurso del rector de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas," 135.

91. Interview with Francisco Javier Ibisate, S.J., by Charles J. Beirne, November 1992. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 79.

92. *Ibid.*

93. Interview with Jon Sobrino, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 5, 1994, 2.

94. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America

a 50 percent pay cut to cover still unfunded scholarships. Shortly thereafter President Julio Rivera came to the rescue with thirty scholarships worth \$52 a month.⁹⁵

The San Salvador UCA opened its doors in 1966 with 309 students (136 in engineering and 173 in economics) and ended the year with 14 professors having taught 367 pupils.⁹⁶ Later that year the School of Business Administration was approved.⁹⁷ Fr. Beirne endorses the belief of Román Mayorga, university president from 1975 to 1979, that “the school got off the ground . . . because of three factors: the international prestige of the Jesuits as educators, negative impressions of the National University’s quality and atmosphere, and the initial academic programs of engineering and business [which were] in great demand during this era of ‘developmentalistic optimism.’”⁹⁸

In 1967 the UCA grew to 541 students taught by 26 teachers (mostly part time). And on May 12 the Board obtained a \$240,000 loan to purchase land for a campus. But shortages of Jesuit personnel and fund-raising problems led its president, Fr. Idoate, to tell his provincial that if the Jesuits were going to continue to staff the seminary, “I do not see the university as viable.” Though twenty donors had promised to help purchase a campus site, Fr. Idoate reports that “the project is moving desperately slowly, and some have put on the brakes because of nervousness at the publication of certain church social documents.”⁹⁹ One can see why the paradigm shift from development to the option for the poor, which was about to take place at Medellín, would take several years to arrive at the UCA.

In the meantime, the UCA had more immediate and mundane concerns. On July 28, 1967, the university was evicted from the Salesian property. The Salesian superior, Fr. José C. Di Pietro, wrote with equal parts of disgust and irony to the Jesuit provincial:

I have nothing to say about the music, dancing and happiness of the students at their parties, but what surprises me is that on these occasions they are given total freedom in our house to get drunk with barrels of beer at their disposal. . . . After my complaints . . . they suspended the

José Simeón Cañas, November 15, 1965 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America).

95. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America José Simeón Cañas, November 25, 1966 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America).

96. *Plan Quinquenal, 1977-81*, Vols. I-III (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1976), 6.

97. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America José Simeón Cañas, September 28, 1966 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America).

98. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 27, 28; and Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 79.

99. Letter from Florentino Idoate, S.J., to Segundo Azcue, S.J., April 21, 1967 (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus in Central America). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 81.

distribution of beer for a time, but the students continued with their supply of rum, and threw the empty bottles from the second floor to the street. . . . I am sure that such orgies are not the usual custom in your high schools and universities.¹⁰⁰

Fortunately, the UCA was able to move with its now 719 students and 42 instructors to a temporary home at the Jesuit high school where they stayed until finally moving to a permanent campus in February 1969. Yet, despite these setbacks, by 1968 the UCA would begin sending faculty for Fulbright-sponsored graduate studies in the United States,¹⁰¹ and establish a third faculty or division (in addition to business/economics and engineering) in the area of philosophy, letters, and human sciences. The year 1969 ended with 57 UCA faculty having educated 1,039 students, and the appointment of Fr. Luis Achaerandio, S.J., the recently retired provincial superior of the Central American Jesuits, as university president. Like the rest of the Latin American Church, the UCA was about to be rocked by the impact of Medellín.

The 1968 Jesuit Meeting in Rio, Brazil

The documentary history of liberation theology compiled by Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J., bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the preferential option for the poor, and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies, only gradually came to supplant development as an overarching horizon for many Latin American church leaders, including the Jesuits. Hennelly traces this outcome to the church's disenchantment with the failure of the First Decade of Development to address what Medellín would eventually call the "institutionalized violence" of "international monopolies and [the] international imperialism of money" directed against the poor (citing Pius XI in *Quadragesimo anno* and Paul VI in *Populorum progressio*).¹⁰² He also cites the effect of events like the March 31, 1964, military coup in Brazil, and the subsequent adoption of Brazil's "totalitarian ideology" of the National Security State by other Latin American regimes.¹⁰³ But Hennelly suggests that the crucial break occurred when the Latin American church began to attend to its own experience that "unlike the United States and Europe, Latin America constituted an enormous ocean of poverty."¹⁰⁴ This

100. Idoate correspondence folder (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus in Central America). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*.

101. Fr. Beirne notes that through 1994 the UCA would have sponsored fifty-two faculty members for Fulbright scholarships for U.S. graduate studies. Of these twenty-nine were no longer teaching at the UCA, twelve were still on the staff, two had died, and nine were still in studies. See Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 82.

102. Second Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Document on Peace" (9e), in Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 108.

103. Second Conference of Latin American Bishops, in Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 41.

104. *Ibid.*, 2.

experience became an important “source”¹⁰⁵ for the church’s pastoral and theological reflection, a move that was further stimulated by Vatican II’s call for ecclesial renewal and inculturation.

While it would take until 1971 for Gustavo Gutiérrez to elaborate his “theology of liberation,”¹⁰⁶ what was clearly understood by the bishops at Medellín in 1968 was that the church was giving apostolic “preference to the poorest and most needy,” and “pre-eminence” to “our duty of solidarity with the poor.” Indeed, the bishops went out of their way to point out that “this solidarity means that we make ours their problems and their struggles,” through “criticism of injustice and oppression” and participation in “the struggle against the intolerable situation that a poor person often has to tolerate.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, as I have already noted, the church’s discernment that God was calling it to a preferential option for the poor would lead some to see the church as an important participant in civil movements for social change and liberation from military rule and other forms of oppression.

It is important to distinguish the meaning and history of the church’s disenchantment with developmentalism and its subordination of integral development to the option for the poor as the horizon for its apostolic activity during the 1960s, from the history of the formal consideration of these concepts by theologians and church leaders. For while the latter history must address the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez, who dedicated himself to this task, the former more encompassing paradigm shift involved a broad cross-section of individual believers, pastoral agents, and church leaders throughout the Latin America. This larger history would include the church’s adaptation of Paulo Freire’s development of methods of literacy training designed to “conscientize” Latin America’s poor, Brazilian experiments with basic Christian communities, and the meeting of the Jesuit provincials of Latin America with their General, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, May 6-14, 1968. The dramatic results of this meeting (yet another important meeting in the months before Medellín) would play a crucial role in the history of the Central American Jesuits and the University of Central America by inspiring the province retreat of December 1969.¹⁰⁸

105. Ibid.

106. Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*.

107. Second Conference of Latin American Bishops, “Document on Poverty in the Church” (9, 10), in Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 116.

108. In order to avoid confusion, I will not use the terms “vice-province,” “vice-provincial,” etc., substituting “province,” “provincial,” etc., throughout this work. The only exception is that printed works will retain their original titles in the footnotes. Miguel Elizondo, “El sentido teológico y espiritual de una reunión comunitaria de la viceprovincia” [The Theological and Spiritual Meaning of a Community Meeting of the Vice-Province], in “Reunión Ejercicios.” The prefix “vice” is inherently confusing since it is also used in English to mean *assistant*. At the time referred to in the text the Society of Jesus in Central America was still formally a vice-province of the Spanish Province of Castile. Fr. Juan Hernández-Pico explains that after having been elevated from the status of a “mission” on February 7, 1937, it would remain a vice-province until August 5, 1976, when Jesuit general Pedro Arrupe officially elevated its status and appointed Fr. César Jerez the first provincial of the new province. See Juan

The final document represents an official statement of the vision of the highest levels of governance of the Society of Jesus in Latin America for the post-Vatican II renewal of its membership. In their analysis of “the social problem of Latin America” the Jesuit leaders “propose to give this problem absolute priority in our apostolic strategy; indeed we intend to orient our whole apostolate around it.”¹⁰⁹ Leaving no doubt that their option for the poor has a political dimension they state, “We hope to participate, as best we can, in the common quest of all peoples . . . for a freer, more just, and more peaceful society.” Emphasizing that this implies a commitment to critically reexamine their various works in light of the struggle for liberation from military rule and other forms of oppression in Latin America they assert, “In all our activities, our goal should be the liberation of humankind from every sort of servitude that oppresses it.” And “aware of the profound transformation this presupposes,” including a “break with some of our attitudes in the past,” the provincials assert with some prescience that though these changes “will almost certainly arouse reactions,” still “we promise to work for bold reforms that will radically transform existing structures (*Populorum progressio* §32) . . . as the only way to promote social peace.”¹¹⁰ The document (written two-and-one-half months before Gutiérrez’s speech in Chimbote, Peru) is an unusually clear exemplar of the significance and depth of the shift in the Latin American church before Medellín in 1968 from development to the option for the poor and the efforts to promote liberation it implies.

The Jesuit provincials are quintessentially Ignatian in their preoccupation with exploring the practical apostolic implications of this paradigm shift for Jesuit works in Latin America. First, they propose to “prepare priests and lay persons for their apostolate in the world of today.”¹¹¹ Second, the document proposes all Latin American provincials “allocate a part of our apostolic resources to the growing mass of those who are most neglected.” Examples given include “Centers of Research and Social Action,” “rural parishes,” and “pastoral work among grassroots communities” of the poor.¹¹² Third, the provincials ask that all Jesuit “schools and universities accept their role as active agents of national integration and social justice in Latin America.”¹¹³ Fourth, “adults in every walk of life” are to be supported as “active promoters of social change.”¹¹⁴ Fifth, the Jesuit leadership asks that “communications media” be given “decisive importance in inculcating human values . . . that will help to create the new order we seek.”¹¹⁵ Sixth, the superiors propose that “our participation in the creation of

Hernández-Pico, S.J., *Historia reciente de la Provincia de Centroamérica (1976-1986)* (San Salvador: Ediciones Cardoner, 1991), 17.

109. Provincials of the Society of Jesus, “The Jesuits in Latin America,” in Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology*, 77-83 at 78.

110. *Ibid.*, 78, 79.

111. *Ibid.*, 79.

112. *Ibid.*, 80.

113. *Ibid.*, 80, 81.

114. *Ibid.*, 81.

115. *Ibid.*, 82.

a new social order presuppose[s] a deep, inner conversion within each one of us.”¹¹⁶ And seventh, the Jesuit provincials state, “We also realize that . . . [this] presupposes changes in our decision-making process as provincials. . . . But we are pledged to carry it through as quickly as possible.”¹¹⁷

Within one year the Jesuits of Central America would begin a planning process to reevaluate all of their existing works in light of the decrees of Vatican II, Medellín, the Rio letter, and the commitment of the Central American Jesuits themselves to solidarity with the poor. It was this process as much as any other that served to translate the paradigm shift from developmentalism to the option for the poor stated by their leaders at Rio and Medellín into a reality for the Jesuits in El Salvador.

The Call for Renewal: Ellacuría and the Voice of Jesuit Formation

Jesuit students immersed in a course of studies far removed geographically and thematically from the realities of Central America were among the first members of the Central American province to embrace the “profound conversion”¹¹⁸ called for by the bishops of Latin America, and the Latin American provincials at Rio. Fr. Juan Hernández-Pico notes in his *Recent History of the Central American Province (1976-1986)* that thirty-nine of the Province’s seventy-two Jesuits doing studies gathered in Madrid, June 26-29, 1968, with Fr. Segundo Azcue, provincial of Central America, in order to discuss “the crisis hitting religious life.”¹¹⁹ The students complained of the “inertia” and lack of “new proposals and planning” from the Central American Jesuits in response to the challenges of secularization, the suffering of “the Third World,” and the 1968 Rio letter signed by Fr. Azcue calling Latin American Jesuits to an option for the poor. Fr. Hernández-Pico reports that Ignacio Ellacuría, who was at the meeting, proposed that Fr. Azcue convene “a representative meeting of the Province in order to create a shared consciousness and sense of co-responsibility for the necessary changes” mandated by Medellín and Rio.¹²⁰ The author adds that the elderly provincial “demonstrated an admirable openness of heart to the new challenges,” and “decided to convoke the [requested] meeting of the Province during December 1969.”¹²¹ A decade later Fr. Azcue would serve as confessor for Archbishop Romero.¹²²

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid., 82.

118. Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, “Document on Justice,” in Hennelly, ed. *Liberation Theology*, 98.

119. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 4-5.

120. Ibid., 5. Fr. Hernández-Pico identifies Ellacuría as the source of the proposal in personal correspondence with Fr. Charles Beirne, S.J., July 1993. See Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 84 n. 45.

121. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 6.

122. James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 46.

Hernández-Pico says Azcue “entrusted the preparation to Frs. Llasera and Ellacuría.” Fr. Javier Llasera, assistant to the provincial, was named general secretary for the meeting, and the young Ellacuría recruited his former novice master to the team, Fr. Miguel Elizondo, now retreat master and director of the final stage of Jesuit formation in Medellín, Colombia. The group also invited two other Spaniards to give presentations, Fr. Florentino Idoate, S.J., the UCA’s first rector, and Fr. Ricardo Falla, S.J., a young anthropologist ordained in 1964 and in training for assignment to one of the new Centers for Research and Social Action (CIAS). Elizondo and Ellacuría, still only thirty-eight years old and ordained in 1961 just before Vatican II, would play a critical role in turning Azcue’s request into an epoch-defining moment for the Central American Jesuits.

The leaders of the retreat were all Spaniards, which is not surprising in light of the still official subordination in 1969 of the Central American Province to Spain. It is important to understand this relationship and its impact on Ellacuría and Elizondo as leaders of this crucial retreat. The Spanish Jesuits first arrived in Guatemala in 1579,¹²³ seven years after coming to Mexico on September 28, 1572,¹²⁴ and three decades after the first New World Jesuits arrived in Brazil on March 29, 1549. However, the worldwide suppression of the Society of Jesus by Pope Clement XIV on August 16, 1773,¹²⁵ and the expulsion of all Jesuits from El Salvador in 1872,¹²⁶ meant that no Jesuits returned to El Salvador until the arrival in 1914 of a group of Jesuits fleeing religious persecution from the Mexican revolution. A little over twenty years later, on February 7, 1937, the Jesuit “mission” in Central America was elevated to the status of a vice-province under the care and supervision of the Spanish Province of Castille.

As part of this mission in 1949 six young Jesuits were sent to San Salvador from Spain under the direction of novice master Miguel Elizondo in order to help found a Jesuit novitiate for Central America. One can imagine tears running down the face of Ignacio Ellacuría’s worried parents, his father an oculist

123. See the historical study written by the Central American Jesuit provincial Jesús M. Sariego, S.J., *Tradición jesuita en Guatemala: Una aproximación histórica* (Guatemala: Universidad Rafael Landívar, 2010), 3; http://www.url.edu.gt/PortalURL/Archivos/24/Archivos/Trad_jesuita_en_Guatemala.pdf, accessed March 26, 2011.

124. The dates for Mexico, Brazil, and the worldwide suppression of the Jesuits are provided by William V. Bangert, S.J., *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 95, 37.

125. The Jesuit order was restored worldwide on August 7, 1814. See Bangert, *History*, 428.

126. This date and the information through the following sentence are from Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 20-21, following two historical articles published in the UCA journal *Estudios centroamericanos* (ECA). See Judex (pseudonym), “Cincuentenario de la llegada de los jesuitas a El Salvador,” *ECA* no. 198 (October 1964): 289-91; Césareo García del Cerro, S.J., “Aportación de los jesuitas españoles a Iberoamérica,” *ECA* no. 214 (April 1966): 64-68. Sariego says, “The second Jesuit epoch in Guatemala, the modern period occurs . . . with the missionary group sent from Spain and New Granada (Colombia) in 1850.” See Sariego, *Tradición jesuita en Guatemala*, 5.

from outside of town, as they bid goodbye with other heartsick parents to their sons leaving Bilbao, Spain, by train on their way to El Salvador. Like the others, “Ellacu” had entered the Jesuit novitiate in Loyola, the home of St. Ignatius, only a year before. But there he was, a firmly solicited (yet willing) eighteen-year-old “volunteer” about to begin what he would later call his “American” life.¹²⁷

The true “Central-Americanization” of the province only became a reality with the wave of native-born sons who entered the Jesuit novitiate during the 1970s and ’80s, making it possible to end the legal dependency on the Province of Castille on August 5, 1976.¹²⁸ But Ellacuría and the other Spaniards who came as teenagers felt that, unlike Spaniards who came later in formation as priests, they had adopted the reality of Central America as their own.¹²⁹

Looking back on the challenge of forming mainly Spanish novices to serve in the Americas, Elizondo recalls being guided by Ignatius’s motto, *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God), and says, “I felt totally free of my past, of my antecedents as a Jesuit and as a novice master, although I was a ‘novice’ in that myself.”¹³⁰ Not surprisingly, Elizondo sought to instill freedom in his novices as well. He encouraged them to interiorize the spirituality of their yearly retreat encounter with the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius by studying the founding history and documents of the Society of Jesus, and by learning to use their own judgment in adapting to their new reality. This seemed better than depending on Spanish convention regarding “the many things they were supposed to do in order to be a good Jesuit—the many rules to obey, virtues to practice, devotions to keep and so on in order to reach what one can consider essential in the vocation of the Society.”¹³¹ Elizondo admits that he sometimes struggled to live with the “somewhat adolescent” exuberant energy of his young charges, such as Segundo Montes (one of the martyrs), who arrived from Valladolid, Spain, in 1951. But as Fr. César Jerez, S.J. (the native-born provincial who would lead the

127. “El volcán jesuita: entrevista con el Padre Ellacuría, rector de la Universidad Centroamericana,” *ABC* (March 28, 1982). Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 17, and Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., “De Portugalete a San Salvador: de la mano de cinco maestros,” in J. Sobrino and R. Alvarado, eds., *Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘Aquella libertad esclarecida’* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1999), 42–58 at 44.

128. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 17. This date is provided in the “Recent History of the Central American Province” by Fr. Hernández-Pico, which mentions “central-americanization” as a central challenge (*Historia reciente*, 3). It was also the subject of a difficult meeting of the province’s men in formation with their superiors in 1994. The younger men, who are overwhelmingly from Central America, complained of the overemphasis on Spanish culture and customs and the lack of attention to inculturation by Spanish-born Jesuits. Interview of Central American Jesuits in formation by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, July 1994.

129. Based on a comment by a Jesuit who came as a teenager from Spain to Central America. Interview with Salvador Carranza by Teresa Whitfield (Santa Tecla, El Salvador, January 25, 1991). Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 21 n. 20.

130. Interview with Fr. Miguel Elizondo, S.J., by Teresa Whitfield (Guadalajara, Mexico, December 31, 1990). Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 21.

131. *Ibid.*, 22.

province through its first persecutions and the martyrdoms of Rutilio Grande, S.J., and Archbishop Romero) would later recall, Elizondo “taught us not to be afraid.”¹³²

It was this generation, especially Ellacuría and his old novice master, Elizondo, who would set the stage during these days for a thorough renewal of Jesuit formation in light of the historical realities of Central America. The two helped create an epoch-changing moment of conversion by confronting the faith of the province gathered for the Christmas 1969 retreat with the historical reality of the suffering people of Central America. Jon Sobrino believes that the question that faced the Society of Jesus during these years after Medellín (1968) and the call of Vatican II (1962-1965) to read the signs of the times in light of the gospel was, “So, how do you react in the midst of [Central America’s] reality?” In trying to explain what prepared Ellacuría for his leading role in helping the UCA and the Central American Jesuit province to answer this question, Sobrino recalls,

Ellacuría used to say he was impressed by four people during his life: his novice master, Fr. Elizondo, at the human, spiritual level; Espinosa Pólit, his humanities professor in Ecuador; Karl Rahner as a theologian at Innsbruck; and Xavier Zubiri in Spain, the subject of his doctoral dissertation in philosophy. What I think Ellacuría appreciated from Zubiri was the critical realism. Zubiri taught him to ask, “What is the university in the midst of reality? And what is the reality of the University?”¹³³

The enthusiasm for reality inspired by these men, and the aforementioned freedom grounded in the tradition of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius nurtured by Elizondo,¹³⁴ helped prepare Ellacuría not only to embrace the younger Jesuits’ criticism in Madrid of their far-flung formation, but to be converted himself by the historical reality of Central America they so missed. Sobrino adds that for the rest of his life (1967-1989) “Ellacuría was pioneering that; taking risks, not being afraid—we were, of course—but not being stopped by problems, persecution, bumps.”¹³⁵ This process was about to take a massive leap forward with the Christmas 1969 province retreat.

132. Interview with César Jerez by Teresa Whitfield (Managua, Nicaragua, February 18, 1991). Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 24.

133. Interview with Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein and Barry Stenger (San Salvador: UCA, January 29, 1992), 4.

134. Jon Sobrino believes that “Ellacuría was strongly affected by the realism of the *Exercises* of St. Ignatius.” He suggests that the deep-seated realism of the *Exercises* is embodied in the centrality they give to the following: (a) the examination of the present historical moment; (b) the notion of imitation [of Christ]; (c) the doctrine of the incarnation; and (d) the meditation on the two standards. Note from Jon Sobrino to Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 24, 1995.

135. Interview with Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein (San Salvador: UCA, July 5, 1994), 6.

Looking back, Fr. Hernández-Pico, secretary for the gathering, recalls,

The predictions were realized that there would be “large disputes” in this “*Spiritual Exercises*–conference.” The Province experienced a powerful and conflictive cleansing, whose effects, redoubled during the year 1970, would be present during all of the years Fr. Miguel F. Estrada was provincial. The meeting itself was seen by some as the time when the foundations were able to be established to sketch a new navigational map for the Central American Jesuits. Others saw it as an assembly vitiated by the emotionality of new positions, and more like a meeting of fundamentalist fanatics than a time of calm discernment. [However, with] quite a few directives put there to try to avoid a serious rupture in the union of hearts among the Jesuits of the Province, Fr. Arrupe substantially approved the practical conclusions of the meeting.¹³⁶

The perspective provided by the distance of almost a quarter of a century gives us a broader appreciation of the seminal importance of this gathering. It is now clear that a shift in horizons, comparable to that experienced by the bishops at Medellín, occurred during the days of December 24–31, 1969, for the majority of Jesuits gathered at the diocesan Seminary in San Salvador. The importance of later decisions and events inspired by the meeting would tend to overshadow the open-ended and properly affective character of this attempt by a group of Central American Jesuits to update their own grasp of Ignatian spirituality. They began by returning to the spirituality of their founder embodied in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius to prepare themselves to respond to the epoch-making challenges of Medellín and Rio. Fortunately we are able to ground the living memory of the event in documents that provide an in-process record of the meeting itself.¹³⁷

Conversion of Heart and the Option for the Poor of the Central American Jesuits: The December 1969 Retreat

Ellacuría and Elizondo used a truly “radical” approach for the retreat in returning to the long-neglected tradition of group discernment described in *Deliberatio primorum patrum*,¹³⁸ the official account of the 1539¹³⁹ discern-

136. Hernández-Pico, *História reciente*, 9.

137. “Reunión-Ejercicios de la viceprovincia Jesuitica de Centroamérica, Diciembre 1969,” in *Reflexión teológico-espiritual de la Compañía de Jesús en Centroamérica, II* (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus, Central American Province, Survey S.J. de Centroamérica).

138. *Constitutiones societatis Iesu* I, 1-7; in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Monumenta Ignatiana*, Series III. See Jules J. Toner, S.J., “The Deliberation That Started the Jesuits: A Commentary on the *Deliberatio primorum patrum*, Newly Translated with a Historical Introduction,” *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 6, no. 4 (June 1974).

139. Ignatius and his early companions deliberated for several months during 1539 on

ment by Ignatius of Loyola and his companions to found the Society of Jesus. Yet the meeting's central theme of "renewal"¹⁴⁰ (*renovación*), like Vatican II's *aggiornamento* (bringing up to date) of church traditions, made this admittedly bold recovery of Jesuit foundations seem truly traditional in the hands of the province's former novice master and the soon-to-be director of Jesuit formation (Ellacuría). "Following the parameters of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius,"¹⁴¹ the two sought to renew the whole province by constituting it as single subject united "in communal reflection and prayer."¹⁴² The object of prayer and reflection was to be "the image of the Jesus and the Society [of Jesus] . . . in the circumstances of Central America today."¹⁴³

Principles and Foundations

Ellacuría's first talk summarized the "goal and meaning" of the gathering in three points: (1) to create a moment of communal reflection for the Central American Jesuits about the present historical situation of Central America guided by their shared tradition of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius; (2) to offer the Jesuits an opportunity to come to prayerful agreement about the fundamental principles for the renewal of their members and apostolic works; and (3) to prepare the hearts (affections) of those gathered by seeking an attitude of openness and "indifference" through the *Spiritual Exercises* as the principle and foundation for the personal and structural renewal of the province.¹⁴⁴ The approach was effective, though, as we shall see in the next section, not without its risks.

The first morning was filled out by the Fr. Azcue's provincial welcome, a communal rendition of "Veni Creator," and Elizondo's introductory reflection on "The Theological and Spiritual Meaning of a Community Meeting of the Province."¹⁴⁵ This talk emphasized the christological depth of Ignatius's principle that "we should make ourselves indifferent to all created things, insofar as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition."¹⁴⁶ Elizondo

whether to formally constitute themselves as a religious order. This decision was confirmed during communion of a Mass celebrated for the group by Pierre Favre on April 15, 1539.

140. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Finalidad y sentido de la reunión" (Goal and Meaning of the Meeting), 1, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 37.

141. "Presentación," in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 1.

142. "Documento final de la reunión de El Salvador," 1, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 183.

143. "Presentación," 1. Juan Hernández-Pico links the reflection on this theme and the postulate developed at the Province Congregation of 1970 to the historical development of Decree Two ("The Jesuits Today") of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, December 2, 1974–March 7, 1975 (see Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*), 9, 10.

144. Ellacuría, "Finalidad y sentido de la reunión," 4.

145. See note 108, above.

146. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Elisabeth Meier Tetlow (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 11. The complete text reads: "Human persons are created to praise, reverence, and serve God the Lord and by this means to attain salvation. The other things on the face of the earth are created for us, to help us in attaining

asserts, "If we have to renew ourselves, we won't begin by renewing 'things,' nor will we begin by renewing ourselves, as persons; rather we will begin by renewing our . . . [experience] of the God who has communicated himself to us" in the *Spiritual Exercises*.¹⁴⁷ Many were no doubt surprised by the depth of humility and feeling with which this elder Jesuit invited his brothers to put aside their doubts and fears and to embrace a spirit of communal conversion in meeting the challenge of Medellín.

I have a lot of people here who have been my novices, to whom I have given the *Exercises*, and have tried to explain what the Society is. I was superior of this province, which meant I had to look after the majority of those who are here. [And] you may have an image which could become an obstacle to the correct interpretation of what, in reality, the *Exercises* are, identifying this spirituality with what you received from me. I always think that the third class of humility [see note] for me is to have been master of novices twenty years before the present epoch, because it was impossible that one could have prepared people for such a different era from the one in which we lived and those things which used to condition our life. Thus it is that I am beginning to be converted myself and to acknowledge the sins . . . which I may have had in a thing so essential as the transmission of that which the Society of Jesus should be. I have tried to change [*convertirme*] and to be open-mindedly indifferent, without worrying about anything but what the truth is, whatever it may be, even though it might be very different from what I have lived. I have tried to adjust a bit to the rhythm of the times and the voice of the call of God which manifests itself there.¹⁴⁸

the purpose for which we are created. Therefore, we are to make use of them insofar as they help us to attain our purpose, and we should rid ourselves of them insofar as they hinder us from attaining it. Thus we should make ourselves indifferent to all created things, insofar as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things. Our one desire and choice should be what will best help us attain the purpose for which we are created."

147. Elizondo, "Sentido teológico," 1.

148. Ibid., 3. In his *Spiritual Exercises* St. Ignatius elevates the "third degree of humility" above the others in the following words: "By grace, I find myself so moved to follow Jesus Christ in the most intimate union possible, that his experiences are reflected in my own." This is reflected in "a love and a desire for poverty in order to be with the poor Christ; a love and desire for insults in order to be closer to Christ in his own rejection by people; a love and a desire to be considered worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent according to the standards of the world. See David L. Fleming, S.J., *A Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976; 2nd ed. rev. 1980, 1987), 40, 41; §167.

Elizondo then forcefully asserts that what is at stake is nothing short of a “dialogical encounter of the whole province . . . with the Christ of today, with his church of today, and with the Christ located here, in this province.”¹⁴⁹

Looking back, we can see that this historical encounter with the Christ of Medellín, Rio, and the region’s suffering people had the effect of actualizing the radical freedom inspired by the *Spiritual Exercises*, which Elizondo had tried to instill in his recently immigrated charges in 1949. While he could not have known his efforts would bear fruit in the birth of a prophetic vision for the church in Latin America, Elizondo later recalled: “I [had] wanted to prepare in them the openness that is necessary for what the future will bring, without ever knowing what the future may be.”¹⁵⁰

The “First Week” of the *Spiritual Exercises*: The Province Examines Its Conscience

The first day ended with a presentation summarizing the results of the June 1968 student meeting in Madrid, a review of the various Jesuit works in the nations of the province (Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Costa Rica), a Christmas-eve dinner, and a large concelebrated mass. Christmas morning was dedicated to a beginning of the small group process. After lunch Elizondo gave the first of two talks on the first week of the *Exercises*, emphasizing how unjust and hurtful patterns of behavior among the Jesuits of Central America might inhibit a free response to God’s call to a preferential option for the poor discerned by the bishops at Medellín.

In “The First Week as Indispensable Beginning for Conversion,”¹⁵¹ Elizondo argues that it was Ignatius’s tangible experience “that the Reign of God has already come,”¹⁵² which made the saint aware of sin and brought about the two stages of his conversion. The initial conversion was provoked by an experience of the reality of the Kingdom in the lives of the saints, which Ignatius read while recuperating at Loyola from a serious injury sustained in a military campaign. The second, more profound, conversion was provoked by a deeply mystical experience years later while writing the *Spiritual Exercises* in Manresa of God’s “salvific design” through the work of the Trinity in the world.¹⁵³ As a son of Ignatius, Elizondo similarly argues that if “we speak of a conversion at the level of the province,” then “we all have to face, or confront ourselves with the Reign of God.” But he adds a crucial point. He says, “There can be sin without guilt—that is, situations which are sinful . . . [simply] because they impede” the

149. Elizondo, “Sentido teológico,” 5.

150. Interview with Miguel Elizondo by Teresa Whitfield, December 31, 1990. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 24.

151. Miguel Elizondo, “La primera semana como indispensable de conversión” (The First Week as Indispensable Beginning for Conversion), 1-8, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 46-53.

152. *Ibid.*, 1.

153. *Ibid.*, 2.

Reign of God. On the other, however, he says we must take responsibility for “our faults,” which include “my judgments or ideas, my positions or situations, which may be the cause of these sins.”¹⁵⁴ Elizondo then calls each Jesuit, and the province as a whole, to do a traditional Ignatian examination of conscience regarding how their individual and social sins may have become obstacles to “our encounter with Christ . . . which is our apostolic vocation.”¹⁵⁵

Having dealt with the preliminaries, Latin America’s Jesuit retreat master then invited his colleagues to accept what he sees as the fundamental grace of the Ignatian charism:

The Ignatian vocational experience consists in a Trinitarian experience, of the Trinity present and operative in this world, in all things . . . realizing its plan for the salvation of the whole world. In this experience Ignatius sees that all things are born from God and return to God through the presence and operation of God’s self. And not only by means of the presence and operation of God, but through the insertion of humanity in history. Into this history of salvation comes the human “par excellence,” Christ, and with him all persons chosen to actively cooperate in the operation of the Trinity, to realize the salvific plan of God.

When St. Ignatius feels that this is the call, that the one calling him . . . is . . . the God of salvation, he emerges from his solitude and . . . engages the world. [Thus,] . . . the definitive God of Ignatius is going to be the God of this world, . . . the world is the location for the encounter with God. . . . [Consequently,] action becomes a totally different category. . . . Love will not be principally affective or contemplative, but a love which is realized in works, which translates into service, which is realized in this cooperation with God. And, in this way, *action will be for St. Ignatius the response to this Trinitarian God, and the sign of the active presence of the Trinity in Ignatius and the life of his Society*¹⁵⁶ [my emphasis].

The talk ends by relating this profoundly Ignatian understanding of human action to a recent interview with the Jesuit superior general, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, pointedly subtitled “The Society of Jesus has decided to dedicate itself to the world of the poor and recognizes the necessity for structural change.”¹⁵⁷ The retreatants spent Christmas afternoon in small group reflection on Elizondo’s points, followed by a eucharistic celebration, and a free evening to visit local friends and family.

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid.

156. Ibid., 3, 4.

157. Ibid., 7, 8.

Tensions and Challenges

Ellacuría began the following morning with a fraternal correction intended to preserve the unity of minds and hearts, which the Jesuit general, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, considered essential to the success of the retreat.

Yesterday, unfortunately in my opinion, the young people said little about their sins, as if it was not intended here to look at what is sinful in the lives of all of us. However, it is necessary to confront not only our works, but our lives. It is easy to criticize our works. But it is not so easy to examine our lives, and the young people have lives as well. . . .

I want to say from this moment, to avoid misunderstandings, that this schema is not designed to attack anybody. . . . So then, I would ask that neither the older people nor those who are in authority think that this . . . has been prepared as a weapon to attack them. Nor, equally, should the younger people think that it is a weapon with which they can attack and which frees them from all [self]reflection.¹⁵⁸

He then offered a challenging meditation on “Our Collective Situation as Seen from the Perspective of the First Week.”¹⁵⁹

Here Ellacuría argues (perhaps surprisingly for 1969) that any Christian anthropology “without essential and constant reference to sin” is “deformed.”¹⁶⁰ With Elizondo, he distinguishes “personal” from “collective” sin, noting that in the Christian tradition “human self-destruction is due to . . . personal sin.”¹⁶¹ He asserts that, while the traditional understanding of “original sin goes beyond personal liberty,” it nonetheless includes the notion that “in one way or another we are all responsible” for the evils of this world.¹⁶² Thus, he concludes, “the collective evil of social injustice, which is in the teachings of Vatican II, . . . Medellín, and . . . Rio, the great sin of our time, the ‘mystery of evil’ of our day, is itself . . . caused by sin, the sin of not attending to the other as a human being, . . . as a person.”¹⁶³

Juan Hernández-Pico recalls the remarkable impact of Ellacuría’s words.

All were powerfully struck by the consideration of sin as “collective sin,” a biblical interpretation of the crystallization of evil in history. Attention was called to the fact that Vatican II, Medellín, and the Rio Letter were pointing to, for our present history, social injustice as the great collective sin. The compliance with this great sin in our lifestyles

158. *Ibid.*, 1.

159. Ellacuría, “Nuestra situación colectiva vista desde la perspectiva de la primera semana,” 1-14, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 58-71.

160. *Ibid.*, 3.

161. *Ibid.*, 7.

162. *Ibid.*, 5.

163. *Ibid.*, 7.

(individualism, adoption of bourgeois values, worldliness) and in the way of structuring our works (preference given to the upper classes, economic commitments to the rich, collaboration with oppressive forces) pointed out our co-responsibility for this collective sin.¹⁶⁴

Ellacuría's challenging reflection echoed throughout the morning dedicated to time for personal reflection, an hour for small group discussion, and a general assembly for reports and discussion. The official record of the meeting¹⁶⁵ documents the electric effect of the presentations, and the strong mood for change building in the province. While noting the "terror" felt by many in the face of the unknown, one group called for "hope" and "faith in the continuing presence of the Spirit in . . . our epoch."¹⁶⁶

After lunch, small groups discussed the results of a questionnaire that had been distributed asking all to assess the current state of the province. The survey revealed a general feeling of satisfaction with the renewal of religious life,¹⁶⁷ with the notable exception of the vow of poverty.¹⁶⁸ However, strong majorities felt the province favored the rich and neglected the poor in its apostolic works.¹⁶⁹ And there was virtual unanimity in the opinion that "the great renewal documents of the church" were still little known and lacked implementation in the province.¹⁷⁰

The general assembly that followed became a profound and surprisingly detailed communal reflection on the individual and collective shortcomings of the Central American Jesuits when examined in the spirit of Medellín and Rio. Group seven, which included the next provincial, Fr. Miguel Estrada, and a current member of the provincial staff, Brother Francisco Azurza,¹⁷¹ suggested:

Upon analyzing the causes of the shortcomings in the changes, we believe that sufficient practical respect for the aforementioned documents does not exist. There has been a lack of decision and courage in the superiors, including both the consultors [the Executive Board of the province], and the subjects as well, . . . and a lack of planning at the provincial level. There is no concrete plan of action and the principal cause of this is the magnitude of the change to be realized.¹⁷²

164. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 8.

165. "Nuestra situación colectiva desde la perspectiva de la primera semana" (Dia. 26:3, 4), 1-4, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 72-75.

166. *Ibid.*, 2.

167. "Primera encuesta o examen practica. Resultados," 1-5, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 156-60.

168. *Ibid.*, 2, questions 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.

169. *Ibid.*, 3-4, subsection on "Sobre el sentido de nuestras obras colectivas."

170. *Ibid.*, 4, subsection on "Sobre la renovación de nuestras obras de acuerdo a las directivas de la Iglesia y la compañía."

171. For a list of the members of each discussion group, see "Reunión provincial: Grupos de trabajo," in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 12.

172. "Resumen de la discusión por grupos y la asamblea general" (Dia 26. 5:1, 2), 3, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 154.

The group proposed the creation of a structure for province planning that would carry out a process of discernment regarding the works of the province guided by the conclusions of the retreat. This process would play a powerful role in helping to transform the Central American province in a few short years, but as Ellacuría prophetically warned, “You have to die to sin [to follow this path], and death is not without pain.”¹⁷³

The “Second Week” of the *Spiritual Exercises*: The Reign of God Preached by Jesus

The following day, December 27, Miguel Elizondo gave two talks exploring a key theme from the second week of the *Exercises*: “The Ignatian Vision for the Following of Christ.”¹⁷⁴ The first presentation¹⁷⁵ claims that Ignatius, Jerome Nadal, and their companions understood the Jesuit and Christian vocation as an active collaboration with the Trinity in bringing about the Reign of God. Indeed,

This call from Christ to the whole world and to each one in particular is, not only to enter into the Reign, but rather to collaborate with it. And so the importance of apostolic action will take on a sharp relief in Saint Ignatius. *In this concept of the Trinitarian experience, the world is not going to be saved only through prayer or only through penance, but rather, in this Ignatian view, through apostolic action which is, at the same time, prayer*¹⁷⁶ [my emphasis].

After time for personal reflection and small group sharing, the retreatants gathered for a general assembly.

The discussion had clearly gained considerable momentum by this point. There were apparently contradictory calls for serious change, strong criticisms of the current province leadership, complaints of an overemphasis on social themes, an appeal for the importance of priesthood, a discussion on how to sort out the various images of Christ present in the province, and an urgent plea for practical models to integrate religious life with work for social change in the service of the poor. Perhaps the question of a recently ordained Jesuit from the Jesuit high school in Panama captured the moment best: “It seems that a certain fear still exists that this meeting is being guided toward the social. But is it certain people who are guiding us, or is it the contemporary situation itself? If it is the latter, we have to go in this direction and come up with real solutions.”¹⁷⁷

173. Ellacuría, “Nuestra situación colectiva,” 14.

174. “Temario, distribución de los días y horario” (List of Topics, Daily Plan and Schedule), 3, “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 5.

175. Miguel Elizondo, “La visión Ignaciana del seguimiento de Cristo” (Dia 27:1), 1-8, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 76-83.

176. *Ibid.*, 3.

177. Br. Luis Tadeo Ardila, S.J., quoted in “Resumen de la discusiones de grupo y las intervenciones en la asamblea” (Dia 27: 3,4), 4, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 87.

After lunch Elizondo's second talk, on "Prayer in the Society of Jesus,"¹⁷⁸ again highlighted Ignatius's Trinitarian experience of God as creating, acting in, and sanctifying history in order to explain Nadal's famous description of Ignatius as a "contemplative in action."¹⁷⁹ Elizondo suggests this is why action became the *locus classicus* for the Ignatian encounter with God. And he says this is the reason that Ignatius, even though he prays two hours a day, puts no legislation in his *Constitutions*¹⁸⁰ requiring a specific duration for daily prayer. Elizondo's argument is that,

The spirituality of Saint Ignatius is a spirituality of action in this double sense: in that all prayer should translate into apostolic service, and that action and apostolic service are in themselves prayer, which is characteristically Ignatian. Speaking in clearer terms, they are union with God.¹⁸¹

His point is that, while "Medellín . . . is urging [Latin American Christians] to find a theology for the person of action . . . the Ignatian experience gave it to us four hundred years ago."¹⁸²

Elizondo's talk was then followed by a general assembly in which Luis Achaerandio, president of the UCA, charged that "some young people are trying to justify not explicitly praying."¹⁸³ While this intervention would be read by some as representing the growing split between the "gradualists" and the "liberationists,"¹⁸⁴ it is only fair to Fr. Achaerandio to point out that the intervention was about the role of prayer in the renewal of religious life. And here it is crucial to recall that the monumental shift of the Central American province toward the option for the poor at the 1969 retreat emerged from an honest discernment about the proper path for religious renewal. It was not a strategic

178. Miguel Elizondo, "La oración en la Compañía of Jesus" (Prayer in the Society of Jesus) (Dia 27:5), 1-8, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 88-95.

179. Jesuit historian Joséph de Guibert, S.J., notes: "Jeronimo Nadal, one of the men who knew Ignatius most intimately, thinks that his special grace was 'to see and contemplate in all things, actions, and conversations the presence of God and the love of spiritual things, to remain a contemplative even in the midst of action' (*simul in actione contemplativus*).¹⁷⁹ See *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young, S.J., ed. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, [1953], 1964, 1972), 45.

180. On this point, see St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), §§582-84, 259-61. Footnote 2 (p. 260) maintains, "With respect to the length, Ignatius assigned for the scholastics still in formation one hour of prayer daily, which could be divided into different periods (342). But he steadily refused to prescribe one universal rule obliging all the formed members to one specified duration of daily prayer (582-83)."

181. Elizondo, "La oración," 3.

182. *Ibid.*, 90.

183. "Preguntas a los padres Elizondo y Ellacuría" (Dia 27, 5), 1, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 96-98.

184. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 84.

referendum on politics, the Alliance for Progress, or liberation theology. No doubt, however, many struggled to hold such strategic concerns at bay as the province gathered to celebrate Mass at the day's end.

Following the Christ of the San Salvador Retreat: Discernment and Decision

Achaerandio's admonition on the importance of prayer is important to keep in mind as we turn to the two talks by Ignacio Ellacuría built around what many regard as the key moment in the *Spiritual Exercises*, "making a choice [election] of a state or way of life."¹⁸⁵ Significantly, the retreat's final document places these talks under the critical heading, "The election, and the reform of our works."¹⁸⁶ The first presentation, on "The Problem of the Translation of the Spirit of the *Exercises* to the Province,"¹⁸⁷ offers the Christ of the San Salvador retreat as the norm for that reform. Ellacuría argues,

The province should be the efficacious sign of [the] Christ experienced in the *Exercises*. Because if it is [part of the] church, it should be a sign, and it should be an efficacious sign; an efficacious sign of Christ. And which Christ? Of the Christ experienced in the *Exercises*, in the historical situation in which we are living. Saint Ignatius made his Society the historical objectification of the charism of the *Exercises*. That is to say: . . . he thought, . . . that the Society is the great outcome of the *Exercises*, the great objectification of the *Exercises*, the great body animated by the spirit of the *Exercises*.¹⁸⁸

Ellacuría's challenge was to apply this experiential-Christological norm to the present historical reality of the province. Recognizing that each work of the province inevitably reflects the worldly dynamics of its historical situation, he warns, "If the high school or the university or the work in which I am engaged competes against, due to its own dynamics, what each one of us personally thinks or has experienced is the dynamic of the *Exercises*, then there is a problem to be solved."¹⁸⁹

The rest of the day was given to two more rounds of personal reflection, small group discussion, and a general assembly. The record bears eloquent testimony to the almost irresistible momentum building to confront a question posed from the floor by Miguel Elizondo himself: "the Society will have to see concretely

185. This translation is from Fleming, *Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises*, 103.

186. "Documento final de la reunión de San Salvador" (Final Document for the San Salvador Meeting), 2, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 184.

187. "El problema del traslado del Espíritu de los Ejercicios a la vice" (The problem of the Translation of the Spirit of the *Exercises* to the Vice-province) (Dia 28:1), 1-12, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 104-15.

188. *Ibid.*, 6.

189. *Ibid.*, 11.

if these high schools and universities are a sign, in the higher and transcendent sense of Christ, for serving and loving others.”¹⁹⁰

It was in this atmosphere that Ellacuría delivered his most powerful, and potentially explosive, talk on the penultimate day of the retreat—an all-out effort to confront the faith of his fellow Jesuits with the scandalous historical reality of Central America as part of the Third World. In a daring and very Ignatian move, he turned what many already knew to be a dangerous confrontation with this seemingly hopeless reality into the ultimate apostolic challenge, recommending “The Third World as the Optimal Place for the Christian to Live the *Exercises*.”¹⁹¹ It is interesting to note that he portrays the talk as a “small attempt” to go beyond the work of his teacher, Karl Rahner, by focusing on the “worldly reality [of Central America], and conceiving of it in theological terms.”¹⁹²

Noting that the overwhelming majority of the world’s population lives in the Third World, Ellacuría argues that if “Christ is in the poor,” then “it is not us who have to save the poor, but rather it is the poor who are going to save us.”¹⁹³ He then offers a prophetic reflection on what would prove to be his own fate.

A minimal solidarity with the Third World elicits a turn to the road to redemption and the march to the resurrection. . . . Imagine the day on which a professor at the university turns his whole orientation toward prophetic denunciations of the allies of the . . . [First and Second] Worlds in this Third World. . . . The day in which a university professor dedicates himself categorically and thematically to prophetically denouncing that reality, be assured on that day one of two things [will happen]: either those outside, or those inside, will end up removing him, . . . and they will start taking away his posts. And [likewise] be assured that if the Society puts itself wholly on this valiant road of protest, the Society will not have to renounce [its posts], they will be taken away.¹⁹⁴

Ellacuría then proceeds with his stunning argument that the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius is leading the Jesuits of Central America to serve, and therefore to share, the fate of the crucified Christ of the poor. Laying out a rationale for Jesus’ death on the cross, he asserts on the one hand, “It is not true . . . that Christ loved the cross, and that he went looking for pain, poverty, and the rest. Christ was only seeking to fulfill his mission. On the other hand, however, he did know that his mission would carry him in the end to the cross; and conse-

190. “Resumen de las discusiones de grupo e intervenciones en la Asamblea General” (Dia 28: 3,4), 8, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 120.

191. Ignacio Ellacuría, “El tercer mundo como lugar optimo de la vivencia Cristiana de los Ejercicios” (The Third World as the Optimal Place for the Christian to Live the Exercises) (Dia 29:1), 1-12, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 127-38.

192. *Ibid.*, 2.

193. *Ibid.*, 4.

194. *Ibid.*, 6.

quently what he did was say, 'I will fulfill my mission even though I know I am going to die.'¹⁹⁵ Ellacuría then argues that a similar dynamic is at work in the Jesuit vocation to apostolic action, which requires them to confront the inherently anti-evangelical dynamics of the Third World. And he suggests it places the Society of Jesus in the Third World on the same road that Christ walked:

We are in the same situation [as he was]. . . . [And] what is it they will say to us priests or Jesuits when we dedicate ourselves to this task? First of all [they will say] . . . "these priests are communists or Marxists, we can't help them anymore. Let's find other priests, because there is always a need for priests that support us in our situation, since these Jesuits are not helping us." . . . [But] we must stay with the mission of the Old Testament prophets, not because we are seeking that, . . . but rather because of our understanding of the secular mission that we have to fulfill, and everything else will be given to us besides: the pain we spoke of yesterday and the beatitude which this pain gives.¹⁹⁶

Ellacuría's words would prove eerily prophetic. In the early hours of November 16, 1989, following the Jesuit assassinations, a military sound truck from the First Infantry Brigade circulated in the neighborhood of the bishop's headquarters announcing triumphantly, "Ellacuría and Martín-Baró have fallen. We are going to continue killing communists!"¹⁹⁷

Following this talk and time for personal and small group reflection, the general assembly strongly endorsed "the creation of a Central Planning Commission which will work until Holy Week looking for a practical manner in which to realize these ideals."¹⁹⁸ The strongly supported proposal would be implemented. But the voice of Fr. Noel Garcia from the Managua UCA ended the session with a poignant challenge to his fellow Jesuits, adding a sobering reminder that the outside world was rapidly changing even as their prayerful deliberations drew to a close.

I have been working for nine years in social questions, having been trained for that. [And] I see that we are confronted with a social revolution in Latin America. For that reason I believe that, rather than discussing whether the high schools or the universities should abolish themselves as such, we should see if they are fulfilling their end of forming agents of change, so that this social revolution which has to have an ideology—Marxist or Christian—becomes Christian. This is our great responsibility.¹⁹⁹

195. Ibid., 8, 9.

196. Ibid.

197. Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1993), 309, 71.

198. "Resume de la discusión por grupos y la Asamblea General" (Dia 29: 3.4), 2, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 140.

199. Ibid., 3.

The final document would recall Ellacuría's talk, and the discussions that followed, as a critical turning point toward the decision "[t]o put ourselves efficaciously at the service of this Third World with the power of the gospel and the resources of our human preparation."²⁰⁰

The Third and Fourth "Weeks" of the *Spiritual Exercises*: Coming to Conclusion

After lunch the survey team reported that an overwhelming proportion of the gathered Jesuits had written that they were now "ready to leave everything" in order to "undertake an honest search for what we should do."²⁰¹ Thus, December 29, 1969, ended with the formation of working groups to prepare a discussion for the following day "regarding the accommodation of our works to the spirit . . . of these days."²⁰² Afterward they gathered for the Eucharist, celebrating the "apostolic mission"²⁰³ of the Jesuits in Central America.

On the final morning, thirty-seven-year-old Ricardo Falla predicted that "death and resurrection" would inevitably accompany the Society's option for the poor in Central America. But he identified this with "The Sacrificial and Resurrectional Meaning of Religious Life,"²⁰⁴ and reminded his brothers that, after Ignatius's insight at the River Cardoner into the role of the Trinity in the world, the saint reported beginning "to see everything with another set of eyes, and to discern and test the good and the bad spirits."²⁰⁵ The sixty-three-year-old ex-president of the El Salvador UCA, Florentino Idoate, then responded to Falla's challenge by summoning the province "to see God in all the concrete urgency of today for us in the Third World," and to begin a process of apostolic discernment in the ecclesial spirit "concretized by the documents [of] the Council, Medellín, [and] Rio. . . ."²⁰⁶ Fr. Idoate's fusion of the horizons of Jesuit renewal with Medellín's call to the option for the poor in his interpretation of "The Contemplation to Attain [Divine] Love in a Secularized World"²⁰⁷ shows how far things had progressed since his 1965 speech inaugurating of the UCA in the name of "development."²⁰⁸

200. "Documento final de la reunión de El Salvador," 3.

201. "Resultados de la segunda encuesta o cuestionario" (29:5), 4, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 168 (results: 84 respondents, 5 = very strongly agree; 5=56, 4=16, 3=6, 2=1, 1=4; abstain=1; 86 percent responded 5 or 4, "very strongly agree" or "strongly agree").

202. "Temario, distribución de los días, y horario," 6, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 7.

203. *Ibid.*

204. Ricardo Falla, S.J., "El sentido sacrificial y resurreccional de la vida religiosa," (30.1), 1-2, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 142-43.

205. *Ibid.*, 2.

206. Florentino Idoate, S.J., "La contemplación para alcanzar amor en un mundo secularizado" (The Contemplation to Attain [Divine] Love in a Secularized World), 2, in "Reunión-Ejercicios," 145.

207. *Ibid.*, 1.

208. Florentino Idoate, S.J., "Discurso del rector de la Universidad Centroamericana

Throughout the afternoon and evening the Jesuits worked to produce the outlines of an apostolic plan to concretize their own conversion, first in a general assembly, then in small task forces, and finally in a plenary session called for 8 p.m. They gathered after evening Mass for a final session in order to approve “The Final Document of the San Salvador Meeting,” which recommended three “presuppositions”²⁰⁹ for a yet-to-be-written apostolic plan: (1) the province’s communal commitment to the “redemption and liberation” of Central America as part of the Third World; (2) a strengthening of the spirit of community, mutual respect, and simplicity of lifestyle in the province; and (3) a deepening of the spirit of the willingness to put oneself and the works of the province at the service of the poor, as expressed in the retreat. A three-month “Work Plan”²¹⁰ was then approved with the express purpose of moving the process forward.

Only a Beginning

Fr. Hernández-Pico suggests that, officially, it was first here at the 1969 retreat that “the Jesuits committed themselves to . . . attend to the cries that were coming from the unjustly impoverished and oppressed majorities of Central America, putting aside disordered affections for established works and lifestyles [in order to promote] . . . efficacious action on behalf of the poor.”²¹¹ With this monumental shift in horizons the process of renewal accelerated quickly, including “the rapid naming of a new master of novices (Fr. Juan Ramón Moreno) and the creation of a new work, that of the Delegate for Formation, for which Fr. Azcue nominated Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría.”²¹² Both nominees would be assassinated nineteen years later at the UCA. Within three months the province leadership²¹³ embraced many of the recommendations from the retreat, including the idea that Jesuit formation be geographically and spiritually relocated within the historical reality of Central America.²¹⁴

The new provincial, Fr. Miguel F. Estrada, then called a second meeting of delegates selected to represent the various “works and nations”²¹⁵ of the province in September 1970, at the Santa Tecla Jesuit center in San Salvador dedicated specifically to the question of “apostolic programming.” Not surprisingly, the first months of Fr. Estrada’s tenure were largely focused on preparations for this critical gathering, including the completion of a “sociological survey”

José Simeón Cañas, Forentino Idoate, con motivo de la inauguración de la Universidad,” *Planteamiento universitario 1989* (San Salvador: UCA, 1989), 135, 136.

209. “Documento final de la reunión de San Salvador,” 4.

210. “Plan de trabajo” (Work Plan), 1, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 182.

211. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 8, 9.

212. *Ibid.*, 9.

213. This meeting, formally called the Congregation of Procurators, had been previously scheduled as a mandated meeting of the leadership of the province.

214. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 9, 10.

215. *Ibid.*, 10.

of the Central American region (twelve volumes), which was presented at the meeting with “provisional conclusions.”²¹⁶ Fr. Hernández-Pico reports that after much debate and discussion it was decided at this second meeting that “our apostolates should . . . foment attitudes of commitment to the social liberation our peoples, giving the latter the theological depth of being viewed as an integral part of the redemptive liberation of Jesus Christ.”²¹⁷ And he concludes that the most important achievement of the gathering was the development of the outlines of the new apostolic plan called for at the December retreat.

In this same meeting the Central American Jesuits determined an order of apostolic priorities. Their presupposition was the affirmation of the Rio Letter that “the social problem of Latin America” should have “absolute priority in our apostolic strategy” and, thus, . . . should translate into the allocation of “a part of our apostolic efforts toward the innumerable and believing mass of those who have been abandoned.” The meeting named a series of apostolic activities (not concrete works) as priorities. (1) The formation of young Jesuits; (2) socio-philosophical-theological reflection on the Central American reality; (3) attention to, and, in some cases, formation of diocesan priests and . . . male and female religious; [and] (4) community organizing. They also mentioned two others without distinguishing an order: exercising a liberating influence in the area of education, and the promotion of communication media.²¹⁸

Clearly, the preferential option for the poor and the struggle for liberation it implies had officially replaced developmentalism as a defining aspect of the horizon of the Jesuits of Central America.

The debate by no means ended there, however.²¹⁹ An opposition group from the UCA and the diocesan seminary, which had emerged during the retreat, charged that the dramatic Christmas and Holy Week movement of the province toward the option for the poor had been a kind of religious coup d'état. Fr. Beirne says, “They pictured Ellacuría as controlling the younger group that did his bidding.”²²⁰ The new provincial, Fr. Estrada, was compelled to write to Fr.

216. Ibid.

217. Ibid.

218. Ibid., 10, 11.

219. Ibid., 10-14.

220. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 86. Fr. Beirne notes that the group included Fr. Achaerandio, and Antonio Perez (both from the UCA); Fr. José Ignacio Scheiffler (a member of the first UCA Board replaced by Ellacuría) and Santiago Anitua (both from the San Salvador Seminary); and Fr. Jesus Rodriguez Jalon (from an unidentified university; he and Anitua did not attend the retreat). Note that the information in parentheses was not provided by Fr. Beirne, but was extrapolated by the author from the retreat document (“Lista de asistentes,” 1-4, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 8-11; and “Distribución de los padres y hermanos de la provincia segun su trabajo de acuerdo con el ultimo catalogo,” 1-2, in “Reunión-Ejercicios,” 14-15).

Arrupe in Rome in order to refute these charges, to explain the depth of the changes taking place, and to report on the work of the survey team.²²¹ Responding immediately, Fr. Arrupe “praised the work of the sociological survey team and told Estrada not to be surprised by opposition.”²²² Thus encouraged, the thirty-six-year-old provincial pressed forward.

Four months later, after reviewing the results of the important September meeting at Santa Tecla, Fr. Arrupe would write, “The conclusions, presuppositions, and results are worthy of approval and are within the spirit of the Vatican Council, the 31st General Congregation and the documents of Medellín.”²²³ He would describe statements in the sociological and theological sections of the documents that reflected the shift to the horizon of liberation as “correct,” noting “they conform to recent developments of the social apostolate since Medellín . . . and are consistent with the orientation of the Society of Jesus in Latin America.”²²⁴ But he would caution Fr. Estrada to heed the importance of apostolic unity, and to respect the difficult changes in mentality that such a shift of horizons would require.²²⁵

Thus, Fr. Arrupe’s approval cemented the commitment of the 1970 Jesuit leadership in Central America to the process of conversion called for by Latin America’s bishops at Medellín, and the Jesuit provincials at Rio. As I have suggested, what had occurred could be described as a shift of apostolic horizons. Like many others, the Jesuits realized that the horizon of development, and its “historicization”²²⁶ in programs such as the Alliance for Progress, had proved inadequate to deal with the painful historical realities of Latin America. Indeed, even as Jesuit superiors working in the provincial offices near the UCA struggled with recalcitrant priests at the UCA and the archdiocese, events were acceler-

221. Letter from Miguel Francisco Estrada to Pedro Arrupe (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus of Central America, September 3, 1970). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 86.

222. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 86. Fr. Beirne is summarizing the contents of the September 3, 1970 letter from Fr. Arrupe to Fr. Estrada.

223. Letter from Fr. Pedro Arrupe to Fr. Miguel F. Estrada (San Salvador: Archives of the Society of Jesus of Central America, February 25, 1971). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 86.

224. Ibid.

225. Ibid., 86-87.

226. This concept of the “historicization” is developed by Ignacio Ellacuría in numerous places. See Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Historicization of the Concept of Property,” in John Hassett and Hugh Lacey, eds., *Towards a Society That Serves Its People* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 105-37 [translated from *ECA* 31, nos. 335-336 (1976): 425-50]; Ellacuría, “The University, Human Rights, and the Poor Majority,” in Hassett and Lacey, eds., *Towards a Society*, 208-20 [translated from “Universidad, derechos humanos y mayorías populares,” *ECA* no. 406 (August 1982): 791-816]; Ellacuría, “The Kingdom of God and Unemployment in the Third World,” in Jacques Pohier and Dietmar Meith, eds., *Unemployment and the Right to Work* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), [translated from “El reino de Dios y el paro en el tercer mundo,” *Concilium* 180 (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1982): 588-96].

ating across town. Salvador Cayetano Carpio was recruiting students from the National University for an “armed revolutionary struggle”²²⁷ under the new banner of the FPL (the Popular Forces of Liberation), the first of the FMLN’s eventual five political-military organizations. And in March 1970 the country’s land barons, their supporters, and the Salvadoran military party rudely slammed the door in the face of a growing chorus of proposals for agrarian reform.

Fr. Arrupe’s support for the results of the Santa Tecla meeting and the new direction of the province completed the first stage of the conversion of the Central American Jesuits from developmentalism to a historical commitment to Medellín’s preferential option for the poor and the struggle for justice and liberation it implies. It was a big step forward. But as the gathered members of the province had realistically concluded in December, “It is only a beginning.”²²⁸ The first fervor of this epoch-changing conversion was about to meet the historical realities of the UCA and El Salvador.

227. “Morales Erlich y Dada Hirezi candidatos a junta” [Morales Erlich and Dada Hirezi candidates for junta], *Prensa Gráfica* (January 7, 1980). Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 103.

228. “Documento final de la reunión de El Salvador,” 4.

2

Taking Responsibility for the Historical Reality of El Salvador (1969-1979)

FROM THE OPTION FOR THE POOR TO THE UCA COUP

The University of Central America (UCA) felt the shock waves of the Jesuit province retreat almost immediately as 1970 began. But it would take an entire decade for the university community and its leadership to articulate a new horizon for its work. Jon Sobrino describes the 1970s as the decade during which the UCA developed the *theoria* of its self-understanding as a Christian university. He distinguishes this decade from the 1980s, which he says were “more focused on the *praxis* of the University.”¹ Sobrino notes that lay faculty played a key role in this process of self-definition: “people like Román Mayorga [who] was much more influential in the University than [many] Jesuits.”²

Román Mayorga, who joined the university in 1971 and served as president from December 1974 to October 1979, argues for the historical importance of several documents written during the decade that “officially defined the very model of what kind of university the UCA was trying to be.” He suggests, “These documents had, at least during the years of the 1970s, the greatest importance in the UCA’s understanding and creation of itself; they demanded a . . . prolonged reflection, a . . . consensual approval, and a . . . global effort to carry them out.”³

He goes on to argue, however, that “not only the documents, but the process of elaborating them, adopting them, and carrying them out was important in the history of the UCA, inasmuch as they contributed to shaping the institution which actually came to exist, as well as a very developed model for that institution.”⁴ Fr. Juan Hernández-Pico likewise believes that it is important to pay attention to the collaborative nature of this process.

1. Interview with Jon Sobrino, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, April 19, 1994, 3.

2. Ibid., 2.

3. Letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., January 21, 1994 (typescript), 11 (used with permission of Román Mayorga Quirós).

4. Ibid.

Historically it's important to say that there was a process of conversion among persons on the teaching faculty and the administration of the UCA. It was not only a process of conversion among the Jesuits, but among a group of lay persons who had a lot of influence here at the UCA. And this group, Jesuits and lay persons together, developed a common vision. Here I am speaking from the analogy of the conversion of the Province. And it was this group that developed the vision.⁵

Fr. Charles Beirne offers an evocative description of what these years were like in his historical study.

The development of drafts of [these documents] are examples of this collaboration which took place not only in formal sessions on campus but also at social events in the homes of lay colleagues.⁶ Jesuits and lay colleagues celebrated birthdays and anniversaries together; they went to the beach for holidays, and they became close friends. Luis Achaerandio, the rector, contributed significantly to encouraging this community atmosphere. Although major decisions continued to be the sole responsibility of the Board of Directors, these decisions tended to represent a consensus from the university community rather than just dictates from above. This spirit not only produced creative ways of being a university, it laid the groundwork for a solid community that would face adversity in the coming years.⁷

This is not to say, however, that there were not conflicts and tensions regarding the emerging direction of the university.

The Jesuit community managed ongoing internal tensions between the “gradualists” and the “liberationists” for the better part of the decade. This manifested itself in separate living arrangements for the two groups, and constant disagreements on the Board of Directors regarding “timing, topics, and emphases” in implementing the university’s new direction, about which there was nevertheless general agreement.⁸ On the one hand, Ellacuría’s combination of intellectual brilliance and “charismatic genius”⁹ helped push the UCA toward the emerging commitment of the Central American Jesuits to the option for the poor articulated by the Latin American bishops at Medellín. On the other

5. Interview with Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 1, 1994.

6. Interview with Román Mayorga Quirós by Charles J. Beirne, S.J., March 21, 1994. Cited in Charles Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 114.

7. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 114.

8. See *ibid.*, 92-93.

9. This is the characterization used by Juan Hernández-Pico to explain Ellacuría’s extraordinary role in the transformation of both the UCA and the Central American Province. Interview with Fr. Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, July 7, 1994, 8.

hand, Mayorga, who says he moved to the UCA “at the beginning of 1971,”¹⁰ was more the consensus builder. Hernández-Pico notes that Mayorga “was the practical mediator between two lines of thought [that of Ignacio Ellacuría and Luis Achaerandio] among the Jesuits on the Board of Directors, part arbitrator and mediator.”¹¹ Thus, what Hernández-Pico calls Mayorga’s “intellectual and moral prestige”¹² allowed him to play a critical role in the planning processes that translated the university’s emerging vision into institutional form culminating with the documents in question.

Fr. Cardenal asserts that “very strong lay–Jesuit tensions” began to emerge toward the end of the decade between the university’s Jesuit leadership and “those who wanted more power in the UCA in order to turn it into the university of the Christian-Democratic Party, just as the National University had become the home of the left.”¹³ He says, “Ellacuría strongly opposed this vision of the lay Christian Democrats at the UCA,” and that Mayorga and others “eventually left to form part of the government” in the reformist 1979 coup.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Sobrino, Mayorga, Hernández-Pico, and Beirne all agree that the UCA experienced a period of dynamic collaboration among lay and Jesuit faculty and staff during the 1970s, which eroded after 1979. All emphasize the importance of the documents produced by that collaboration, both in the formation of a new vision for the UCA during the 1970s and for the process of confronting the

10. Román Mayorga, “Recuerdo de diez Quijotes” (unpublished manuscript, Montevideo and Washington, DC, March 1991), 10; published as *Recuerdo de diez Quijotes* (San Salvador: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2010).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., August 18, 2009, correspondence with author, transcript in personal files.

14. Jon Sobrino has suggested, “Without a group of lay people, this type of project is impossible. I’m convinced of it.” But, as regards the centralization of decision making in the Jesuit Board of Directors which took place during the 1980s (and the consequently decreased role of lay faculty and staff in key decisions) he argues: “Why was the leadership in the hands of Jesuits? Under the circumstances of persecution and a university that wants to confront structurally, the Jesuits were able to do it best. That’s because they were Jesuits. In 1980, when things got tough, many of the lay people left. The ‘total commitment’ was different. Some lay people resented that, sometimes with good reasons. [But r]emember, in 1979 30% of the [lay] faculty went to the government. These things don’t happen in universities [in the United States]. We see them down there. [For instance, w]hen lay faculty come to the United States to study, they leave the university when they come back. I think that it is an illusion to think you can find a group of lay people totally committed to the university.” Thus, while recognizing the problematic aspects of this centralization of power for collaboration between lay and Jesuit faculty and staff, he argues, “without the Board of Directors the university would have collapsed. But we still need to address the need for the participation of others, and to develop along more democratic lines.” (All quotes from interview with Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein, April 19, 1994.) Román Mayorga Quirós, on the other hand, seems to feel that the university could have survived while still preserving more of the previous participation of lay faculty in decision making (letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, January 21, 1994).

national reality of El Salvador as a university community. And they agree that an important aspect of the decline of this collaborative spirit was the aforementioned exodus of many outstanding lay faculty to the government as part of the short-lived 1979 reformist coup, which the Jesuit provincial, Fr. César Jerez, S.J., told superiors in Rome was being called the “UCA Coup.”¹⁵

In this chapter I will summarize and attempt to establish the context for the development and historicization of the vision captured in these 1970s documents, which the university placed at the heart of its collection of official writings defining its mission and identity, published shortly before the assassinations in 1989.¹⁶

Toward a University That Serves Its People: The Presidency of Fr. Luis Achaerandio (1969-1974) and the Speech to the Inter-American Bank

It is no accident of history that in late 1970 it was Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., with assistance from Román Mayorga, who wrote the address of university treasurer, Fr. Gondra,¹⁷ outlining a new vision of the UCA for representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) gathered in Washington, DC. The speech was delivered to celebrate the October 27, 1970, signing of the IDB loan financing early development the university’s material foundation.¹⁸ Its writers would lead the UCA as successive presidents from December 1974 until Mayorga’s departure to lead the government in October 1979, and Ellacuría’s assassination on November 16, 1989.

Mayorga recalls that the plan to obtain the loan was hatched in 1969: “I was working at the National Council for Economic Planning and coordination (CONAPLAN) preparing educational development projects for the Ministry of

15. Letter from Fr. César Jerez, S.J., to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., Archives of the Society of Jesus, Central American Province, San Salvador, El Salvador, no. 42, October 23, 1979. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 145 n. 72.

16. The following are included under the title “Official documents”: 1. “Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la firma del contrato con el IDB,” in *Planteamiento universitario 1989* (San Salvador: UCA, 1989), 9-14 (delivered as an address in 1970 by Rev. José María Gondra, S.J., written by Ignacio Ellacuría and Román Mayorga Quirós); 2. “Consideraciones justificativas y aclaratorias del escalafón de la Universidad,” in *Planteamiento*, 15-36 (published by the Board of Directors in January 1974 after university-wide consultation); 3. “Las funciones fundamentales de la universidad y su operativización,” in *Planteamiento*, 37-121 (published by the Board of Directors in May 1979 after university-wide consultation; final draft written by Sobrino and one other person); 4. Ignacio Ellacuría, “20 años de servicio del pueblo Salvadoreño,” in *Planteamiento*, 125-29 (written and delivered by Ignacio Ellacuría at the UCA on September 15, 1985).

17. In 1969 Fr. Florentino Idoate, S.J., was president of the UCA; Fr. José María Gondra, S.J., was treasurer; and Fr. Joaquín López y López, S.J. (later assassinated) was general secretary. All were well connected with El Salvador’s wealthy families through long years at the Externado San José, the Jesuit high school in San Salvador.

18. “Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la firma del contrato con el IDB,” 9-14.

Education” when “Fr. Gondra and Fr. Luis Achaerandio, S.J., asked me . . . if I would help them plan the University’s development.”¹⁹ Mayorga remembers that he worked “for many months in a CONAPLAN office” with Fr. Achaerandio and Fr. Luis de Sebastián, S.J., and the architect Juan José Rodríguez. Together, he says, “we prepared the first plan for the development of the UCA, which provided the material foundation for the University and permitted them to create the structure of an institution capable of becoming what it is today.”

Fr. Beirne, who has closely examined the documentation leading up to and supporting the loan request, notes that at some point during this process the Jesuit leadership of the university concluded that a loan would be necessary, but could not find favorable interest rates or long-term financing in Central America.²⁰ So academic vice-president Luis de Sebastian, S.J., and Mayorga developed a proposal for the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, DC. University treasurer, Fr. Gondra, “thought in terms of a few hundred thousand dollars, but Román Mayorga recommended a goal of two million”!²¹ Mayorga says the proposal “had the clear intention” of financing the construction of “the infrastructure or basic platform of the University.”²² Beirne says it provided “for nine buildings, the basics of a library, laboratory equipment, more full-time personnel, graduate studies for faculty, and technical assistance.”²³ Happily, Mayorga was able to convince CONAPLAN to declare the project “a high national priority,” and the “Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador indicated its willingness to make it fully guaranteed.”²⁴

Inside the university, however, not everyone was content with the proposal. Ellacuría, who had never worked with Mayorga, wrote an internal memo attacking its characterization of the UCA as “triumphal, confusing desire with reality . . . in a disgraceful lack of self-criticism.”²⁵ Mayorga himself later conceded that the proposal was “inspired by a certain *developmentalism* without any explicit reference to the problems of class divisions and domination.”²⁶ But Mayorga felt that “the nature of the document did not lend itself to larger ideological concerns,” and feared that mentioning such realities would scare off the bankers. For his part, Ellacuría saw the loan’s approval as an opportunity to “go public” with a new vision of the university.

19. Román Mayorga, “Recuerdo de diez Quijotes” (March 1991), 5-6.

20. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 95-96.

21. Ibid.

22. Román Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1976), 32.

23. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 96. Here Beirne follows Román Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 31.

24. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 31.

25. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Algunas notas sobre el resumen del survey de la Universidad J.S. Canas,” April 10-11, 1970, Survey Vol. VII, UJSC, 22, Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus. Cited in Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 47 n. 20.

26. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 31.

Mayorga recalls, “The first time I spoke with Ignacio Ellacuría, or *Ellacu* as we who were his friends knew him, was around the middle of 1970 when BID approved the loan to finance the UCA’s first development plan.”²⁷ The Board of Directors had designated Ellacuría to prepare the speech and asked Mayorga to provide “suggestions” on what the document should contain. Mayorga says, “I offered some ideas about the possibility . . . of creating a new kind of university in Central America, a university that would put its whole self at the service of social change simply as a university, that is to say, by means of the specific functions of this type of institution.” Delighted, Ellacuría “told me these ideas coincided with those he had been elaborating from a theological angle” for the speech. Subsequently, “he showed me a draft, and we revised it together.”²⁸

Mayorga later accompanied Fr. Gondra to Washington for the signing speech, which he says was so well received that “they later offered Fr. Gondra a job at BID”! Mayorga recalls, “When I told this story to *Ellacu* . . . he laughed out loud and baptized the first of our collaborations as ‘our speech given by Gondra.’ It would be the beginning of a friendship that lasted to the end of his life.”²⁹ A few days before the assassinations Ellacuría sent his old friend a copy of the recently published 1989 collection of the UCA’s defining documents, which Mayorga fondly notes, “began with ‘our speech given by Gondra.’”³⁰ The gift reached Mayorga after the assassinations with the poignant dedication, “For Román, still so present in this book and in the University.”³¹

“A Critical and Creative Conscience” for the Salvadoran People

Though Gondra’s speech mentions neither Vatican II (1962-1965) nor Medellín (1968), the Council’s insistence that the church “carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times . . . in light of the gospel” (*Gaudium et spes* §4) is clearly in the background. Following Medellín’s 1968 “option for the poor,” the address is built on the premise that the UCA has a responsibility to respond to the social, political, and cultural forces oppressing El Salvador’s suffering people. Thus, Medellín’s interpretation of the Council’s mandate forms one leg of what Ellacuría called the “theological angle”³² driving the speech’s claim that the UCA’s “principal problem, now that our launch is assured by the loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, is to work out our particular university identity within the specific *historical reality* that we are living today in Central America.”³³

27. Román Mayorga, “Recuerdo de diez Quijotes,” 10.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid. See “Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la firma del contrato con el BID,” 9-14.

31. “Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la firma del contrato con el BID,” 12.

32. Ibid., 10.

33. Ibid., 9. My emphasis.

The other more formally theological dimension of this angle is Ellacuría's oft-repeated Ignatian conviction, implicitly assumed here, that "there are not two histories, a history of God and a human history; a sacred and a profane history. Rather, there is a single *historical reality* in which both God and human beings take part, so that God's participation does not occur without some form of human participation, and human participation does not occur without God's presence in some form."³⁴ These premises converge in the document's assertion that the UCA's mission is to respond as a university to the *historical reality of Central America*. And this assertion is informed by Ellacuría's conviction that *historical reality* is not only the arena in which the university must fulfill its various functions in secular society, but also the *locus theologicus* for its encounter with God.

These assumptions (explicit and implicit) lead Ellacuría and Mayorga to write, "For this reason we ask ourselves here today before this authentic Latin American forum, what would be the best university service we could render to the people with whom we live?"³⁵ This query, which drives the rest of the speech, merges the aforementioned concerns with the characteristic emphasis of Ignatian spirituality on discerning God's will and doing the *magis* (sometimes understood as the "greater" good) in carrying it out. The writers presume that if the Jesuit apostolic ideal is to be realized at the UCA, it must be enacted in institutional activities that *most effectively* promote the values of the Kingdom of God within the particular "historical reality" of the people the university hopes to serve. Thus, the document suggests that the UCA will start from an analysis of the historical reality of *what is* in order to discover *what should be done*. It will move from the national reality of El Salvador to the specifics of how its ethics should be lived out in that reality, rather than vice versa. This effectively moves the speech beyond Vatican II's generalized mandate "of reading the signs of the times in light of the gospel" toward a commitment to take positions on the specific historical realities of Central America and El Salvador guided by the discernments of church leaders at Medellín, Vatican II, and Rio. The UCA would soon discover that there is a big difference between teaching students the abstract principles of Catholic Social Teaching and taking public positions on the defining public of the day!

The speech then defines "How the University of Central America José Simeón Cañas understands its mission as a university,"³⁶ asserting that the UCA does not understand its mission "as a utopian search for timeless truth" but rather as a form of "service to the people that gave it being." Accordingly, if the university's functions are to be carried out in a "strictly historical" manner they must be concretized in response to "the historical situation of the peo-

34. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Historicidad de la salvación cristiana," *Escritos teológicos*, II (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 2000), 539; reprinted from *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 1 (1984): 5-45. My emphasis.

35. "Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas en la firma del contrato con el BID," 9.

36. *Ibid.*

ple it should serve.” With this in mind, the speech then proceeds to examine the historical meaning of what the authors define as the university’s three key functions: the commitment to promote human *development* outlined in UCA’s founding documents, and its dual obligations to pursue *truth* and *liberty*, traditional obligations of the Latin American university.³⁷ Ellacuría and Mayorga outline strategies for *historicizing* each of these functions at the UCA, which Ellacuría describes as “demonstrating the impact of certain concepts within a particular context.”³⁸

Beginning with *development*, the document asserts, “When our University began its foundational labors in 1965 it thought that its service should be focused on the concept of development.” However, they note that the university soon discovered that “the work of development, which struggles for the urgent advancement of the neediest, carries within itself the dynamic that leads to its own subordination.”³⁹ As evidence the document asserts that “*BID* itself” has discovered that the work of development is best understood as “a means for human and social transformation” that points beyond itself toward “a higher ideal which, while incorporating development, goes beyond it.” For both *BID* and the UCA, then, development turns out to be the means to a higher end, the “unavoidable precondition for a life that is humane, personal, and free for our peoples.” While not the final goal, development is the necessary condition for attaining that goal.

Ellacuría and Mayorga then turn to the concept of *integral development*, which we have seen was promoted in church documents after 1967, using it to define how development should be historicized in the work of the UCA.

Before subordinating the concept of development as the ultimate objective of the University, we must insist that it is *integral development* that the University must pursue, as stated in the memorable document [of Pope Paul VI], “development cannot be reduced to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic it must be *integral*, that is, it

37. *Ibid.*, 10.

38. There are two distinct but related meanings of *historicization* found in Ellacuría’s work. In addition to the meaning stated above, Ellacuría uses the term in his *Philosophy of Historical Reality* to refer to the incorporative and transformative power that human praxis exerts over the historical and natural dimensions of reality. For my description, see Robert Lassalle-Klein, “Ignacio Ellacuría’s Debt to Xavier Zubiri: Critical Principles for a Latin American Philosophy and Theology of Liberation,” in Kevin Burke and Robert Lassalle-Klein, eds., *Love That Produces Hope: The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 109. For the original sources, see Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990), 169; and Ignacio Ellacuría, “La historicización del concepto de propiedad como principio de desideologización,” *ECA* nos. 335-336 (1976): 425-50, at 427-28; translated as “The Historicization of the Concept of Property,” in John J. Hassett and Hugh Lacey, *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador’s Murdered Jesuits* (foreword Leo J. O’Donovan; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 105-37, at 109.

39. “*BID*,” 10.

must promote the development of all people and of the entire person”
(*Populorum progressio* §14).⁴⁰

The authors then provide three reasons why “this approach requires a profound renovation of the traditional structures of the University in order to impact the full development of all.”

First, the commitment to integral development implies that “the mission of the University is to serve everybody and not just a group of privileged students”⁴¹ who become professionals. The authors recognize that while some students use their education for selfish purposes that undermine “the just promotion and distribution of the national wealth,” others faithfully “comply with this sacred obligation of service.” They insist, however, that the modest contributions of the latter group should not lead the university to “appease its conscience by thinking it is impacting the entire nation through the professionals formed there,” or by imagining that it has thereby “integrally fulfilled its mission of service.”

Second, the writers argue that “the University should put itself at the service of all,” and that it should do this by “directing its attention, its efforts, and its functioning as a university to the study of structures . . . that influence the lives of each citizen for good or for ill.”⁴² They say the university “should analyze [these structures] critically, it should contribute in a university manner to the denunciation and destruction of those that are unjust, and it should create new models which can be implemented by society and the state.” And they conclude, “This is the irreplaceable work of the University in its service to the country as a whole and to each of its citizens,” comprising a “critical and creative task” that the university fulfills for the nation.

Third, the authors argue that the university has a duty “to conscientize” the Salvadoran people, “not with moralizing preaching, but with conclusive studies.”⁴³ The idea is that the UCA “should strive to awaken in everyone an acute awareness of the human rights of every Central American,” both at home and before the “international community.” They assert, “Only in this way” will the university be able “to promote integral development without repeating the errors that have historically plagued developmentalism.”

Next, having addressed the university’s commitment to promote *human development*, the speech moves to the role of *truth* in the mission of the UCA. The document argues that “the University should be a kind of laboratory for the truth,” reflecting the UCA’s effort “to define itself by means of the search for truth, a social truth” that helps the nation to understand and to bring about “the realization of what is owed to each.”⁴⁴ Thus, “the University understands its principal mission as that of being a *critical and creative conscience* for

40. Ibid., my emphasis.

41. Ibid., 11.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 12.

the Salvadoran reality within the Central American context.”⁴⁵ This powerful articulation of the UCA’s new vision for itself would appear again and again in subsequent statements of the UCA’s mission. Aware of the possibility of misinterpretation, however, Ellacuría and Mayorga immediately add, “We do not intend to be activists, but we do demand for ourselves the autonomy of thought and communication that will permit access to every source of truth, will allow us to communicate it, and will tolerate that sublime form of action which is thinking that brings about liberty with justice.”

Finally, having argued that development will be historicized through the promotion of *integral development*, and that truth will be historicized through the university’s role as a *critical and creative conscience* for the country, Ellacuría and Mayorga conclude that *liberty* can be fully historicized at the UCA only through university-style efforts to promote *liberation and freedom* for the Central American people. The text says, “Liberty must be initially understood in the current situation of our peoples as *liberation*” from “what is oppressive,” or in the words of Pope Paul VI, “as liberating humanity from slavery, and enabling it to become its own agent responsible for its own material, moral, and spiritual development” (*Populorum progressio* §34).⁴⁶ The document insists, however, that “in order to know what kind of development to promote and for whom, or to know how development should be subordinated to liberation and freedom, what is needed is a new vision of the university, and a new kind of courage in carrying out the university task.”

The talk then ends where it began, with Fr. Gondra thanking the no-doubt surprised bank officials for financing the UCA’s intention to create a new kind of university.

The fact is that this contract with the Inter-American Development Bank offers us the possibility for a *new liberty* to search for and communicate the *truth*, and the opportunity to work without compromise for the *true development* of our people. This is something that deserves our deepest thanks and the gratitude of the country to whose service this University has publicly committed itself.⁴⁷

In the end, the address functioned as a kind of public announcement by the university’s next two presidents, one lay and the other a Jesuit priest, that the UCA was embracing the *preferential option for the poor* outlined by the Latin American bishops at Medellín. We should note, however, that the UCA’s understanding of its role in historicizing the university’s commitments to development, truth, and liberty was, at this point, largely mediated through the agency of the country’s elites. It would not be until the end of Archbishop Oscar Romero’s three-year leadership of the archdiocese, and the failure of both the “UCA

45. Ibid., 12, my emphasis.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 14, my emphasis.

Coup” and the FMLN’s “final offensive,” that Ellacuría and the UCA would find the practical means to focus the resources of the university on the agency of the poor and their emerging role in Salvadoran civil society.

***The Central American Jesuits Incorporate the Option
for the Poor into Their Apostolic Planning***

For their part, the Central American Jesuits continued to press ahead with the task of incorporating the newly adopted horizon of the Medellín bishops into their apostolic planning. Here too Ellacuría played a significant, if controversial role. Fr. Arrupe had described Ellacuría as “a little radicalized with some explosive ideas”⁴⁸ and approved the latter’s appointment by Fr. Miguel Estrada as head of Jesuit formation only *ad experimentum*. Fr. Estrada, the first native-born provincial of Central America, was himself appointed in April 1970, just after the 1969 retreat, despite the fact that at thirty-six he was clearly identified with the new generation of “liberationists” considered by Luis Achaerandio and others to be under the influence of Ellacuría.⁴⁹

As expected, changes followed quickly. College and philosophy studies for Jesuit seminarians were returned almost immediately from abroad to the province. Small communities were opened, some in close proximity to the poor. One small community moved to a rural town, Aguilares, a little over twenty miles from the capitol where in September 1972, Fr. Rutilio Grande and his team began a new form of “rural evangelization”⁵⁰ that would lead to his assassination in 1977. In 1974 Ellacuría founded the Center for Theological Reflection, where Jesuit seminarians, for the first time, could study theology in the country. Hernández-Pico notes that “All this was possible because . . . [Fr. Azcue] named Ignacio Ellacuría as delegate for formation.”⁵¹

Of course it was Miguel Estrada who approved these innovations, marshaled crucial support both within the province and from Rome, and, from his first day in office, “exerted himself in order to make the options and conclusions of the meeting of 1970 a reality in the Province.”⁵² In addition to the items mentioned above, Fr. Hernández-Pico says Estrada’s term saw “the birth and development of small communities capable of a great sense of community and simplicity”; “the foundation of the Centers for Research and Social Action (CIAS) in the Province”; and “support . . . for the most progressive vision at the UCA in San Salvador and the *Externado*,” the Jesuit high school in San Salvador.

48. Segundo Azcue to Pedro Arrupe, December 21, 1969, cited in Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., “La Provincia de Centro América,” 92, Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus. Also cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 45.

49. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 84-85.

50. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 12.

51. Hernández-Pico interview by Lassalle-Klein, 4.

52. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 11. Here Hernández-Pico refers to the second Province Congregation of 1970 during September at Santa Tecla in which the Jesuit leadership officially committed itself to the new horizon or “category of liberation” (*ibid.*, 10).

Hernández-Pico asserts that Estrada's decision to return Jesuit seminary formation from abroad to Central America "began to reverse the shortage of vocations." He admires Estrada's "courageous" confrontation with the Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza, regarding the latter's attempts to interfere with the Jesuit-sponsored UCA of Managua. And he praises Estrada's role in fostering an emerging "coherence" between the option for the poor of the 1969 retreat and the reality of the "apostolic and community" works of the Society of Jesus in Central America.⁵³

In fact, from 1969 to 1974 the Society of Jesus waged a largely internal struggle to apply its new option for the poor to the mundane reality of its work in Central America. At the UCA Luis Achaerandio and Ignacio Ellacuría were the respective spokespersons for the competing "gradualist" versus "liberationist" Jesuit positions.⁵⁴ Fr. Beirne notes that Achaerandio had been elected president of the UCA on August 19, 1969, just four months before the December retreat and about a year after both Medellín and the important Jesuit meeting at Rio. Fr. Beirne asserts that "opposition to the [sociological] survey," which tried to document the existence of oppressive social structures in Central America, "had come mainly from Achaerandio" and a group of others who "pictured Ellacuría as controlling the younger group."⁵⁵ Hernández-Pico says this same group opposed the province's official adoption of the horizon of "liberation" at Santa Tecla.

Not surprisingly, Ellacuría recalls "being in a constant struggle and in the minority on votes"⁵⁶ during the first eight years following his 1967 election to the Board of Directors. Beirne describes how Jesuit living arrangements at the university reflected this split. "UCA I" was home to the gradualists (Achaerandio, Gondra, Ibasate, Sáinz, López y López, and Esnaola), while "UCA II" housed the "liberationists" (Ellacuría, de Sebastián, Montes, Cortina, Sobrino, Martín-Baró, Arroyo, Mariscal, and, subsequently, Rodolfo Cardenal). But Beirne also notes that "the gradualist and liberationist factions worked together, at times sparring, at times uniting their forces, especially when bombs began to explode after 1976, and after the assassination of Fr. Rutilio Grande, . . . [when] the Board had tilted toward Ellacuría's positions, thanks to a 3-2 majority (Ellacuría, Mayorga, and de Sebastián)."⁵⁷

During the earlier period, however, Beirne says,

Both groups reached general agreement on goals statements such as Gondra's 1970 speech at the IDB loan signing, the operational manual of the UCA, and even Ellacuría's 1975 article in *Estudios centroamericanos* (ECA) that explained the basic characteristics of the university.

53. Ibid., 12.

54. This terminology is that of Fr. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 84.

55. Ibid., 88.

56. Letter from Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., July 1993. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 92.

57. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 92-93.

On issue after issue, however, they disagreed as to timing, topics, and emphases. And yet, an integrated university model came out of the dynamic tension between the two sectors.⁵⁸

This was no doubt due, in part, to the leadership provided by Achaerandio during his presidency. Mayorga, who joined the Board as its first non-Jesuit member in 1970, offers a balanced view of Achaerandio's leadership. He insists,

It is neither fair, nor remotely realistic, to pin labels on him like "reactionary" by some, and "radical" by others. There is one aspect, at least, in which one would have to be more explicit: he was a visionary in the contracting of lay persons and was generous in the integration of their contributions. Many of the lay persons that I mentioned before came to the UCA during his presidency. In my opinion, no other Jesuit saw with such clarity the importance of the university community, nor facilitated as much as he its growth and integration.⁵⁹

Thus, despite their disagreements over the proper horizon for the work of the university, the UCA's Jesuit leadership managed to work with one another and their lay collaborators to develop the vision for a new kind of post-Vatican II university inspired by Medellín's preferential option for the poor. Their achievement seems all the more remarkable when one considers that it occurred as the social, political, economic, and military elites of El Salvador degenerated into polarized and irreconcilable camps.

Strategic Planning to Implement the UCA's New Vision

The UCA's gradual incorporation of the horizon of the option for the poor, and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies, into its key documents during the 1970s consistently subordinated these concepts to the more general and encompassing horizon of "historical reality."⁶⁰ The BID speech, which initiated the UCA's official commitment to this process, begins with the premise that "the principal problem [of the UCA] . . . is to find our own university identity in the concrete historical reality which we are living today in Central America."⁶¹ It then argues in a derivative manner for the adoption of liberation as the proper horizon for the work of the Central American university because it constitutes the proper response to "the present situation of our peoples."⁶² Likewise, the key 1979 document that culminates this process, and still occupied the preeminent

58. Ibid., 93.

59. Letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., Washington, DC, January 21, 1994, 14. Used with permission of Fr. Beirne.

60. When the intent is to refer to the historical reality of El Salvador, the term "national reality" is used.

61. "BID," 9.

62. Ibid., 12.

position in the university's own handbook in 1989, affirms, "The UCA seeks to be an institutional university response to the historical reality of the country. . . . It does this in a university manner and . . . with a Christian inspiration."⁶³

This subordination of the option for the poor and liberation to the more encompassing notion that they represent the proper Christian response to the demands of historical reality reflects a general tendency in Latin American ecclesial and theological thought. At the UCA, however, it was Ignacio Ellacuría who emphasized this relationship and constantly sought to ground its adoption by the UCA in a philosophical foundation. In 1972 Ellacuría published an article in *ECA* that used the work of the Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri to propose the following model for human intelligence:

We have, accordingly, a theoretical intelligence, a practical intelligence, and an historical intelligence. The three are not only legitimate as aspects of intelligence, but they are, moreover, mutually implicated: theoretical knowledge demands a practice and both shapes and is shaped by a situation; practical knowledge is a situated knowledge and both implies and produces a theoretical knowledge; historical knowledge is at the same time both theory and action. [But] the supreme form of intelligence would be that which would fulfill to the highest degree all three dimensions of intelligence.

Ellacuría argues thus because he believes that not only intelligence but reality itself is formally historical. Thus intelligence is ultimately a response to, and must therefore have reference to, historical reality. Accordingly, he concludes that the university is most theoretically astute when it is engaged in "a form of effective thinking"⁶⁴ about the present historical reality in which it is situated.

Ellacuría's 1973 book, *Freedom Made Flesh*,⁶⁵ situates this action-oriented understanding of thinking, which he believes should take place at the university, in an explicitly religious and Christian context. Building on the work of Karl Rahner, Ellacuría suggests, "If people work within the world for the new future of history, and if they live on the basis of Christian promise and hope, then they are working for the definitive appearance of God as the absolute future of man (Rahner)." He goes on to suggest, however, that "we must affirm God, not only as the Absolute of individual experience, but also as the Absolute of historical experience itself."⁶⁶

Ellacuría's point is that not only human understanding and political libera-

63. "Las funciones fundamentales de la universidad y su operativización," in *Planteamiento*, 47.

64. Ellacuría, "Filosofía y política," in *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*, vol. I (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991), 53.

65. Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976). Originally published as *Teología política* (San Salvador: Ediciones del Secretariado Social Interdiocesano, 1973).

66. Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 108.

tion, but the very act of contemporary Christian belief in the liberating character of God's salvific communication and self-revelation, must be situated within the general horizon of historical reality. He asserts,⁶⁷ "Christians . . . must insist that the presence of God in natural and historical reality is not the presence of a demiurge who miraculously rewards or punishes the religious behavior of individuals and nations." He says this implies "on the theoretical level they must seek a line of action that will transform the world and human society," while on the practical level "they must implement it in their praxis." As a result, Christian action for justice "will serve as the essential sign, without which man's transcendent salvation cannot be rendered present." For this reason, then, "Christians must insist that history is the locale of God's revelation, and that this revelation is meant to show us here and now that God is revealing himself in history."⁶⁸

The suggestive English title of this work, *Freedom Made Flesh*, highlights Ellacuría's conviction that God's freedom was incarnated in the historical life lived by Jesus of Nazareth. It also highlights what he sees as the free choice facing the church and individual Christians whether or not to embrace or reject Medellín's "decisive turning towards the poor" as an essential aspect of "the mission of the Church in Latin America."⁶⁹ Typically, the reasoning he offers has less to do with internal church concerns and the teaching authority of its bishops than with the demands of the historical reality of Latin America, when interpreted in light of the gospel. Ellacuría writes,

In Latin America "the poor" are not a fringe group; they are the majority. In a real sense they define what Latin America is: poor in health, poor in education, poor in living standard, poor in having a say in their own destiny. [Thus, both] by virtue of the universal vocation of the gospel, and by virtue of the historical summons specific to the region in which the Latin American church lives, it must be the Church of [and for] the poor.⁷⁰

We must not miss the implication here that the poor are still "other" for Ellacuría's implied reader. Thus, the challenge to the church that believes it is called by God to make a preferential option for the poor is to overcome its distance from the poor through solidarity and compassion grounded in real relationships.

It is not surprising, then, that the documents of the early 1970s through which the UCA began to redefine its mission as a Christian university should characterize the UCA's embrace of the option for the poor, and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies, as the reasonable and informed response in light of the gospel to the demands of "historical reality." Neither is it surprising that these documents should demonstrate a certain preoccupation with the institutional forms designed to translate that horizon into thinking about "effec-

67. His understanding of this term would now be described as post-modern.

68. Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, 18.

69. *Ibid.*, 146.

70. *Ibid.*

tive history”⁷¹ designed to change the national reality of El Salvador through the leadership of the country’s elites.

Mayorga’s 1976 history of the UCA describes 1970-1974 in terms that reflect this preoccupation. He characterizes 1970 as the “year of the ideological crisis”⁷² when the university officially embraced the “thesis . . . ‘of liberation”⁷³ in the BID speech. He says the university’s plan was to bring the horizon of liberation to the country’s elites by means of policy proposals and professionals formed through dialogue and solidarity with the poor.

The form in which the university was to contribute to this liberation, was by means of the study of reality, the scientific denunciation of oppressive structures, the search for effectively liberating solutions, and the preparation of professionals capable of implementing those solutions; [all done] in dialogue and solidarity with oppressed people.⁷⁴

Recognizing the difference between these ideals and the actual accomplishments of the UCA, however, Mayorga immediately insists that in 1970 there remained a great “distance between this thesis and the reality of the University.”⁷⁵

The year 1971 followed as a “year of expansion”⁷⁶ for both the UCA’s physical plant and its new self-understanding. Mayorga offers an important sketch of a process created to help the UCA faculty and staff deepen their commitment to the new horizon, and to implement it in the actual work of the university.

In 1971 a seminar was held which included the participation of students, professors and directors, that is to say, with the representation of all spheres [of the university community], in which the commitment of the university to work for liberation was reaffirmed. This caused the orientation that was supposed to be guiding the university to penetrate, at least intellectually, into larger sectors than had participated in the initial discussion. . . . In fact, it constituted the first public examination of conscience, open to all spheres and profoundly critical, that the UCA dared to have with a degree of self-confidence.⁷⁷

On the practical side, the university press published *An Analysis of a National Experience*, which documented government repression during the 1971 National Association of Salvadoran Educators (ANDES) teachers’ strike. The piece was so “effective” that it led President Fidel Sánchez Hernández to eliminate the

71. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (2nd ed. rev.; New York: Crossroad, 1960, 1975, 1991), 302.

72. Ibid.

73. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 37. See also pp. 37-40.

74. Ibid., 37.

75. Ibid., 38.

76. Ibid., 40. See also pp. 40-44.

77. Ibid.

UCA's annual subsidy from the 1972 national budget, which was approved by the National Legislative Assembly (more on this later).⁷⁸

Mayorga characterizes 1972 as the "year of the organic structuring of the university to the order of its goals."⁷⁹ He recalls, "At the beginning of 1972 a project for the organization of the university was prepared which had been in the works since the preplanning for the renewed ideological orientation."⁸⁰ The process produced the "Organizational Handbook of the University,"⁸¹ which envisioned a three-pronged structure through which the university would transform its commitment to the option for the poor, and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies, into an historically effective horizon for the national reality of El Salvador. This document outlined a detailed structure for the "coordinated realization of . . . appropriate university-style activities (Teaching, Research, and Social Outreach)."⁸²

The year 1973 then followed as the "year of the institutionalization of research and of social outreach."⁸³ An institute for research was created with Dr. Guillermo Ungo as its first director, and a Center for Social Outreach was established as well. A steady stream of studies bringing the university's commitment to the option for the poor to bear on the national reality began to flow from the UCA. These studies embodied the UCA's growing efforts to focus the university's research and social outreach on the historical reality of El Salvador, historicizing its self-proclaimed mandate to "create new models so that society and the state can implement them."⁸⁴

The year 1974 proved to be a "year of consolidation"⁸⁵ dedicated to correcting "imperfections," "deficiencies," and "lacunae" in the newly operative model of the university. Mayorga cites two major initiatives in this regard. First, in January the Board of Directors and the superior council of the university approved an important document intended to create an infrastructure to retain and recruit lay collaborators for the UCA's new mission in the decade ahead. This document ("Justifying and Clarifying Considerations for the Salary Scale of the University"⁸⁶) appears in the university's own handbook, and is cited by Mayorga, both in his history and personal correspondence, as one of the key documents of the 1970s.⁸⁷

78. Ibid., 41. Rodolfo Cardenal confirms this scenario in private correspondence with author, August 18, 2009.

79. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 44.

80. Ibid., 46.

81. Mayorga Quirós includes important sections of this manual in his history. See *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 212-24.

82. "Manual de Organización de la Universidad," from *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 213.

83. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 49. See also pp. 49-59.

84. "BID," 11.

85. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 59. See also pp. 59-64.

86. "Consideraciones justificativas y aclaratorias del escalafón de la Universidad," in *Planteamiento*, 15-36.

87. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 59-62. Also letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., January 21, 1994.

With these developments the UCA issued a bold call to reform the university's internal structures.

On numerous occasions the UCA's "being the critical and creative conscience of the national reality" has manifested itself in severe criticisms against the injustice of social structures that deny human beings access to the authentic fullness of life. The university has constantly exerted itself to point out paths for a process which, because of the present characteristics of the life of the Central American people, should be initially understood as a process of radical social transformation which seeks to liberate the people from diverse forms of structural oppression.

[But] only with difficulty could the university present itself as authentic in its statements, if it did not focus its critical lens on its own realities, and did not try to eliminate, to the greatest degree possible, whatever traces of injustice or oppression that could be found in its own structures.⁸⁸

The document argues that the current salary scale at the UCA had become unjust because: (1) it was unresponsive to the "visible elevation in the cost of living during the year of 1973"; (2) it was "disordered," "intuitive," and "lends itself to interpretations of personal favoritism"; and (3) it promoted "a frankly competitive" atmosphere among faculty and staff at the UCA.⁸⁹ It then establishes a new salary scale based on eleven criteria. Mayorga's history says that this new system broke "the schemas of hierarchy and exploitation which . . . [were] usual in the Salvadoran economy."⁹⁰ And he proudly notes that the highest salary possible was only 3.5 times the upper limit for the lowest category of manual labor.

Other major initiatives cited by Mayorga include the creation of a sliding scale for tuition based on a student's ability to pay,⁹¹ the permanent establishment of the Center for Theological Reflection, and the addition of new majors in political science and sociology. Thus, it seems that by the end of 1974 the university community and its leadership felt justified in their belief that the UCA was ready to expand and to test the validity of its commitment to the option for the poor through an examination of the impact of the UCA's teaching, research, and social outreach on the broader historical reality of El Salvador.

88. "Consideraciones justificativas," 15.

89. *Ibid.*, 16.

90. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 60.

91. "Resolución de la Junta de Directores y el Consejo Superior Universitario sobre cuotas diferenciadas de pagos estudiantiles y sus anexos," in Román Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 63-64.

**Historicizing the Vision:
Risky Engagements with El Salvador's Elites**

It is important to understand the changes underway at the UCA as the beginning of a university-style attempt to support increasing calls for needed social change in the country, and to avoid the violent confrontation taking shape among El Salvador's increasingly polarized political, ecclesial, economic, and military elites. A brief look at the developments taking place in the national reality of the country help to explain the urgency driving the aforementioned changes at the UCA.

Taking Positions on Political Debates: Agrarian Reform, Revolution, and the Status Quo

Any list of key events from this period must include the National Agrarian Reform Congress convened in January 1970, only weeks after the Jesuit retreat. President Fidel Sánchez (1967-1972) had proposed a mild program of agrarian reform in August 1969, and in what Román Mayorga calls a "small *coup d'état*,"⁹² a coalition of reformist members of the official party (the PCN [National Conciliation Party]), the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and certain members of the government called the Congress for January 1970. The unexpected opening soon emerged as the defining moment of 1970 for Salvadoran secular and church leaders interested in pursuing agrarian reform through democratic means. Its controversial conclusion would be that it is "not only a right of the State but a duty" to carry out "massive expropriation [of underutilized land holdings] for the sake of the common good."⁹³

The Catholic Church was among the many governmental, nongovernmental, business, and labor groups invited to participate in the Congress. Archbishop Luis Chávez y González sent a delegation of priests and laity, which created a "strong commotion"⁹⁴ according to Archbishop Rivera Damas by vigorously supporting calls for agrarian reform. However, much of the wealthy and land-owning private sector united in polar opposition to the proposals before the Congress and exited *en masse* during the first session. Rodolfo Cardenal recalls, "The private sector expected the UCA to leave the room with them. But not only did they not leave, but they supported the project of agrarian reform."⁹⁵ Mayorga adds, "The brilliant and independent interventions of the UCA representatives at the Congress attracted considerable attention and provided an important landmark in the development of the institution."⁹⁶

92. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 35.

93. "Resoluciones y recomendaciones del Primer Congreso Nacional de Reforma Agraria," *Economía salvadoreña* 28 (1969): 109.

94. Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 82.

95. Cardenal, correspondence with author, August 18, 2009.

96. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 35.

Unfortunately, the dangers of moving from broad statements about Catholic Social Teaching to politically controversial positions on the defining issues of the day soon became apparent. Hours after speaking strongly in favor of agrarian reform, the archbishop's spokesperson, Fr. José Inocencio Alas, was "beaten, drugged, and left naked on the edge of a cliff in the mountains south of San Salvador."⁹⁷ Fr. Cardenal says the fact that the university's representatives did not walk out with its donors "was interpreted by members of the private sector as a *betrayal* by the UCA. The university, which they had regarded as a defender of their interests, had abandoned them." Cardenal emphasizes that this sense of betrayal "strongly influences the perception of the UCA in the private sector even today."⁹⁸

Chastened, the government party manipulated the national elections that followed two months later, effectively removing agrarian reform from the presidential and legislative agendas until the mid-1970s. But as the decade began the Agrarian Congress had clearly placed land reform and the rights of peasant farm workers to organize at the top of the agenda of those pressing for economic and political reform through democratic means.

Another sector of Salvadoran society, however, had already abandoned reform in favor of armed revolution as the only way to bring about significant economic, political, and military change.⁹⁹ The first of what would become the five political-military organizations constituting the National Liberation Party (FMLN) was founded in 1970 by Salvador Cayetano Carpio.¹⁰⁰ Carpio had become secretary-general of the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS) during the 1960s, a party that, in its own words, had "renounced the armed struggle"¹⁰¹ after the disastrous *matanza* of 1932. Carpio would later recall,

After a long process of ideological struggle within the traditional organizations [or political parties] it became evident that they . . . denied the possibility and necessity of the Salvadoran people undertaking the process of revolutionary armed struggle. [However,] by the end of 1969 it was very clear that El Salvador, its people, needed an overall strat-

97. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 82.

98. Cardenal, correspondence with author, August 18, 2009.

99. For a fuller account of the details of the founding of the various revolutionary political-military organizations in El Salvador during the 1970s, see Montgomery's account, on which the information in the next two paragraphs is based. See Montgomery, "The Revolutionaries," in *Revolution in El Salvador*, 101-26.

100. Salvador Cayetano Carpio (his *nom de guerre* was "Marcial") committed suicide on April 12, 1983, in Managua, Nicaragua, after being implicated in the assassination of another top leader of the FPL, Mélida Anaya (known as "Ana María"). For an interesting and provocative analysis of this event, see José Antonio Morales Carbonell, "El suicidio de Marcial ¿Un asunto concluido?," *ECA* 49, no. 549 (July 1994): 653-89.

101. "Declaración del CC del PCS en ocasión del 50 aniversario del levantamiento armado de 1932" [Declaration of the Central Committee of the Salvadorean Communist Party on the 50th anniversary of the 1932 armed uprising], El Salvador, January 1982. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 103.

egy in which all methods of struggle could be used and combined in dialectical fashion.¹⁰²

Thus, Carpio resigned from the Communist Party of El Salvador, went underground, and founded the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL) in 1970.

This sector of Salvadoran society would become increasingly important as the decade progressed. In 1972 the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP) also emerged from the Communist Party (PCS) with a different, younger, and more diverse constituency. And in 1975 the Armed Forces of the National Resistance (FARN) was formed by a group that left the ERP when a hard-line faction assassinated Roque Dalton, El Salvador's most important living poet (then a member of the ERP), ostensibly because of his insistence on the need to emphasize political as well as military revolutionary activities. The following year, on January 26, 1976, the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC) was founded comprising union workers, individuals who had left the group that founded the ERP in 1972, and others. And finally, in 1979 the PCS itself decided that the time for armed struggle had come. Thus, the PCS formed the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), which grew out of militias created after the February 28, 1977, massacre in the Plaza Libertad that preceded the assassination of Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J., by only two weeks.¹⁰³

Each of these groups had a political arm, including mass-based organizations for political mobilization and education. But it was the steadily worsening standard of living and the increasingly brutal military, paramilitary, and right-wing suppression of civil society that fueled the steady growth of these political-military organizations during the 1970s. Ultimately, the interaction of all these factors with the failure the 1979 "Young Officers" or "UCA" coup (and its plans for agrarian, political, economic, and military reform), would create the conditions for the outbreak of true civil war in 1980.

A third sector, or social grouping, that would play a significant role in the coming decade was the coalition between the El Salvador's oligarchy (mostly large land-holders) and the military. Military candidates stole both national legislative and presidential elections during the 1970s, defrauding their rival civilian candidates of victories won at the polls. The fact that members of the oligarchy not only allowed this to happen but actually promoted the military consolidation of political power must be partially explained by the shared interest of these two groups in both the institutionalized system of corruption and the military repression of civil society in the name of anti-communist ideology.

According to retired Lieutenant Colonel Mariano Castro Moran, corruption was endemic in public life. Moran,¹⁰⁴ a graduate of El Salvador's military academy, participated in the successful 1944 rebellion against Hernández Martínez,

102. Mario Menendez, "Salvador Cayentano Carpio: Top Leader of the Farabundo Martí FPL," *Prensa Latina*, February 1980. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 103.

103. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 105.

104. This biographical information is from Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 280 n. 44, 280.

and was a member of the Civilian-Military Directorate, which ruled after the U.S.-supported, anti-communist counter coup of January 25, 1961. In 1984 he wrote in *ECA*,

It is a notorious and public fact that corruption has come to pervade all levels of public administration. The continuation in government of the regime's functionaries is not only because of political ambition but because they try to continue enriching themselves. . . . It is the survival imperative of a mafia encrusted with power.¹⁰⁵

In this article Moran describes the 1970s construction of El Salvador's international airport and the freeway connecting it to San Salvador, along with several other incidents, as examples of the magnitude of the country's institutional corruption.

Montgomery summarizes a graphic description of how military officers gradually became part of this system of corruption in a 1980 interview with Cuban-born Peter Dumas, part-owner and general manager of the San Salvador Sheraton during the 1960s and 1970s.

Peter Dumas, of the San Salvador Sheraton Hotel, asserted . . . that the private sector was "more corrupt" than the army. He explained that as long as officers were in the barracks there was no opportunity for them to become corrupt. When they assumed positions in state-owned companies such as ANTEL (the telecommunications company), however, opportunities for corruption abounded. Dumas described how the system might work for him: an officer would be invited to dinner at the hotel, to return and bring his family, and to use hotel facilities (gratis, of course) for a birthday party or similar event; there would follow an invitation to spend the weekend at the manager's beach house. Later the officer would be offered the opportunity to buy 10 percent of a business with guarantees that if he needed a loan one would be available at attractive interest rates, courtesy of a bank owned by members of the oligarchy. This, Dumas concluded, was only one example of how a "very elastic system" of corruption worked.¹⁰⁶

In this way the economic and political self-interests of important military leaders became personally and institutionally intertwined with that of the wealthy land-owners who were virulently opposed to agrarian and political reform.

In 1972, however, the army-dominated government of President Fidel Sánchez Hernández (1967-1972) seriously alienated the majority of El Salvador's

105. Mariano Castro Moran, "Función política del ejército Salvadoreño en el presente siglo" [Political function of the Salvadoran Army in the present century] (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1984), 242. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 65.

106. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 65. Material cited from interview by Tommie Sue Montgomery with Peter Dumas, January 1980.

wealthy land-owning families with his modest attempts to develop a public consensus for a “democratic program of agrarian reform.”¹⁰⁷ The 1970 National Agrarian Reform Congress had unified the oligarchy in polar opposition to all discussion of the topic. And Sánchez’s tolerance for political opposition made possible the electoral defeat of his hand-picked successor, presidential chief of staff Colonel Arturo Armando Molina. Molina’s victorious opponent was the former mayor of San Salvador, José Napoleon Duarte, whose platform included the promise of real agrarian reform. Predictably, however, the PCN-controlled Central Elections Council, which had already disqualified on technicalities the most likely winners among the opposition candidates for the National Assembly, fraudulently declared Colonel Molina the winner of the February 20, 1972, presidential election. As a result, on March 25, 1972, reformist army officers, led by Colonel Benjamin Mejia, instigated yet another coup.

The coup was soon defeated by the Air Force and security forces, and Molina was inaugurated. But the legitimacy of the new presidency had been weakened by the coup, by the blatant electoral fraud, and by the military’s sullied reputation as an institution not committed to democracy. Now alienated from the reformers, the new president turned toward the oligarchy and the right wing for political support, unleashing the ideology of anti-communism against the National (public) University, an important voice for agrarian reform since at least the 1940s. Molina charged that the university was communist controlled, and at his request the National Assembly annulled the university’s autonomy. Military troops occupied its campuses, arrested faculty, staff, and students, and closed the university until September 1973, when it reopened under government control. A July 1972 *ECA* editorial said the takeover “calls into question the value of any university and its freedom to realize its university mission.”¹⁰⁸ But the intervention was popular among the increasingly reactionary land barons who saw both democratic and revolutionary strategies for agrarian and political reform as two sides of the same socialist coin.¹⁰⁹

This narrow alliance between the military and the oligarchy proved to be politically unstable, however, and disruptive of bilateral relations with the United States.¹¹⁰ Thus, in 1976, the U.S. Agency for International Develop-

107. Casa Presidencial press release, *Prensa Grafica*, August 15, 1969. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 61.

108. Unsigned editorial, *ECA* (July 1972): 438. Rodolfo Cardenal notes that all editorials in *ECA* are unsigned “because it is considered the official voice of the University, and its direction is closely associated with the Vice-president for Social Outreach.” Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., August 18, 2009, private collection.

109. Stephen Webre, *José Napoleón Duarte and the Christian Democratic Party in Salvadoran Politics 1960-1977* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 185; Mario Flores Macal, “Historia de la Universidad El Salvador” [History of the University of El Salvador], *Anuario de Estudios centroamericanos* 2 (1976): 13-35; cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 66.

110. The information in this paragraph is from Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *The Central America Fact Book* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 216-19.

ment (AID) persuaded Molina to implement a mild program of agrarian reform involving only 4 percent of the national's land. The program was to be jointly implemented by the military and two U.S. AID-supported projects: the Agrarian Transformation Institute (ISTA) and the Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS).

In response, the oligarchy waged a fierce and ultimately successful campaign of extreme anti-communist rhetoric and violence against the program. And a year later the hard-line minister of defense, General Carlos Humberto Romero, replaced Colonel Molina in yet another fraudulent election. This was followed by an unprecedented wave of persecution against the church, the Jesuits, and the UCA as part of a larger violent repression of Salvadoran civil society by government and clandestine right-wing groups.

An Emerging Role in National Events

ECA played an increasingly important role in giving the UCA a voice in public affairs during this period. In early 1969 the Central American Jesuits passed control of the journal to the university. Rodolfo Cardenal describes Ellacuría's role in bringing *ECA* to the UCA, and the significance of its first issue.

The need to efficaciously project the university into society motivated . . . [Ellacuría] to search for an organ to publish the truth uncovered by research at the UCA and to denounce injustices. Therefore he arranged that the UCA should assume the direction of the magazine *ECA*. The first issue of this new era of *ECA* was . . . dedicated to analyzing the causes and consequences of the war with Honduras. In this edition of the magazine the true causes of the conflict were unmasked by demonstrating that the root of the problem was in the unjust [system of] land tenancy. . . . [And] from this edition forward, *ECA* has been the principal and most constant organ for the publication of the critical thought of the university, and the most important professor's chair occupied by Fr. Ellacuría.¹¹¹

The October 1970 BID speech written by Ellacuría and Mayorga further clarified the university's commitment to the option for the poor and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies. The plan was to engage the country's elites in developing policy proposals for change, and to produce professionals formed through "dialogue and solidarity with the oppressed."¹¹² *ECA*, together with a series of individual studies published by the university, would become one of the primary vehicles for implementing this during the last half of the decade.

111. Rodolfo Cardenal, "Ser jesuita hoy en El Salvador," *ECA* 44, nos. 493-494 (November-December 1989): 1017.

112. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 37.

ECA and the War with Honduras

On July 14, 1969, the Armed Forces of El Salvador invaded Honduras.¹¹³ In response, Ellacuría's lead editorial in the UCA's new flagship journal boldly asserts, "The university would be failing in one of its most grave responsibilities, that of being an intellectual conscience for the nation, if it did not confront this crisis, offering an intellectual diagnosis."¹¹⁴ He explains that the issue will therefore be dedicated to an in-depth examination of the war from a variety of perspectives, including a chronology of the events themselves; analyses of the effects of the war; its impact on the economy (the war had disastrous effects, eating up one-fifth of the budget¹¹⁵); the role of the Organization of American States in the conflict; legal issues; and a comparative statistical analysis of possible outcomes.¹¹⁶

William LeoGrande provides a historical perspective on the conflict, explaining that before 1969 Honduras played an important role easing long-simmering tensions in El Salvador over land tenure patterns: "With over 600 people per square mile, El Salvador's population density was the highest in Latin America. Over a quarter of rural families (26.1%) were completely landless, and another 60% owned too little land to support a family."¹¹⁷ Fortunately, though El Salvador had no open land to develop, "Illegal emigration to less populous Honduras acted as a safety valve for the potentially explosive situation in the countryside." Montgomery adds that by the end of the 1960s this population had grown to "at least 300,000 Salvadoran settlers," many of whom were "second generation immigrants" and "successful small farmers."¹¹⁸ A crisis emerged in April 1969 when Honduras, "using a new agrarian reform law, notified Salvadoran farmers that they had thirty days to leave their land." Two months later, the country "reversed its open-border immigration policy and closed its border." In response, El Salvador tried to close its own border to the returning immigrants, filed a complaint with the inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and invaded Honduras.

Though Salvadoran forces destroyed the Honduran Air Force on the ground

113. Recall that Ellacuría and Mayorga Quirós would suggest that the university "must understand its principal mission as that of being the critical and creative conscience of the Salvadoran reality within the Central American context" ("BID," 12).

114. *ECA* 24 (1969): 389.

115. Webre, *Duarte*, 93, 97. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 61.

116. The 1969 war with Honduras was referred to as the "Soccer War" because nationalistic sentiments stirred during the World Cup soccer competition between the two countries provided political cover for the El Salvadoran military to start a five-day war in July with Honduras over its decision to expel up to 300,000 Salvadoran peasants farming there, some for multiple generations. See William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 34; Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 59-60; Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 20.

117. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 34.

118. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 60.

and advanced far into the country, a cease-fire brought about by U.S. pressure on the Salvadoran government brought the war to an end after five days. While the war had been popular, it ate up one-fifth of the annual budget, and tens of thousands of landless Salvadoran peasants returned home. Byrne notes that the number of landless peasants in El Salvador more than doubled during this period from 19.8 percent in 1961 to 41.1 percent in 1971.¹¹⁹ This had the effect of both intensifying ongoing tensions over land distribution and accelerating parallel problems with income distribution. Accordingly, from 1970 to 1980 the income of the poorest fifth of the population dropped from 3.7 percent to 2 percent of national income, and the richest fifth went from 50.8 percent to 66 percent of the national total.¹²⁰

Ellacuría's treatment of the 1969 war with Honduras in *ECA* is unremarkable in that it provides an ethical justification for the position of the Salvadoran government in the conflict. What is notable, however, is his characterization of the desperate socio-economic and political predicament of El Salvadoran peasants as a "limit-situation."¹²¹ He cites Karl Jaspers, "who used this term to refer to those situations in which one cannot live without struggle and suffering . . . , situations which place our whole existence in question and flood it with light."¹²² This leads him to make two key points: "first: the presence of a limit situation itself is a condemnation of an unjust structure that demands radical change; [and] second, when a person or a people enter a limit-situation, decisions are always ambiguous and therefore those who make and implement these decisions must refuse to be swept up by the passions aroused by the impact of that situation."¹²³

Ellacuría concludes with a good deal of prescience that if the present situation of El Salvador continues unchanged in which "fundamental human rights are being obscured due to legal and political arrangements," the result will be a contradiction or "antinomy between justice and [the] law."¹²⁴ Lest we miss the point, Ellacuría says that he is talking about "situations such as that of resistance to totalitarian regimes, revolution against unjust structures, revolutionary violence. . . ." Clearly, this is a man who hopes to avoid violence by alerting leaders in the government and civil society to the storm he sees gathering on the horizon, and who is aware months before the December 1969 retreat of the dangers of embracing Medellín's preferential option for the poor.

119. Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 20.

120. Ibid. Byrne (*El Salvador's Civil War*) cites Carlos M. Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes: Market, State, and the Revolutions in Central America*, trans. Ted Kuster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), 68.

121. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., "Fundamental Human Rights and the Legal and Political Restrictions Place on Them," in Hassett and Lacey, *Towards a Society That Serves Its People*, esp. 96-99 (translated from "Los derechos humanos fundamentales y su limitación legal y política," *ECA* 24, nos. 254-55 [1969]: 435-49).

122. Ibid., 96-97.

123. Ibid., 99.

124. Ibid.

Land Reform

The style that would characterize the UCA's adoption of the option for the poor and integral development as the horizon for its work in the 1970s was further developed in two issues of *ECA* on the subject of land reform. The second release (January-February, 1970) of the new *ECA* under the UCA's direction took up the subject, and Ellacuría's lead editorial offers nine principles that he argues should guide reform. The editorial tries to provide a rational basis for further dialogue with its analysis that any comprehensive proposal for Salvadoran land reform should provide both for a more "just land distribution," and "an increase in productivity,"¹²⁵ two aspects of land reform considered mutually exclusive by some participants in the reform congress.

1. On the one hand, he argues that the land ownership system should not be an obstacle to socio-economic and human development.
2. It should take into account the common good when promoting its own interests,
3. It should not accumulate benefits through unjust wages.
4. On the other hand, he says that profitable use should be made of the land, which will ensure stable employment.
5. The government should contribute to economic and human development by providing basic and vocational education, and promoting community development and organization.
6. Production and work should be adapted to promote both economic efficiency, and high employment.
7. Land productivity should be improved through fertilization, infrastructure and appropriate crop cultivation.
8. Adequate credit resources should be established to promote private agro-economic development.
9. [The country should] improve national and international marketing and quality control techniques, provide economic incentives to promote development, and enhance the availability of technical information.¹²⁶

In 1973 *ECA* again returned to the issue.¹²⁷ This time, however, all the articles emphasized the need for political change in order to pressure the wealthy to address their historically unjust monopoly of El Salvador's land and economy. Mayorga says this special edition of *ECA* was intended to serve as a "point of departure"¹²⁸ both for a series of seminars that the UCA would offer to governmental- and private-sector bureaucrats during the month of April, and for high-level conversations with government officials regarding "possible technical collaboration" by UCA scholars and administrators in developing a national

125. Ibid.

126. *ECA* 25, nos. 256-257 (January-February 1970): 3.

127. *ECA* 28, nos. 287-298 (July-August 1973).

128. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 53.

plan for agrarian reform. Mayorga's history notes with some tact, however, that following "the well-known events in September of that year in Chile" (the U.S.-sponsored assassination and coup that overthrew the agrarian-reform-minded government of Salvador Allende), the government officials who had attended the seminars "unexpectedly resigned their positions, the conversations between the UCA and the government were terminated, and the theme of agrarian reform seemed to fall into official neglect once again."¹²⁹ The UCA was learning just how hard it would be to achieve even minor changes in government policy regarding land reform in El Salvador through the agency of sympathetic and conscientious elites.

Two Important Books on the National Reality

In 1971, UCA faculty produced a controversial interdisciplinary study of the ANDES teachers' strike (*An Analysis of a National Experience*) applying the university's newly adopted principles "to a concrete case involving the study of the [national] reality, and the denunciation of oppressive structures."¹³⁰ Mayorga recalls, "The case was red hot at the moment," and the study proved to be explosive.

This low-bred research project . . . caused the withdrawal of the 1972 national subsidy which the executive branch had already presented to the legislature. The subsidy disappeared "as if by magic," through instructions from the executive branch just before the appropriation was to have been voted. High government officials claimed later that urgent public needs had come up at the last minute, and made necessary a pull back of the UCA subsidy.¹³¹

Ellacuría's contribution to the volume summarized the chronology of events and offered an ethical analysis.¹³² The Salvadoran National Legislature had passed a basic "Salary Law for the National Teaching Profession," but ANDES protested vigorously on three fundamental points: (1) the law exemplified a "totalitarian" encroachment upon the legitimate prerogatives of non-governmental bodies in educational institutions (the teachers union demanded an appeals board for administrative decisions;¹³³ (2) the basic salary scale was unjust;¹³⁴ and (3) the Assembly was both manipulating the legislative process and excluding the legitimate participation of important non-governmental offi-

129. Ibid., 53-54.

130. Ibid., 41.

131. Ibid.

132. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Estudio ético-político del proceso conflictivo ANDES-ministerio," in *Análisis de una experiencia nacional* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1971), 123-54. Reproduced in Ignacio Ellacuría, *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989): Escritos políticos* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991), 523-56.

133. Ibid., 525.

134. Ibid., 528.

cials.¹³⁵ Ellacuría notes that ANDES warned it “was going to strike” if their proposal for a “raise in salaries and a mixed appeals board was not approved.” But “the legislative assembly and the executive branch were not intimidated . . . and did not change the disputed points [in the law].”¹³⁶ As a result the teachers went on strike for three months.¹³⁷

Though the volume criticizes both the Ministry of Education and the teachers’ union, it raised the curtain on a host of issues particularly troubling to the government: the right to unionize and strike (farm worker unions were still banned), the control of the press by the right, the urgent need for profound educational reform, and the effect on the educational system of the fundamentally unjust distribution of economic resources in the country, among others. Hernández-Pico’s informal history cites the effort as early “proof of the capacity of a university institution to become a critical conscience for the national reality.”¹³⁸ Known simply as “the yellow book,” Whitfield says the study was “badly printed” and “largely unread.”¹³⁹ But it was clearly an important moment for the UCA in beginning to apply its new horizon to the historical realities of El Salvador, and to discover the limits of its strategy for concretizing its option for the poor through the agency of the country’s elites.

The project also led Ellacuría to establish a critical principle regarding the nature of civil society that would shape his thinking in social ethics to the end of his life. After praising ANDES for assuming its role as “a political force,” he warns that “there is a . . . sense of politicization that is directed to the change of the government in order to put oneself in its place,” much like “a political party.” While conceding, “This can be legitimate and necessary,” he states that it is not the proper “meaning of a guild group like the teachers’ [union].”¹⁴⁰

Juan Hernández-Pico has argued that this development must be considered “important because it shows that Ellacuría consistently wanted a strong civic [or civil] society capable of being a social force over against political forces such as the state and political parties.”¹⁴¹ According to Beirne, Hernández-Pico argues that the insight gained in this exchange would “lead him to urge the emergence in the 1980s of a ‘third (social) force’ with an important role alongside the Salvadoran government and the FMLN insurgency.” Later, we shall see the absolutely critical role this idea played in Ellacuría’s discovery of practical strategies for linking the teaching, research, and social outreach of the university to the country’s poor majorities as the agents of their own destiny.

Emphasizing the point a few months later, the August-September edition of

135. Ibid., 529.

136. Ibid., 531.

137. The teachers were on strike from June 7 until September 1, 1971, which falls during the Salvadoran academic year.

138. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 12.

139. Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 51.

140. Ellacuría, “Estudio ético-político,” 534.

141. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 103. Beirne cites a letter from Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., July 1993.

ECA supported the union's demand to raise teachers' salaries. But Ellacuría's lead editorial again cautioned, "ANDES should deepen its consciousness of the need to serve the country. It should avoid certain characteristics of a movement closed in upon itself; . . . [and] it should avoid the temptation to turn itself into a political party."¹⁴² As structures in civil society began to emerge and promote mass mobilization in El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s, challenging a society dominated by land-holding families and the military, the implications of this line of thought became increasingly apparent.

Two years later, in June 1973, the UCA published *El Salvador: The Political Year of 1971-1972*,¹⁴³ demonstrating that the military related PCN had stolen the 1972 elections for the Molina government. Mayorga Quirós (who was one of the authors) believes that the yellow book "marked a culminating point in a gradual process in the relations between the institution and the state from a more or less presupposed collaborationism . . . to an exercise, in this case, of the critical university function."¹⁴⁴ He also states that the decision to actually publish the study provoked "an internal crisis [at the UCA] . . . only matched, in its conflictive character, by the ideological crisis of 1970, and perhaps even more intense."

When Ellacuría told the UCA Board he was recruiting CIAS scholars César Jerez and Juan Hernández-Pico for a joint research project on the elections, Román Mayorga cautioned that the UCA publish the work with the following prologue: "(a) This is a scientific piece of historical investigation of ideas and falls within the mission of the university; [and] (b) it is the sole responsibility of its authors and it does not commit the rest of university personnel for or against its content."¹⁴⁵ But Whitfield nonetheless observes, "The study . . . became the focus of extreme tension among the Jesuits. Lines were drawn between those who saw in the publication of the book a test case of whether the university was able to live up to its rhetoric and those more conservative Jesuits, still in a majority on the Board of Directors, and including the [president] . . . Luis Achaerandio, who feared the political and financial consequences that publication would bring with it."¹⁴⁶

Such fears were confirmed when the book's assertion that the election had been stolen played a role in the Jesuits being dismissed after fifty-seven years as directors of the country's diocesan seminary. In September 1972 Archbishop Chávez and the secretary of the bishops' conference, Bishop Oscar Romero (who spearheaded the move), came to inform the Jesuit provincial, Fr. Estrada, that the Jesuits' tenure as directors of the diocesan seminary (which dated to 1915), was about to end. The final letter of dismissal, written by Bishop Romero

142. ECA 26, nos. 274-275 (August-September 1971): 481.

143. Juan Hernández-Pico, César Jerez, Ignacio Ellacuría, Emilio Baltodano, and Román Mayorga Quirós, *El Salvador: Año político, 1971-72* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1973).

144. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 51-52.

145. "Minutes of the Board of Directors of the UCA" (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America, November 9, 1972).

146. Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 51.

at Estrada's request, stated that the service of the Jesuits was no longer needed because the local diocesan church had attained sufficient "maturity" to take control of the operation itself. Whitfield argues, however, that the real issue was resistance by conservative bishops to the implementation of Vatican II and Medellín at the seminary, and to the contractual "autonomy" of the Jesuits to carry out the Council's directives.¹⁴⁷ Cardenal details a series of skirmishes that led to Rutilio Grande's nomination as seminary rector being vetoed in 1970.¹⁴⁸ The final blow came two years later when a number of seminarians who had seen the study refused an invitation to sing and serve at a solemn Mass to be attended by the recently inaugurated president, Colonel Molina, whose government, the seminarians said, "had been rejected by the people."¹⁴⁹

The dispute even spread to Guatemala, where some Jesuits from the Rafael Landívar University sent an anonymous letter to the UCA protesting the decision made for security reasons to publish the work in their country.¹⁵⁰ Despite the difficulties, however, the volume was published, and Rodolfo Cardenal reports that copies were smuggled into the country hidden in a truck belonging to the uncle of Fr. César Jerez.¹⁵¹ In the end, the book was important beyond Jesuit circles because it exposed the national elections as a charade whose real purpose was to provide political legitimation for military rule and the suppression of political dissent in the service of El Salvador's wealthy elites.

Slander and Political Repression

Not surprisingly, relations with the Molina government quickly deteriorated, resulting in outright hostility toward other Jesuit-sponsored efforts to implement the new orientation. Hernández-Pico recalls that when administrators tried to implement Medellín's option for the poor at their high school across town (the *Externado San José*), "the government of Colonel Molina [began] . . . accusing various Jesuits of violating the Constitution."¹⁵²

The problem began on April 27, 1973, with a letter from the high school parents' association to the school's president, with copies to Fr. Estrada and Fr. Arrupe in Rome, complaining that field trips designed to expose their sons to the national realities of El Salvador "should be realized with a Christian

147. Ibid., 48-49.

148. Rodolfo Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza: Vida de Rutilio Grande* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1985, 2002), 114-39, 155-86.

149. "Apuntes ante la salida de la Compañía de Jesús del Seminario Central de San José de la Montaña de San Salvador" (San Salvador: Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus), 20. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 50.

150. Rodolfo Cardenal, "La Provincia de Centro América en sus diez últimos años, 1969-79" (unpublished manuscript, San Salvador: Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus), 144. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 52.

151. Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., correspondence with author, August 18, 2009. Whitfield says the books were transported by car. Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 52.

152. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 14.

spirit and not oriented by the doctrine of class struggle.”¹⁵³ The upset parents reported that their newly enlightened children now “repeatedly accuse their families of living like bourgeoisie, as if the effort to maintain an economic well-being was a crime.” The conflict escalated with an editorial written by Bishop Oscar Romero for the May 27, 1973, edition of *Orientación*, the newspaper of the San Salvador archdiocese. Whitfield’s account is succinct:

The editorial was a direct attack on a “certain school”¹⁵⁴ whose Marxist teachers had perverted the principles of Medellín with “pamphlets and literature of known red origin.” Rapidly reprinted throughout the press as the authentic opinion of the Salvadoran church, it touched off an unprecedented campaign against the Jesuits as “Communists in sheep’s clothing”¹⁵⁵ and “a threat to peace and social order.” On June 11 the prosecutor general himself weighed in to charge the *Externado* with “teaching classes of Marxist orientation.” Jesuits, staff, and parents of the *Externado* were called upon to testify, hour after hour and day after day, as the scandal absorbed the nation.¹⁵⁶

During May, June, and July 1973 the local newspapers and radio stations were filled with attacks and half-truths. The crisis peaked on June 11, 1973, when Molina’s attorney general formally charged the school with “teaching classes of Marxist orientation.”¹⁵⁷ Archbishop Chávez finally intervened and appointed a commission to investigate the accusations, which fully exonerated the Jesuits and others teaching at the *Externado San José*. At the same time Ellacuría gathered a group of UCA Jesuits who combined forces with some of their counterparts at the *Externado* to publish a six-part series in the local media entitled, “The *Externado* Thinks Like This.”¹⁵⁸ The series refuted the charges of Marxist ideological indoctrination and un-Christian anti-family attitudes and provided a rational framework for the entire enterprise of educational reform in the spirit of Medellín.

Juan Hernández-Pico says the piece played an important role in deflating the accusations. However, he believes that it was “the strong and courageous position of Archbishop Chávez and Father Estrada that succeeded in paralyzing” the attempt to bring authorities at the *Externado* to trial for violating the Constitution.¹⁵⁹ Rodolfo Cardenal agrees, recalling that the elderly archbishop

153. “Asociación de Padres de Familia del ‘Externado San José’ to Rev. Padre Francisco Javier Colino, S.J. (San Salvador: Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus, April 27, 1973).

154. *Orientación* (May 27, 1973).

155. *Diario Latino* (June 8 and 26, 1973).

156. This entire paragraph from Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 54.

157. *Ibid.*, 54.

158. Hernández-Pico provides this detail on the collaborative nature of the project. See Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 14.

159. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 14. Also, letter from Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., July 1993. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 107.

“negotiated, persuaded, and convinced” President Molina to relent, and the Jesuits agreed “to quietly withdraw the sociology professors at the end of the course.”¹⁶⁰

The affair finally abated when a poll revealed the *Externado* parents themselves overwhelmingly supported the work of the Jesuits at the school. But the message was clear: there would be serious consequences if the UCA and the Society of Jesus continued its efforts in the spirit of Medellín to make the suffering of El Salvador’s impoverished majorities an issue for the next generation of the nation’s civil and governmental elites.

Consolidating the New Idea of the University: The Presidency of Dr. Román Mayorga (1975-1979)

The years 1974 and 1975 were important ones at the UCA in that they completed the shift to the option for the poor as the official horizon of the university. Luis Achaerandio finished his term on the Board and departed in December 1974 for Rome to attend the Thirty-Second General Congregation of the Jesuits, a worldwide meeting of the order to determine its agenda for the years ahead. Hernández-Pico makes the remarkable assertion (widely confirmed by other scholars) that the meeting “elevated as the [apostolic] vision of the universal Society” the difficult decisions of 1969-1970.¹⁶¹ Ironically, the departure of Achaerandio, who had resisted those decisions, created the opening for a similar shift on the Board of the UCA. Román Mayorga was named university president (the only lay person ever so named). The following year, Fr. Luis de Sebastian, a Jesuit economist from Spain living in the “UCA II” community and committed to the “liberation thesis,” was appointed university vice-president, assuming Achaerandio’s place on the Board. This shifted the balance to a three to two majority, with Ellacuría, Mayorga, and de Sebastián favoring a more assertive emphasis of the UCA’s commitment to the option for the poor through explicit support for social, political, and economic change.

Mayorga’s Presidency Completes the Shift

This shift did not come about without pain, however. In April 1974 the province had its own congregation in preparation for the worldwide December meeting. Rodolfo Cardenal describes it as “the longest and most conflictive in the history of the province . . . a forum in which were aired resentments, suspicions, aggressions and calumnies.”¹⁶² Hernández-Pico recalls,

With its hard confrontations, it left behind a vapor trail of intense emotion and pain. This outcome was, on the one hand, a living reflection

160. Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., correspondence with author, August 18, 2009.

161. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 16.

162. Cardenal, “La Provincia de Centro América,” 151. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 58.

of an apostolic body which was being overrun for the first time by the challenge of [Central America's] social conflicts and by the suffering of the great majorities of the poor. On the other hand, it offered a precise X-ray of the lack of maturity with which we confronted each other with our positions.¹⁶³

On the positive side, the delegates were able to agree by sizable majorities on six "postulates" to guide the province in putting the decisions of 1970 into practice: (1) taking positions in favor of the poor in public disputes; (2) practicing the Jesuit vow of poverty as a means of solidarity; (3) allowing more participation by younger members in the province congregations; (4) a commitment to agrarian reform at the farm owned by the province; (5) embracing the role of high schools and universities in the work for justice and solidarity; and (6) ending the province's juridical dependence on Spain and elevation to the status of an independent province within the Jesuits.

However, two men who had led the province through the initial years of its commitment to the option for the poor suffered stunning defeats. Hernández-Pico notes with bitter irony (in light of the petition for independence from Spain) that "the first Provincial born in Central America was not elected to [attend] the Thirty-Second General Congregation"¹⁶⁴ in Rome. In a humbling turn of events the more conservative Luis Achaerandio defeated the provincial, Fr. Estrada, by a single vote on a secret ballot.¹⁶⁵ Fr. Arrupe and his consulters in Rome were deeply concerned at the depth of the divisions described in the documents and represented by the decision not to concelebrate the congregation's final Mass.

Further, in the aftermath of the divisive meeting, Ellacuría was removed as delegate for formation and prohibited, for the time being, from holding any other position in the province government. Fr. Hernández-Pico, who was installed in Ellacuría's place, believes (as did Ellacuría himself) that "Fr. Arrupe . . . [was] under pressure from Fr. Paolo Dezza" to remove Ellacuría as formation superior "because [Dezza] did not have confidence in Ellacuría's orientation."¹⁶⁶ Known as a traditionalist, Fr. Dezza was Fr. Arrupe's general assistant for education and influential at the Vatican as the former confessor of Pope Paul VI and John Paul I. Cardenal believes that the plan was to reduce Ellacuría's influence over

163. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 15.

164. *Ibid.*, 14-15. A province with full status in the Society of Jesus would automatically send its provincial, together with one elected delegate. Since Central America was still formally a vice-province of Spain, they were allowed only one elected candidate. Hernández-Pico implies that it was to be expected that the Jesuits would elect their provincial to represent them in Rome.

165. This bit of information was provided by Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 58.

166. Interview with Fr. Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 1, 1994, 4. Whitfield reports the detail about Ellacuría's belief citing *Noticias SJ* (San Salvador: Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus, December 1989), 8; and interview of Hernández-Pico by Teresa Whitfield, June 15, 1991.

Fr. Estrada, since Rome believed his “government was polarized by his [Ellacuría’s] very presence.”¹⁶⁷

The irony of these moves, however, is that they set the stage for the elevation of Román Mayorga and Ignacio Ellacuría as successive presidents of the UCA, and the realization of their vision for the university articulated in the 1970 BID speech. As we saw earlier, when Luis Achaerandio left for Rome he gave up the presidency of the UCA and his position on the Board. Mayorga, who fully embraced the commitment of the UCA to the preferential option for the poor, but was seen as a mediator, emerged as the choice of all factions for the presidency of the UCA. Educated at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), gracious, and well prepared to deal with El Salvador’s technological problems, Mayorga and his family, as Fr. Beirne notes, “had been close friends of the *gradualists*.”¹⁶⁸ And, though Mayorga was a young age (33), as Hernández-Pico recalls,

Román had a lot of prestige. He was a good scientist, a good economist, and had worked in government agencies, specifically in the ministry of planning. He had left this work to come to the university for less salary. So he also had moral prestige. And he was a good writer. He used to write in *ECA*, and he wrote a book about the mission of the university.¹⁶⁹

Hernández-Pico emphasizes Mayorga’s “great capacity to arbitrate,”¹⁷⁰ concluding, that is one “reason . . . [Mayorga’s presidency] is very important. Because he was the practical arbitrator between two lines of thought among the Jesuits on the Board of Directors, part arbitrator and mediator.”

But Fr. Achaerandio’s departure and the shift of the Board toward the option for the poor also made it possible for Ellacuría to be elected president in 1979. Hernández-Pico believes that after Ellacuría’s removal from Jesuit government “there was a change in his interest, of emphasis. It’s not that his project was itself different, but that perhaps the means, or the platform . . . changes [from] formation and his influence on young Jesuits [to] . . . the university itself. But this is not an instantaneous change . . . I would say it lasts five years until 1979 when they named him . . . [president] of the university.”¹⁷¹ Rodolfo Cardenal disagrees somewhat, stating, “In my opinion the UCA was always first, and his work on formation revolved around the UCA. However, he obviously had more time for the UCA when he no longer had responsibility for the Jesuit students.”¹⁷²

167. Cardenal, “La Provincia de Centro América,” 227. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 59.

168. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 119.

169. Interview with Fr. Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 1, 1994, 8.

170. *Ibid.*

171. *Ibid.* Rodolfo Cardenal concurs with this opinion. See Cardenal, “Ser Jesuita hoy en El Salvador,” 1016.

172. Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., correspondence with author, August 18, 2009.

What is not in dispute, however, is that the shift in the Board made possible by Fr. Achaerandio's departure created the opportunity to move toward the kind of university Ellacuría had envisioned since 1969.

Clarifying and Institutionalizing the New Idea of the University

The immediate result of these changes was heightened focus by Román Mayorga and Ignacio Ellacuría on the task of defining what Jon Sobrino calls the *theoria* of the university's self-understanding. The next five years (1974-1979) would be especially productive in this regard, culminating in the synthetic statement of 1979. In what follows I will look briefly at some of the contributions of the UCA's next two presidents to this process.

Juan Hernández-Pico says that in 1974, "four months after ceasing to be delegate for formation, Ellacuría founded the Center for Theological Reflection"¹⁷³ (CRT). This center, which Mayorga describes as an initiative of the Society of Jesus,¹⁷⁴ was a milestone in Ellacuría's efforts to shift the physical and spiritual focus of Jesuit formation to Central America. Hernández-Pico, Ellacuría's successor as director of formation, writes,

Formation . . . began . . . to be done in Central America. . . . [The novitiate was established at Santa Tecla in San Salvador, and] undergraduates and those studying philosophy studied at the UCA. . . . [As a result] the Jesuit students did their undergraduate and philosophy studies together. . . . Then in 1974 the Center for Theological Reflection was founded [by Ellacuría] which [brought some of the] masters of theology students of the Jesuits [to the UCA as well]. All this was possible because [Fr. Azcúe] named Ignacio Ellacuría as delegate for formation.¹⁷⁵

But the CRT was driven by a larger vision than the training of young Jesuits. Its goal was the dynamic renewal of priests, religious, and lay workers throughout the archdiocese and all of Central America in light of the changes in the Latin American church since Medellín. The center's impact on the Salvadoran church can be seen in a "very confidential" 1975 memo written for the Pontifical Commission on Latin America by the conservative bishop Oscar Romero. The document names the Jesuits as the most important of "Three Factors in the Priests' Political Movement in El Salvador,"¹⁷⁶ and it singles out Ellacuría's three pet projects as having been particularly influential: the work of the CRT; the book, *El Salvador: The Political Year 1971-72*,¹⁷⁷ and *ECA*.

173. Ibid., 6.

174. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 64.

175. Hernández-Pico, S.J., interview with Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 1, 1994, 8.

176. James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 56. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 102-3.

177. Hernández-Pico, Jerez, Ellacuría, Baltodano, and Mayorga Quirós, *El Salvador: Año Político, 1971-72*.

The year after Jon Sobrino's permanent return to the UCA in 1974 from doctoral studies in Frankfurt, he recalls, "Ellacuría said very clearly to me . . . , now you take over the theology program, and I will do something else."¹⁷⁸ Sobrino received his first death threat in 1975 (announced without his name on Salvadoran television) for his work at the CRT and the UCA.¹⁷⁹ The following year Ellacuría assumed formal directorship of his beloved *ECA*. Mayorga offers an evocative recollection of the energy the Basque Jesuit brought to this task:

Ellacuría was the director of *ECA* from 1976, and you had to see him in the [editorial] sessions preparing for the magazine. He was a fund of ideas and unfurled with abandon his virtues of boundless creativity, and commitment to intellectual production. He would propose themes, write editorials, prepare his own articles, solicit collaborative projects, invent new sections, comment on manuscripts, and stimulate all of us to produce more and better work.¹⁸⁰

Cardenal states simply, "Under his direction, *ECA* became the most authoritative magazine on the reality of the country."¹⁸¹ And he suggests that it was first through Ellacuría's work on President Molina's "agrarian transformation of 1976, [that] his figure began to acquire a public dimension. From that moment on, Fr. Ellacuría was always present in the great crises of the country with his sharp and critical analyses."¹⁸² Indeed, it seems that Bishop Romero had been correct in that it was primarily through the CRT, his books, and the pages of *ECA* that Ellacuría began to assume the mantle as the preeminent *public intellectual* of the Salvadoran church.¹⁸³ As we shall see later, however, the Jesuit would study at the feet of his former adversary, Oscar Romero, when the latter became archbishop of San Salvador from 1977 to 1980.

Mayorga, on the other hand, focused his varied talents in administration, analysis, and consensus building on the creation of a comprehensive process of long-range "planning . . . for the second decade of the university," focused on "how to use its institutional influence for the liberating transformation of society."¹⁸⁴ The new president was especially concerned that the university "should not enclose itself . . . in a narrow world in which everybody convinces themselves and satisfies themselves in the belief that they are doing a lot for the

178. Interview with Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 1, 1994, 8.

179. This detail is from Martha Doggett's chronology of death threats and attacks against the Jesuits in El Salvador. See Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1993), 301.

180. Román Mayorga, "Recuerdo de diez Quijotes," 11.

181. Cardenal, "Ser Jesuita hoy," 1018.

182. *Ibid.*, 1019.

183. Cardenal adds that Ellacuría also taught a widely attended course on theology for lay people during the second semester of the year offered in the evening at the Externado San José, and repeated on Saturday mornings at the UCA.

184. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 65.

country, while the miserable living conditions of the immense majority of the population, whom the UCA says it wants to serve, do not change in any way at all.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, the university staff began a UCA-wide effort that produced three volumes¹⁸⁶ with specific goals and objectives for the university and its departments in the areas of research, teaching, and social outreach.

Noting the shortage of qualified persons and facilities for research, the plan outlines a strategy to increase the full-time faculty by 100 percent, while augmenting the student body by only 34 percent from 1976 to 1981. It lays initial plans to build science, library, and computer facilities as essential university infrastructures needed to promote research. And the document asserts that teaching at the UCA should be designed

to prepare professionals who want to and who can contribute to a process of social change which better satisfies the needs of the vast majority of the population and liberates them from the conditions of injustice and oppression in which they currently find themselves. This means in the long and the short run the production of goods and services, and profound structural changes in the distribution of wealth, income and social organization.¹⁸⁷

The plan explicitly asserts that “no prescribed sequence . . . timetable or . . . model of society” is being taught at the UCA. But it opts for a curricular plan balancing introductory courses in the social scientific study of “the social realities of Central America” and open registration courses offered by the university’s three faculties (science/engineering, business/economics, and human sciences), with courses emphasizing specialization and electives for advanced training.

Finally, the plan outlines specific areas of university activity that are to be dedicated to social outreach. These include publication, public statements, broadcasts, editorials, and student social service (700,000 hours for the period of 1976 to 1981). However, it cautions that UCA’s social outreach is to be understood as the responsibility and cumulative impact of the entire university on the national reality of El Salvador. Other important elements include a proposed “Center for Political and Social Documentation” (which would become one of the few sources of reliable data on El Salvador during the 1980s), a student loan fund, efforts to develop the long-term commitment of faculty and staff to the goals and values of the UCA’s vision, and a proposal to develop a new faculty-staff salary scale.

185. *Ibid.*, 66.

186. Universidad Centroamericana Simeón Cañas, “*Plan Quinquenal, 1977-81*, vols. I-III (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1976). The following description of this document is based on the summaries provided by Román Mayorga Quirós and Fr. Beirne. See Mayorga Quirós, “1975: Año de evaluación y planificación,” *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 65-67; and Beirne, “Planning for 1976-1981,” in *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 120-26.

187. *Plan Quinquenal, 1977-81*, I, 158. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 121.

The plan established a permanent office for planning and implementation, which embodied Mayorga's leadership style: collaborative, gracious, and given to developing consensus. Fr. Hernández-Pico notes, however, that the collaborative spirit of this period declined at the end of the decade when many key lay faculty and administrators left the university to join the reformist coup. This was followed a little over a year later by the beginning of the civil war.

In 1979 many left. The war came, and some lay persons stayed. But, more than anything, the university began to function more vertically, centered on the Jesuits, and with less collaboration. It would be important, however, not to confuse these characteristics of centralization and clericalization with the process of conversion [which took place at the UCA during the 1970s].¹⁸⁸

Jon Sobrino also recognizes that the influence of lay faculty and staff was unfortunately diminished by the "centralization" of decision making in Jesuit circles during the early 1980s, but tends to see the change as a product of the national environment of assassination and repression on day-to-day life at the UCA. He insists on the one hand that "without a group of lay people, this type of project is impossible. I'm convinced of it."¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, he agrees that a temporary centralization of decision making in the Jesuit Board of Directors took place during the 1980s, which he sees as a result of understandable decisions made by lay and Jesuit leaders under the threat of death.

Why was the leadership in the hands of Jesuits? Under the circumstances of persecution and a university that wants to confront social structures, the Jesuits were able to do it best. That's because they were Jesuits. In 1980, when things got tough, many of the lay people left. The commitment was different. Some lay people resented that, sometimes with good reasons. [But] remember, in 1979 30 percent of the [lay] faculty went to the government. These things don't happen in [most] universities. But we see them down here. [For instance,] when lay faculty come to the United States to study, they often leave the university when they return to El Salvador. I think that it is an illusion to think you can find a group of lay people totally committed to the university.¹⁹⁰

Thus, while acknowledging the negative impact on lay-Jesuit collaboration produced by this centralization of power, Sobrino argues that "without the Board of Directors the university would have collapsed." He does insist, however, that "we still must address the need for the participation of others, and to develop along more democratic lines."

188. Interview with Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., by Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 1, 1994.

189. All quotes in the paragraph from interview with Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein, April 19, 1994.

190. *Ibid.*

As noted earlier, while similarly acknowledging the key role of lay leadership in the UCA model, Rodolfo Cardenal emphasizes the cumulative impact on the UCA of political ambitions nurtured by certain lay faculty and staff, and external attacks against the university.

It would be impossible to run the UCA without lay people. . . . But this centralization was a response to the situation of the country and the UCA. Perhaps it was caused in large part by the failed attempt of certain lay faculty and staff to take control of the direction of the UCA in order to make it a tool of the Christian Democrats. But it was largely due to the political crisis, which made it necessary to make quick and strong decisions confronting attacks against the UCA, including its economic viability.¹⁹¹

For his part, Román Mayorga complained while still president in 1978 of “a pattern of excessive concentration of power in the Board of Directors,”¹⁹² which was populated mainly by Jesuits. Thus, it is not surprising that he believes that the university could have survived both the exodus to the government and external attacks while still preserving more of the vigorous participation by lay faculty in decision making during the 1980s.¹⁹³ In 1982, Ellacuría himself would bemoan the “bureaucracy and verticalism” that afflicted the UCA under his leadership, “so that the UCA could appear at times to be governed from a higher center which is inaccessible and considerably unknown.”¹⁹⁴

Looking back, we can say that Mayorga and Ellacuría complemented each other in many ways from 1975 to 1979. The combination of Ellacuría’s “charismatic genius” and Mayorga’s “great capacity to arbitrate” fostered a creative synergy that allowed the UCA to forge a dynamic vision, and the real beginnings of “a different kind of university.”¹⁹⁵

Blueprints from Mayorga and Ellacuría

Mayorga and Ellacuría were well prepared to make good use of the institutional resources mentioned above in the hard work of formulating and developing a consensus around the new vision for the work of the university. In this section I will briefly review two key statements of that vision articulated in documents

191. Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., correspondence with author, August 18, 2009.

192. Cited in Beirne, *Education and Social Change*, 125.

193. Letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, January 21, 1994.

194. This is a quote from the meeting of the UCA’s Board of Directors in which Ellacuría was elected to his second term as president. See “Minutes of the Board of Directors” (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America José Simeón Cañas, October 25, 1982).

195. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Diez años después: es posible una universidad distinta?” *ECA* nos. 324-325 (1975): 605-28 (translated by Phillip Berryman as “Is a Different Kind of University Possible?” in Hassett and Lacey, eds., *Towards a Society That Serves Its People*, 177-207).

written during 1975, the first year of Mayorga's presidency and the new majority for the option for the poor and liberation on the UCA Board.

During that year Mayorga somehow found time to revise the draft of the manuscript he had written earlier "in order to clarify for myself the . . . 'Project of the University.'"¹⁹⁶ He published it in 1976 as a "proposal, invitation, and challenge to the entire university community of the UCA." The intention was to stimulate conversation on what the UCA might become in its second decade (1975-1985).

In the first chapter Mayorga proposes "four general characteristics which . . . should typify the UCA in the next ten years." He envisions a university that (1) is truly committed to serving the Salvadoran people "ninety percent of which finds itself oppressed"¹⁹⁷; (2) is open to "all sectors and in permanent contact with their needs and painful realities";¹⁹⁸ (3) serves as "a critical and creative conscience" for the nation;¹⁹⁹ and (4) operates with a "functional," "disciplinary," and "communal" integration in its research, teaching, and social outreach.²⁰⁰ The second chapter summarizes the history of UCA's first decade (1965-1975). Chapter 3 offers a wealth of data documenting the terrible social and cultural polarities defining Salvadoran society: developed-underdeveloped, elitism-marginality, domination-dependence. Chapters 4 through 6 offer critical evaluations of the state of research, teaching, and social outreach at the UCA. And the final chapter outlines a series of challenges that Mayorga believes the UCA must confront in the decade ahead.

The book represents a remarkably clear statement by a young president of his vision for the UCA. What is more impressive, however, is the continuity it shows with statements developed later in the 1970s and 1980s. Mayorga demonstrates a profound appreciation for the work of the university's founders, as well as the importance of the recent commitment after 1969 to a preferential option for the poor and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies. He is also able to offer a realistic summary of obstacles that the university must overcome in order to continue moving forward, offering a convincing argument for the university-wide process of "evaluation and planning"²⁰¹ which followed shortly. Thus, the book was an important step in the self-understanding of the UCA and its appreciation for the need to plan the future. But just as its strength embodies Mayorga's ability to communicate the horizon of the option for the poor to a broad and very diverse university community, so it is also derivative of the work of Ellacuría and others in reformulating the horizon of Medellín as the context for the work of a Christian university in the Third World.

The shift in Ellacuría's focus toward the UCA and his growing profile as a public theologian can be seen in a series of programmatic articles published in

196. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 5.

197. *Ibid.*, 10.

198. *Ibid.*, 13.

199. *Ibid.*, 15.

200. *Ibid.*, 17-19.

201. *Ibid.*, 65-67; also 199-212.

1975, following his removal from Jesuit government the year before. The year began with two short overviews of “The Political Mission of the University”²⁰² and “The Philosophical Anthropology of Xavier Zubiri,”²⁰³ the subject of Ellacuría’s doctoral dissertation and his intellectual mentor. This was followed by perhaps his most important and original programmatic article on theological method, “Toward a Philosophical Foundation for Latin American Theological Method.”²⁰⁴ It is not unfair to say that one must grasp the basic concepts first stated programmatically in this article, and developed in his other writings, if one is to understand the overarching rationality that informs his entire intellectual project, including the work of the UCA itself.

The article begins with four principles from the work of the influential philosophical theologian Emerich Coreth and derived from the philosophical hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, which Ellacuría argues were currently held by many European theologians: (1) understanding has a circular structure that compromises the independence of its claims; (2) understanding is basically the comprehension and description of the structures of human meaning; (3) the “world” and the things that we take for granted as our “horizon” are human structures created for the communication and maintenance of meaning; and (4) all knowledge, including theological knowledge, is basically a search for meaning.²⁰⁵ Ellacuría argues somewhat surprisingly that these assertions reflect a set of philosophical presuppositions that “must be overcome” in order to “do justice . . . to the reality of human knowing and . . . Latin American theological thought.”

His alternative is embodied in what he describes as three “fundamental principles for a proper conceptualization of . . . human intellection” as it operates in a truly “Latin-American theological method.”²⁰⁶ First, human intelligence is first and foremost a sensory and biological adaptation. He quotes Zubiri’s dictum that “a species of idiots is not biologically viable,” and he argues that intelligence never loses this practical character, even in its most abstract expressions. Second, “the formal structure of intelligence . . . is not to understand and grasp meaning, but to apprehend reality and to confront itself with that reality.” Here, Ellacuría first develops his three famous dimensions of “confronting oneself with real things as real”: (1) grasping what is at stake in reality; (2) assuming responsibility for reality; and (3) taking charge of, or transforming reality,²⁰⁷ to

202. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Misión política de la Universidad,” *ABRA* 8 (El Salvador, 1975), 2-7.

203. Ignacio Ellacuría, “La antropología filosófica de Xavier Zubiri,” in *História universal de la medicina*, VIII (ed. Pedro Lain Entralgo; Barcelona, 1975), 109-12.

204. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Hacia una fundamentación del método teológico latinoamericano,” *ECA* 30, nos. 322-323 (August-September 1975): 409-25.

205. *Ibid.*, 418.

206. *Ibid.*, and 418-21.

207. *Ibid.*, 419-20. The Spanish reads: “el hacerse cargo de la realidad,” “el cargar con la realidad,” and “el encargarse de la realidad.” My translation follows that of Jon Sobrino; see Jon Sobrino, “Jesus of Galilee from the Salvadoran Context: Compassion, Hope, and

which Jon Sobrino says, “I would add that we must ‘allow ourselves to be carried along by reality.’”²⁰⁸ And third, “Human intelligence is not only always historical, but this historicity belongs to the essential structure of intelligence.”²⁰⁹

Ellacuría's fourth article of 1975 embodies perhaps the most important programmatic statement of his vision for the UCA, and serves well to demonstrate the “cash value” of the aforementioned ideas. He outlines his program for “a different kind of university, one that as a university and in a university manner, responds to its mission in history, one that demonstrates its political effectiveness in a university manner by . . . [helping] impart shape to a new society and to a new form of state power.”²¹⁰ The key point is that the Christian university must define itself through the arduous task of interacting with, and taking positions on, the historical reality in which it lives. He then argues that this can only be done by getting to know, taking responsibility for (in harmony with its values), and contributing to the transformation of the national reality within which the university is situated, (in this case) El Salvador.

Ellacuría's final major article of 1975 is a contribution to a theological “tribute to Karl Rahner,” whom Sobrino describes as Ellacuría's most important theological mentor. The piece is a programmatic treatment of Ellacuría's vision for theology in a series (127) of “Theses Regarding the Possibility, Necessity and Meaning of a Latin American Theology.”²¹¹ One can hear unmistakable echoes

Following the Light of the Cross,” *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2009): 449-50; also Jon Sobrino, interview by Robert Lassalle-Klein, November 4, 2009, Santa Clara University; personal papers. A more literal translation might read: “realizing about reality”; “picking up (or carrying) reality”; and “taking care of (or taking charge of) reality.” However, the Spanish, which involves a play on words, cannot really be translated literally. Ellacuría says they connote (respectively): “a being in the reality of things—and not only being before the idea of things or the meaning of things . . .,” “the fundamentally ethical character of intelligence,” and “the praxical character of intelligence.” Jon Sobrino characterizes the three in terms of the *noetic, ethical, and praxical* dimensions of intelligence. See Jon Sobrino, “Ignacio Ellacuría, the Human Being and the Christian: ‘Taking the Crucified People Down from the Cross,’” in Kevin Burke and Robert Lassalle-Klein, eds., *Love That Produces Hope: The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier/Liturgical Press, 2006), 18-19.

208. Jon Sobrino, *La fe en Jesucristo, ensayo desde las víctimas* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1999), 102; also Jon Sobrino, “La teología y el ‘principio liberación,’” *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 35 (1995): 138. I believe that the former is mistranslated as “let ourselves be burdened with reality,” in Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 52. Perhaps the meaning is clearer when Sobrino speaks of “corresponding to and being carried by the *more* of reality,” in Jon Sobrino, *Liberación con espíritu: apuntes para una nueva espiritualidad* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1985, 1994), 29, which is adequately translated as “willingness to be swept along by the *more* of reality,” in *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 19.

209. *Ibid.*

210. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Is a Different Kind of University Possible?” in Hassett and Lacey, eds., *Towards a Society That Serves Its People*, 179.

211. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Tesis sobre la posibilidad, necesidad y sentido de una teología Latinoamericana,” in A. Vargas Machua, ed., *Teología y mundo contemporáneo: homenaje a Karl Rahner* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1975), 325-50.

of the philosophical horizon outlined above in his claim that “What . . . Latin America has achieved as its fundamental interpretation of what constitutes reality . . . is the importance of the historical dimension, of history, as a realization of humanity and as the realization and revelation of the absolute.”²¹² Students of theology will not miss Rahner’s influence in the way Ellacuría correlates the urgent questions of secular history with the embodiment of God’s self-offer in the life and death of Jesus, and the witness of his disciples.

We [in Latin America] are historically in a situation of faith . . . at the same time that we are in a historical situation and preoccupied with its transformation. From this necessary situationality, and with the determinate horizon of a faith which asks itself about its secular dimension, it is inevitable that one’s questions regarding the historical situation and the Christian message would be mutually conditioned and evaluated.²¹³

But he parts company with his German mentor in his self-conscious commitment to the historical specificity of the Latin American context. And this makes all the difference! For it is precisely this context that allows Ellacuría to argue: “One can recognize a clear interaction between Latin-American theological thinking and pastoral praxis, which is what has put it into motion.” It is the experience of the Latin American church that leads him to conclude, “What is fundamentally accepted is the intention to present the serious needs of the oppressed majorities in terms of Christian liberation.”²¹⁴ And it is precisely this historical specificity that leads Ellacuría to assert Latin American Christians will make their contribution to the universal church. For, “In the reconversion of the [Latin American] church to the world of the oppressed, one sees a profound principle of renovation for the [universal] church of its mode of evangelization and its mode of doing theology.”

In the end, 1975 proved to be a very productive year for the UCA’s efforts to more clearly define its horizon. Both Ellacuría and Mayorga produced important proposals that outlined a path toward the more fully elaborated vision of the UCA that emerged at the end of the decade. And Ellacuría was able to formulate a programmatic challenge to philosophers, theologians, university educators, and others to *grasp what is at stake* in, to *take responsibility for*, and to *take charge of doing something* to support and promote the ongoing irruption of the poor as agents of their own future in El Salvador and Latin America.

The Synthetic Statement of 1979

Three years later, in April and May of 1978, the Board of Directors initiated a series of meetings with each of the academic departments of the university

212. Ibid., 339.

213. Ibid., 348.

214. Ibid., 336.

designed to produce a synthetic statement of the UCA's self-understanding as a university. The document they produced recalls that the land reform proposals offered by the government of General Humberto Romero, as well as the UCA's application for a second loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, "seemed to have put the UCA into a new stage."²¹⁵ A team of twenty persons was formed, which conducted a five-month consultation involving all sectors of the university community. Jon Sobrino was asked to synthesize the results into a final document, which the Board adopted with some revisions in May 1979.

The final document is the mature statement of a university with nine years' experience living with the new horizon of the preferential option for the poor and the struggle for liberation and justice it implies marked out by the Latin American bishops at Medellín. Looking back to the UCA's emerging role on the political scene during the early 1970s in the view of its final authors, the statement asserts that it "presupposes six or seven years of *doing things* at the UCA."²¹⁶

The first section is dedicated to "The Proper Identity of the UCA."²¹⁷ Its charter statement maintains:

The UCA seeks to be an institutional university response to the historical reality of the country, considered from an ethical perspective as an unjust and irrational reality which should be transformed. This is rooted . . . in a purpose: that of contributing to social change in the country. It does this in a university manner and . . . with a Christian inspiration.²¹⁸

It is interesting that by this point the rhetoric of option for the poor and the struggle for liberation and justice has been almost completely subordinated to the more general and encompassing horizon of formulating a Christian value-based response to the demands of "historical reality." As we have seen, this reflects both the intellectual influence of Ignacio Ellacuría's work on the philosophical foundations for Latin American liberation thought, as well as a general tendency within that body of thought itself.

The document then elaborates three elements as constitutive of the UCA's identity: (1) the UCA should be working "for social change"; (2) it should be doing so "in a university manner"; and (3) its efforts should be guided by and grounded in the "Christian inspiration" of Jesus and the gospels. There is no need to review the first two, by now familiar, characteristics. But the third merits further comment. The section dedicated to this topic argues that UCA's Christian inspiration draws the university's attention to three Christian values. First, while Christian faith sees human history and achievement as the medium of God's self-revelation, it also takes sin seriously as a historical reality, and it

215. "Las funciones fundamentales de la universidad y su operativización," in *Planteamiento*, 43.

216. Interview with Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein, April 19, 1994, 1.

217. "Las funciones fundamentales," 47-54.

218. *Ibid.*, 47.

is critical of any effort to absolutize history or its achievements. Second, Christian faith struggles against the historical effects of sin as they are embodied in oppressive structures, and it sees this struggle as a practical dimension of Jesus' call to love of neighbor. And third, Latin American Christian faith works for the salvation of the whole person and all of humanity through its compassionate solidarity with the part of humanity that suffers most (the poor majority). Accordingly the document concludes:

The most explicit testimony of the Christian inspiration of the UCA will be putting itself really at the service of the people in such a way that in this service it allows itself to be oriented by the oppressed people themselves. This will make the university see and denounce what there is of sin in our reality; it will impel it to create models that historically correspond better to the Reign of God; and it will make it develop typically Christian attitudes, such as operational hope, the passion for justice, the generous self-giving to other, the rejection of violent means, etc.²¹⁹

The second section outlines how the UCA should “operationalize” its “fundamental functions” of teaching, research, and social outreach guided by the “charism” of the three basic characteristics noted above and “the actual circumstances of our actual historical experience.”²²⁰ The document cautions, however, that the UCA does not elevate any of its three basic functions as the most important of the university's tasks. Rather,

The UCA realizes its mission by means of three functions [together]: social outreach, research, and teaching. . . . These functions, related among themselves, form a structure. Although teaching is the material base that conditions the other two, it is social outreach that should give meaning to research and teaching. And it is research that should illuminate what outreach and teaching should be.²²¹

What must be understood here is that the subordination of teaching to the synergistic interaction of all three variables (teaching, research, and social outreach) flows essentially from the notion that the university exists to serve the Salvadoran people as a whole, not just the privileged students who study there.²²² This point is made clearly in the section on the UCA's identity, which insists,

219. *Ibid.*, 53.

220. *Ibid.*, 54.

221. *Ibid.*, 55.

222. Here it is important to address Ellacuría's oft-quoted remark that students were a “necessary evil” for the work of the UCA. Jon Sobrino claims that this “was a cynical comment. It was not part of [Ellacuría's understanding] of the model.” Rodolfo Cardenal says that Ellacuría used to say that, “by definition, the University has students, it forms them as professionals, and it grants titles,” which “consumes most of its human and financial

The UCA exists [primarily] neither for itself, nor for its members. Its center is not located within itself, within its students, within its professors, or within its authorities. [The university] exists for the Salvadoran people, and this should be the center and the ultimate orientation of its activity. More specifically still, [its center should be] the majority of the population which suffers inhuman conditions, and which suffers them by virtue of certain structures which should be transformed. This means the work of the UCA is decidedly oriented by social outreach.

Thus, the work of the university is to be subordinated to the Christian and human vocation *to grasp what is at stake in, to assume responsibility for, and to take charge of doing something about* the historical reality in which it lives. In this context, it is worth noting that the historical reality of El Salvador and the Third World has sensitized this community of scholars to the dangers of unnecessarily reducing the work of the university to what it can accomplish through the tiny minority of the world's population privileged to study there.

The third and final section of the document then concludes with a series of specific recommendations intended to "operationalize" the "goal" stated in Part One and the "functions" outlined in Part Two.²²³ This section amounts to a rather specific outline or plan for the UCA's development over the next several years. The document concludes with three tasks that would prove to be prophetic in the breach. The first recommendation is that "there should be a better and more active participation of all its personnel in the diverse functions and activities of the UCA."²²⁴ Unfortunately, the aforementioned "verticalization" of the UCA's decision-making, together with the devastating loss of 30 percent of its faculty to the government only three months after the approval of this document, would result in what Fr. Beirne argues by 1989 had become "a glaring problem: over dependence on a few key people rather than sustained development of a multi-layered cadre of lay and Jesuit colleagues to implement the model."²²⁵ Both Fr. Beirne and Román Mayorga believe this situation would cripple the UCA's efforts to recover after the assassination of its top Jesuit lead-

resources." But, he says, "Ellacuría is clear: professionals as such are not agents of change, since they seek to enter the established order, to find a well-paying job, and to support a family, etc., their objectives are very different from an agent of change." Sobrino makes a similar point, interpreting Ellacuría's point ironically: "In fact, he used to say that it would be fantastic if 10% left the UCA committed [to the option for the poor], and 50% were less right wing; he used to say that such an outcome would [strongly] affect the collective consciousness [of the country]." Thus, Cardenal concludes, "For Ellacuría, change does not come from the student side of the work, but from the institution of the university as a whole which has the task of transforming the national reality."

223. "Operativación de la finalidad y funciones de la UCA," in *Planteamiento*, 95-121.

224. *Ibid.*, 117.

225. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 235. Fr. Beirne's conclusion on this point is consistent with the analysis of Román Mayorga Quirós (see Juan Mayorga, letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., Washington, DC, January 21, 1994. Used with permission of Román Mayorga Quirós.)

ership in 1989, and potentially confuse future commentators trying to understand its role in the model.

Jon Sobrino suggests, however, "The problem in 1989 . . . was not participation, but a lack of creativity at all levels, Jesuits and lay faculty."²²⁶ Rodolfo Cardenal says, "I'm inclined to agree with Jon. After the assassinations the UCA went through an 'institutional' depression that lasted for five or six years."²²⁷ Reflecting on his own experience of these years, Cardenal observes, "It was complicated to accept the change of direction at the top; the new times and challenges, etc.; the nostalgia for the past, in particular for the people and the models broken by the historical process. This is what caused the depression." Whichever the case, what is clear is that the UCA was unprepared to deal with the loss of its top leadership.

The synthetic statement of 1979 also emphasizes the need for an "articulation of the Christian inspiration of the UCA."²²⁸ During the 1980s the university would admirably fulfill its claim that "the principal articulation of the Christian inspiration of the UCA consists in . . . making Christian values efficaciously seen in its [work]." However, there would be a concerted, and ultimately largely successful, propaganda campaign waged by enemies of the UCA to convince military and government officials that the work of the university was only marginally and perversely linked to Christianity. For example, in a confidential 1987 report for the Conference of American Armies, Ignacio Ellacuría and eight other theologians are described as "aligned with Marxist ideology." The report concludes that "because of their attitudes and means of operation they have marginalized themselves from serious theological discussion."²²⁹ The U.N. Truth Commission would later note that one of the authors of this slanderous report, Colonel Juan Orlando Zepeda, El Salvador's vice-minister of defense, helped to plan the assassination of Fr. Ellacuría and his companions. This kind of slander fostered an attitude in military circles toward Ellacuría and the UCA in which a former student of Fr. Segundo Montes (José Ricardo Espinoza) could become one of the assassins, though, as we saw, Espinoza would weep through the gunshots.²³⁰

226. Jon Sobrino, Note to Robert Lassalle-Klein, July 24, 1995, Santa Clara, CA: University of Santa Clara.

227. On this point, see Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 235-39; Mayorga Quirós, letter from Román Mayorga Quirós to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., January 21, 1994.

228. "Operativización de la finalidad y funciones de la UCA," in *Planteamiento*, 119.

229. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 307. Referencing the source document for this quote, Doggett notes, "Ignacio Ellacuría and eight other theologians are named in a document attacking liberation theology prepared for a meeting of the Conference of American Armies, which includes the armed forces of 15 nations in the Americas, including El Salvador and the United States. . . . The theologians are mentioned in a chapter entitled, 'Strategy of the International Communist Movement in Latin America through Different Means of Action.' Colonel Juan Orlando Zepeda, El Salvador's vice-minister of defense, is part of the working group responsible for the document."

230. Espinoza provides this detail in his extrajudicial declaration. See "El Caso de la masacre de la UCA: Sentencia interlocutoria para detención provisional," *ECA* nos. 393-

Finally the 1979 document sensibly concludes by recommending the importance of good public relations and communications in order to “avoid risks, problems and dangers,” which it describes as “unnecessary and repairable.” A decade later, Archbishop Rivera Damas would say in his Sunday homily of November 19, 1989, the day the Jesuits and the two women were buried,

There is no doubt that such an abominable action had been decided beforehand and the groundwork was laid by an irresponsible campaign of accusations and slanders—above all in some print media—against several of the distinguished academics of the UCA who now are dead. These accusations and slanders poisoned minds and ultimately put weapons in the hands of the assassins.²³¹

The Church in Defense of Civil Society

The brutal repression of Salvadoran civil society by agents of the state forms the backdrop for the efforts of the UCA Jesuits and their colleagues to follow the examples of Fr. Rutilio Grande and Archbishop Romero to accompany and empower the poor in their efforts to bring about reform through mass mobilization. Virtually all such advocates of reform faced brutal repression under the military presidencies of Colonel Julio Rivera (1961-1967), General Fidel Sánchez (1967-1972), Colonel Arturo Armando Molina (1972-1977), and Colonel Carlos Humberto Romero (1978-1979), administrations committed to protecting and consolidating the political monopoly by the Salvadoran army.²³² Like others before them, elections in this period continued to be marred by fraud and military control.

The scenario changed somewhat in 1972, however, when Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte and social democrat Guillermo Ungo joined together under the banner of the National Opposition Union (UNO) to win a somewhat more “open” election over the “official candidate,” Colonel Arturo Armando Molina. As we have seen, however, they were soon deprived of their victory by yet another case of blatant fraud by the military. The Legislative Assembly elections that followed on March 12, 1972, were similarly manipulated, which, in turn, led to the unsuccessful coup of March 25, 1972. The 1974 mayoral and Assembly elections were defaced by still more military manipulation. And, going from bad to worse, the UNO coalition boycotted the 1976 elections, with the result that there was no official opposition for the first time in fourteen years.

394 (November-December 1989): 1155-68. Also see the final report of the Jesuit Lawyers Committee: Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 115 and 64-71.

231. *Proceso*, §409, November 29, 1989, 4. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 34.

232. Here I follow the argument of Edelberto Torres Rivas, “Crisis and Conflict, 1930 to the Present,” in Leslie Bethell, ed., *Central America since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. 101.

Military Control of the State and the Defeat of Land Reform

In this context, the fate of Molina's 1976 plan for agrarian reform illustrates how the declining credibility of the electoral process impacted the work of the UCA and accelerated the rise of political repression at the end of the decade. Not long after the 1976 mayoral and Assembly elections, Colonel Molina and the National Assembly formulated a modest plan for agrarian "transformation" in an effort to restore some credibility to the government. (Molina explained, "We don't use the term agrarian reform because that is communist terminology."²³³) The official decree announced the government's intention to nationalize 61,000 hectares (150,731 acres) of cow pastures and cotton fields in Usulután and San Miguel. It used a 1974 law allowing expropriation of fallow and underutilized land in order to place the property under the Salvadoran Institute of Agrarian Transformation (ISTA), created in 1975. The land was to be distributed to 12,000 campesino families.

The UCA lent its credibility to the project following a June phone call from Atilio Vieytez, a former UCA faculty member working as minister of planning in Molina's government, asking the UCA's support. Rodolfo Cardenal asserts that "President Molina himself made a personal promise to the Jesuit team from the UCA to not step back" from the proposal.²³⁴ The vote went to the university superior counsel and Guillermo Ungo recalls that UCA faculty from the opposition party "didn't think that there existed the real conditions for agrarian reform, but Ellacuría thought that was because of a dogmatic and sectarian position we held as the opposition."²³⁵ The proponents argued that the UCA had been a vigorous advocate of agrarian reform since the Agrarian Reform Congress of 1970, so the Jesuits and Mayorga concluded that the "rational and Christian" position was to support Molina's plan as "an indispensable first step." A July statement expressed the university's real "hope" for the agrarian scheme.²³⁶

A special issue of *ECA* on agrarian reform to be edited by Fr. Ignacio Martín-Baró was planned for September. But before the special issue could be released, Molina gave in to the furious protests of the large land holders and supported changes in the legislation (introduced October 20, 1976), which insured its failure. Ellacuría's scathing editorial, "*A sus ordenes, mi Capital!*" ("At your orders, my Capital!") reminded Molina of his vow, "I only promise what I am sure of accomplishing."²³⁷ The editorial denounced Molina's capitulation to El Salvador's wealthy land barons with bitter irony: "The government has given in to

233. Cited in Robert Armstrong and Janet S. Ruben, *El Salvador: el rostro de la revolución* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1983, 1993; translated from *El Salvador: The Face of Revolution* [Boston: South End Press, 1982]), 83. Also cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 67.

234. Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., August 18, 2009, private collection.

235. Interview with Guillermo Ungo by Teresa Whitfield, December 15, 1990. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 68.

236. "Pronunciamiento del consejo superior de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Canas," *ECA* nos. 335-336 (September-October 1976): 419.

237. Ignacio Ellacuría, "A sus órdenes, mi Capital!" *ECA* no. 337 (November 1976): 641.

the pressure of national capitalism . . . ; the government has given in, the government has submitted, the government has obeyed. After so much hot-air of foresight, strength, and decision, the government has ended up saying: At your orders, my Capital!"

Sadly, Molina's decision also signaled a turn away from the politics of compromise toward political repression as the language for political debate. Two small bombs exploded later that month (September 1976) at the UCA. On the night of December 2-3, 1976, an explosion blew a large hole in the UCA's central administration building, and the White Warriors Union claimed responsibility. Six months later, on June 20, 1977 (three months after the assassination of Rutilio Grande), the same group threatened to assassinate any Jesuit who did not leave the country within thirty days. In response, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., worldwide superior general of the Jesuits, replied after consulting with his men, "They may end up as martyrs, but my priests are not going to leave [El Salvador], because they are committed to its people."²³⁸

Not surprisingly, as the space for economic, political, and military reform grew smaller at the end of the decade in the face of the government's increasingly brutal repression of civil society, armed opposition groups and their political supporters began to gain strength. Tens of thousands of people mobilized for rallies and public protests against the government's policies and increasingly egregious abuses of human rights. Then, on February 20, 1977, Molina's hand-picked successor, General Carlos Humberto Romero, won the presidency in yet another fraudulent election, and the government slammed the door on reform with an escalating campaign of political repression and murder. Forces on all sides of the political spectrum could see that the country was sliding rapidly toward civil war.

Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J.: The Seed That Falls into the Ground

As we have already said, developments at the UCA must be situated in the larger context of the option for the poor by the Latin American Catholic Church at Medellín in 1968 and by the Central American Jesuits in 1969-1970. The immense creativity and generosity of Catholic and other religious leaders in supporting and promoting the renewal of Salvadoran civil society during the late 1970s, and the brutal persecution they suffered for these efforts, are too rich and complex to summarize here.²³⁹ We can do no more than briefly describe

238. Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 77 n. 61.

239. For a small sample, see Phillip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984); Phillip Berryman, *Stubborn Hope: Religion, Politics and Revolution in Central America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Donna Whitson Brett and Edward T. Brett, *Murdered in El Salvador: The Stories of Eleven U.S. Missionaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); Kevin F. Burke, *The Ground beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000); Ann Butwell et al., eds., *The Globalization of Hope: Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean in the New Millennium*, I (Washington, DC: EPICA, 1998);

the examples of Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J., and Archbishop Oscar Romero, their struggles with the politics of repression, and the impact of their efforts on the emerging self-understanding of the UCA at the end of the decade.

As we saw, the Jesuits were dismissed as directors of El Salvador's diocesan seminary in a meeting of Archbishop Chávez and Bishop Oscar Romero with the Jesuit provincial, Fr. Miguel Estrada, in September 1972. This followed a series of skirmishes with conservative bishops by Fr. Grande and other Jesuits over their efforts to implement Vatican II and Medellín at the seminary, resulting in the rejection of Rutilio's nomination as seminary rector in 1970.²⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, Fr. Grande gained approval for a leave of absence from the seminary in order to study at the Latin American Pastoral Institute in Quito, Peru, during 1971-1972.²⁴¹ As noted earlier, the final decision to terminate the Jesuits' more-than-fifty-year tenure at the seminary came when the students refused to sing and serve at a solemn Mass attended by the newly inaugurated president, Colonel Arturo Molina, after his fraudulent 1972 election was exposed by a team of Jesuits at the UCA. Upon Fr. Grande's return, and in light of the fact that the Jesuits were no longer needed at the seminary, Archbishop Chávez named him pastor of the parish church in Aguilares on September 22, 1972. The parish was to be the site of a new Jesuit ministry among rural farm workers, the poorest residents of this "Third World" country. Fr. Grande had traded the comfortable confines of the diocesan seminary for a dangerous new rural ministry among El Salvador's increasingly restive farm workers.

The rural ministry of Fr. Grande and his team among El Salvador's impoverished campesinos at Aguilares (about seventy miles north of San Salvador) symbolized the promise and the price of the church's vision for El Salvador in the late 1970s. This undoubtedly crossed the minds of some among the crowd of forty Jesuits, almost two thousand campesinos, and many friends gathered at

Ann Butwell et al., eds., *We Make the Road by Walking: Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean in the New Millennium*, II (Washington, DC: EPICA, 1998); Rodolfo Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza: Vida de Rutilio Grande* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1985); Ricardo Falla, *The Story of a Great Love* (Washington, DC: EPICA, 1998); Pablo Galdámez, *Faith of a People: The Life of a Basic Christian Community in El Salvador, 1970-1980* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986); María López Vigil, *Don Lito of El Salvador* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990); María López Vigil, *Death and Life in Morazán: A Priest's Testimony from a War Zone in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: EPICA, 1989); Thomas R. Melville, *Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America* (Xlibris Corp., 2005); Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *War against the Poor: Low-Intensity Conflict and Christian Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989); Judith M. Noone, M.M., *The Same Fate as the Poor* (2nd ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Anna L. Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War* (Binghamton, NY: SUNY Press, 1997); UCA José Simeón Cañas, *Rutilio Grande: Mártir de la evangelización rural en El Salvador* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1978); Daniel Santiago, *The Harvest of Justice: The Church of El Salvador Ten Years after Romero* (New York: Paulist, 1993); Whitfield, *Paying the Price*.

240. Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza*, 130-33.

241. *Ibid.*, 133-39, esp. 136.

the parish on December 5, 1976, to see Bishop Arturo Rivera Damas²⁴² ordain two Jesuit seminarians, Carlos Cabarrús and Luis Pellecer, to the priesthood, and a classmate, Jorge Sarsanedas, to the diaconate.²⁴³ This seemed to be the first harvest of an earlier planting.

The short history of Fr. Grande's life by the Central American Jesuits²⁴⁴ reports that the city of Aguilares had "10,000 inhabitants; El Paisnal, 2,000 inhabitants, and the rest of the population of the parish—around 18,000— . . . dispersed in 170 square kilometers around the town."²⁴⁵ The economy of the area was dominated by thirty-five great *latifundial* estates, where the local population worked as seasonal day laborers for about three dollars a day²⁴⁶ (in 1975 a Salvadoran family of six needed to earn \$704 per year to provide for life's basic necessities).²⁴⁷ By June of 1974, two years later, Grande and his team had trained 326 lay catechists who gave pre-baptismal instruction (37) and instruction in the faith (38), ran a youth group with 96 participants (18), animated twelve music groups (12), and trained a team to facilitate the development of new communities (58), seventeen of whom went on to work in other communities.²⁴⁸ That same year, Ellacuría, still head of Jesuit formation, sent a group of young Jesuits studying at the CRT and the UCA to live in Aguilares with the understanding that their collaboration in the ministry would enrich their studies.

But this seemingly simple initiative was soon complicated by what Cardenal describes as "a series of problems and needs that motivated the agricultural laborers to take another step in their consciousness and political activity," based on their "need not only to come together, but to organize themselves."²⁴⁹ The

242. Juan Hernández-Pico reports that Bishop Rivera Damas did the ordination (*Historia reciente*, 20). Whitfield names Archbishop Chávez (Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 100), although she does not cite her source.

243. Within a year, Cabarrús would be thanking Archbishop Romero for personally saving his friend, Panamanian Jesuit priest Fr. Jorge Sarsanedas, who had been kidnapped on May 1, 1977, on his way back from saying Mass, and detained incommunicado by the infamous National Guard. Cabarrús would later use the experiences in Aguilares for his doctoral thesis: *Génesis de una revolución: Análisis del surgimiento y desarrollo de la organización campesina en El Salvador* (Mexico City: Ediciones de la Casa Chata, 1983). Regarding this incident, see Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 24-25; and Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 64-65 and 106-7. On June 9, 1981, Fr. Luis Pellecer, S.J., was kidnapped in Guatemala, held for several months by the armed forces, tortured, and brainwashed. On September 30, 1981, he appeared on national television in a propaganda spectacle organized by the armed forces, denouncing the role of the Jesuits in Guatemala. See Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 59-61.

244. The book was written by Fr. Rodolfo Cardenal but not published under his name. This is clear in the "Introduction" to Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza*, 13-20, esp. 13.

245. Rutilio Grande: *Mártir de la evangelización rural*, 64. The information in this paragraph is from pp. 64-66.

246. This latter detail is from Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 62.

247. Manuel Sevilla, "Visión global sobre la concentración económica en El Salvador," *Boletín de ciencias económicas y sociales* (May-June 1984): 179, 188-89. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 70.

248. Rutilio Grande: *Mártir de la evangelización rural*, 75.

249. *Ibid.*, 433.

rapidly expanding but still illegal Christian Federation of Salvadoran Farm Workers, FECCAS (temporary farm workers were legally prohibited from unionizing), was becoming increasingly active in the area, benefitting from the training and mobilization of agricultural workers by the church. Founded in 1969 to revive the failed Union of Catholic Workers,²⁵⁰ Cardenal explains that FECCAS “actively supported the Christian Democratic Party,” and had a presence in some campesino communities in 1974.²⁵¹ In this environment, at the end of the year a local activist, Apolinario Serrano (or Polín as he was affectionately known), invited three of the Jesuit students to a meeting “in El Líbano, where the first FECCAS group was formed” in the area, followed shortly by foundation of another group in Los Gramales attended by one of the students.²⁵² A few weeks later in December 1974 the seminarians living in Aguilares “offered to collaborate with FECCAS,”²⁵³ helping to organize a seminar attended by some two hundred campesinos. For this reason, Cardenal concludes that in Aguilares, “FECCAS was born at the breast of the Church, which provided economic and social support.” He adds, however, that “soon, after just a few months, FECCAS claimed its autonomy.”²⁵⁴

The implications of this autonomy would soon become apparent to both the seminarians and the older Jesuits as the organizational goals of FECCAS to acquire and use the power of the state fundamentally diverged from the work of the parish in its pastoral accompaniment of the campesino community. Whitfield reports that in 1975 three of the young Jesuits, “two Guatemalans, Alberto Enriquez and Fernando Ascoli, and the Nicaraguan Antonio Cardenal, realized they shared a conviction that the Christian commitment awakened in the people of Aguilares would need to move toward armed revolution if the injustice of their lives was to be redressed.”²⁵⁵ Rutilio and his team in Aguilares raised serious objections to this line of thought, however, and at the UCA Ellacuría insisted that the leadership role being played by the seminarians was a dangerous mistake compromising both the autonomy of FECCAS and the integrity of the church’s work in Aguilares.²⁵⁶ Confirming the fears of the older Jesuits, in 1975 the three seminarians would be present in the cathedral when the BPR (the Popular Revolutionary Block) was founded, and would soon leave the Jesuits to join the revolutionary fronts.

Juan Hernández-Pico asserts that the decision of the Jesuit seminarians to pursue a revolutionary commitment was deemed as “incompatible with the vocation of the Society of Jesus.”²⁵⁷ Thus, their choice to leave the seminary formed a dramatic contrast to the ordination in Aguilares of three of their

250. *Ibid.*, 434.

251. *Ibid.*, 434-35.

252. *Ibid.*, 436.

253. *Ibid.*

254. *Ibid.*, 457.

255. Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 64.

256. *Ibid.*, 65.

257. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 20.

former Jesuit colleagues on December 5, 1976. Hernández-Pico says that Ella-curía, who had strongly opposed the role of the departed seminarians in the popular movement, was “destroyed” by the leaving of the Nicaraguan, Antonio Cardenal.²⁵⁸ Nonetheless, he recalls that when Fr. Gondra complained at the 1978 Province Congregation that “all we are doing with our formation is losing the young,” Ellacuría rose to respond, saying, “We may have lost them for the Society, but they are not a loss for the people of El Salvador.” The Jesuits, who had been reduced to silence, burst into applause.²⁵⁹ However, they would soon find themselves tarred with the same brush as their former colleagues.

This brings us back to the events of December 5, 1976, in which the crowd gathered for the Jesuit ordinations would be linked to an unrelated confrontation just a few kilometers down the road. About 250 farm workers (some of whom were members of the newly formed chapter of FECCAS) had gone to the home of Francisco Orellana to protest their forcible dislocation from land where some had lived for over fifty years. When the leaders asked to speak with the landowner, however, he fired his gun “in panic,” accidentally killing his brother Eduardo Orellana.²⁶⁰ Hernández-Pico notes that the now departed Jesuit seminarians involved in the foundation of FECCAS “had been living for two years in the parish of Aguilares assigned to Rutilio [Grande].” He says that, in the minds of some, this created an “irrational” association of the FECCAS tragedy “to the huge crowd [gathered] at Aguilares with the result that the ordination of the first young Jesuits formed at the Center for Theological Reflection in San Salvador was punctuated by the . . . unleashing of a hate campaign against the church and the Jesuits. One of its lowlights would be the assassination of Rutilio Grande.”²⁶¹

The campaign began ominously on December 7, 1976, with articles in *El Diario de Hoy*, El Salvador’s second largest newspaper, published by Napoleon Viera Altamirano, vilifying the crowd as “hoards of assassins organized by Third-World priests.” We should note that a 1981 cable from the U.S. Embassy later identified Altamirano as a “principal figure” during this period of self-imposed exile in Miami of financing the creation of “rightist death squads” in El Salvador “trying to destroy the moderate reformist government by terrorizing its officials as well as businessmen who cooperate with its reform program.”²⁶² *La Prensa Gráfica* described the Spanish Jesuits as “Marxist leaders protected by official tolerance, bloodying our soil!”²⁶³ And President Molina, whose fraudulent 1972

258. Interview of Juan Hernández-Pico by Teresa Whitfield, June 15, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 66. The meaning of this word is clearly metaphorical, suggesting “devastated” as another possible translation.

259. Ibid.

260. *Rutilio Grande: Mártir de la evangelización rural*, 92.

261. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 20.

262. This cable was released under the freedom of information act. “Millionaires’ Murder, Inc.,” secret cable from Mark Dion, U.S. Embassy, San Salvador, to Secretary of State, January 5, 1981. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 132-33.

263. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 100.

election had been exposed by the UCA, went on television to denounce liberation theology as the “number one” enemy of El Salvador.²⁶⁴ Rodolfo Cardenal says that “Archbishop Chávez publicly defended his priests and the mission of the Church,”²⁶⁵ but the media campaign continued unabated for months.

Sadly, on March 12, 1977, the explosive anti-Jesuit rhetoric of organizations such as the “Committee for the Defense of the Fatherland” sowed its inevitable harvest when Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J., was ambushed and taken from his jeep, with an old man and a fifteen-year-old boy, by armed members of the national police and executed.²⁶⁶ One month earlier, on February 13, Rutilio had said in his homily to a large crowd gathered to protest the government’s expulsion of the pastor of the neighboring parish in Apopa (Colombian priest, Fr. Mario Bernal): “It is dangerous to be a Christian in our environment, . . . practically . . . illegal . . . because the world that surrounds us is radically rooted in an established disorder, before which the simple proclamation of the gospel . . . is subversive.”²⁶⁷

Archbishop Oscar Romero: Prophetic Defender of Civil Society and the Poor

The church’s ministry in Aguilarés would never fully recover from the assassination of Fr. Grande and the repression that followed. Yet in a real way the government’s brutal repression of this experiment in rural evangelization, which had involved such a rich collaboration with the UCA, would open up new and unimagined possibilities. Fr. Miguel Estrada recalls his thoughts as he sought to avoid the recently appointed Archbishop Romero²⁶⁸ when the latter arrived at the Aguilarés church the night of Fr. Grande’s funeral: “These are the consequences of your calumnies. You said we were Marxists and now they are killing us!”²⁶⁹

It was midnight by the time the archbishop finished concelebrating the funeral Mass with the Jesuit provincial, Fr. Jerez, and some others.²⁷⁰ But he

264. Interview with Jon Sobrino by Teresa Whitfield, March 7, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 100.

265. *Rutilio Grande: Mártir de la evangelización rural*, 92.

266. Doggett reports, “a medical examination indicated that shots were fired from both sides of the road and that 9 mm. bullets were fired from a Mauser, the type of weapon then used [only] by the police. The three surviving children were interviewed, and identified one of the gunmen as Benito Estrada. An arrest warrant was issued for Estrada, a 35-year-old resident of El Paisnal . . . [and] customs agent (policía de aduana). . . . He was never apprehended . . . and the murder remains unsolved. See Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 24.

267. *Rutilio Grande*, 108. Also Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 23.

268. On February 22, 1977, Romero had been appointed archbishop of San Salvador.

269. Interview with Fr. Miguel Estrada by Teresa Whitfield, February 6, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 104.

270. The information in this paragraph is from the recollection by Jon Sobrino of the events. See Jon Sobrino, *Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 6-8 (translated from *Monseñor Romero* [San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990]).

asked the priests and sisters (some campesinos as well) to stay and help him formulate the church's response. Someone mentioned that the informal autopsy revealed the victims had been killed by weapons used only the government. Jon Sobrino recalls, "Agitated, perturbed . . . he must have been afraid. . . . The hour had come in which he would have to face up to the powerful—the oligarchy and the government." Sobrino adds, however,

I shall never forget how totally sincere he was in asking for our help—how his words came from the heart. An archbishop was actually asking us to help him—persons whom a few weeks before he had regarded as suspect, as Marxist! I felt a great tenderness for this humble bishop who was asking, practically begging us, to help him bear the burden that . . . had [been] imposed on him, a far heavier burden than his shoulders, or anyone else's, could ever have borne alone.²⁷¹

Years later, three months before his death in 1980, the archbishop himself would recall how his relationship with his brother priests evolved after Rutilio's death.

I asked them to help me carry on with the responsibility; there was much enthusiasm from the clergy to help me and I felt that I would not be alone . . . but that I could count on all of them. That union with the clergy vanquished all our fears. They had the idea that I was conservative, that I would maintain relations with the government, with the rich, and that I would ignore the people's problems, the repression, the poverty. . . . Some of them feared I would stop everything and asked what I was thinking of doing. My response was that they should continue and that we should try to understand each other well, and to . . . [promote] the Church's work as Vatican II and Medellín had asked us to do.²⁷²

Yet something further remained, for up to this point Romero had still not publicly confronted the government on its brutal repression of Salvadoran civil society. Archbishop Romero himself clarifies what changed.

Father Grande's death and the death of other priests after his impelled me to take an energetic attitude before the government. I remember that because of Father Grande's death I made a statement that I would not attend any official acts until this situation [of who had killed Grande] was clarified. I was very strongly criticized, especially by diplomats. A rupture was produced, not by me with the government but the government itself because of its attitude.²⁷³

271. Ibid., 6-7.

272. Interview of Archbishop Oscar Romero with Tommie Sue Montgomery, December 14, 1979. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 95.

273. Ibid.

Fr. Hernández-Pico's poetic description is evocative of the dramatic transformation seemingly brought about by Fr. Grande's death: "Monseñor Romero kept vigil at the body of Fr. Grande on that night of blood [so] generously shed, and awakened to his prophetic vocation."²⁷⁴ The people would call it "Rutilio's miracle." But perhaps it is more accurate to say that Archbishop Romero made a decision to finally confront the government on its brutal suppression of Salvadoran civil society, which was provoked by the suffering the Salvadoran church, including its priests, for its preferential option for the poor. The archbishop himself concludes the preceding statement by declaring that, in the end, "I support all of the priests in the [poor] communities," through whose work "we have managed to combine well the pastoral mission of the church, preference for the poor, to be clearly on the side of the repressed, and from there to clamor for the liberation of the people."²⁷⁵

There are some disagreements among Archbishop Romero's friends and followers on the nature of the change that took place. Bishop Gregory Rosa Chávez, a close associate of Archbishop Romero who worked with the archbishop in communications²⁷⁶ and interviewed him weekly on the diocesan radio station, YSAX,²⁷⁷ argues that Archbishop Romero didn't have a conversion, but rather experienced a gradual evolution toward a decision to take a public position on the abuse of human rights. In support of this theory Bishop Rosa Chávez cites a documentary done by a Swiss journalist who spent a week with the archbishop during the final phase of his life. Rosa Chávez says the journalist asked, "Have you been converted, Monseñor Romero?" and he says that Romero responded, "I wouldn't say *converted*. Rather, it's been a gradual evolution that led to a decision to respond to the situation in the country as a pastor."²⁷⁸

If this is correct, then what role did the assassination of Rutilio Grande play in this process? Bishop Rosa Chávez says, "There are two theories about the conversion of Monseñor Romero, the Jesuits' and ours. The Jesuits say that he was converted thanks to Rutilio. But we say that he was already in a process of conversion."²⁷⁹ Laying out the dilemma, Rosa Chávez explains, "Before being named archbishop he was bishop in a poor rural area where he met many campesinos, while always questioning, 'What is God asking of me?' On the other hand, he was very close friends with Rutilio Grande, and Fr. Grande's death affected him deeply. They were very similar as pastors."

Monsignor Ricardo Urioste, vicar general of the diocese of San Salvador under Romero, similarly asserts, "I don't think the killing of Rutilio Grande

274. Hernández-Pico, *Historia reciente*, 24.

275. Interview of Archbishop Oscar Romero with Tommie Sue Montgomery, December 14, 1989. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 95.

276. Interview of Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, November 12, 2009.

277. Brockman, *Romero*, 116.

278. Interview of Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, November 12, 2009.

279. *Ibid.*

provoked the conversion of Monseñor Romero.”²⁸⁰ As evidence of Romero’s prior concern for the poor, Urioste cites an incident in 1976 when Romero, as bishop of the diocese of Santiago de María, “opened his bishop’s house to the poor.” James Brockman’s biography of Oscar Romero recounts the details of this incident, noting that the bishop criticized the “selfishness” of the coffee growers for denying a “just wage” to the harvesters, forcing them to spend cold nights sleeping in the public square of Santiago de María during the harvest. In response, Romero opened the cathedral rectory, the diocesan offices, and a hall for clergy meetings in the bishop’s residence so that “hundreds of workers thus had at least a roof over their heads at night and shelter from the cold.”²⁸¹ Brockman asserts, however, that while Romero “did what he could to alleviate the hardships of the harvesters,” on the other hand, he offered “no solution for the injustice beyond wishing that the landowners were not so selfish and fraudulent.” Brockman asserts that public interventions of this sort would have to wait until “after he became archbishop” and the death of Rutilio Grande, when, like the campesinos of Aguilares, “he would come to recognize that the oppressed must organize in order to pressure for their rights, and he would vigorously defend the rights of their organizations.”²⁸²

Granting the validity of these differing perspectives, I would argue that Sobrino, Bishop Rosa Chávez, and Monsignor Urioste are all partially correct in that their claims address different pieces of the puzzle of the transformation or “conversion” of Archbishop Romero. Clearly, Romero’s embrace of Medellín’s call to a preferential option for the poor may be properly described in his own words cited by Bishop Rosa Chávez as “a gradual evolution that led to a decision to respond to the situation in the country as a pastor.”²⁸³ On the other hand, the archbishop himself distinguishes the “gradual evolution” of his option for the poor from his later “decision to respond to the situation in the country as a pastor.” Here the archbishop differentiates his own early evolution toward a preferential option for the poor from his later decision to publically denounce the situation in the country. Using the language of conversion developed by Donald Gelpi, S.J.,²⁸⁴ I would argue that we can distinguish Romero’s *personal conversion*, characterized by his gradual decision to assume personal responsibility for the suffering of the poor, from the archbishop’s *socio-political conversion* following the assassination of Rutilio Grande and other priests. For it was only after the death of Rutilio Grande that Romero began to take full responsibility as archbishop for the systematic and ongoing violations of human rights by the

280. Speech and interview of Monsignor Ricardo Urioste by Robert Lassalle-Klein, Santa Clara University, April 28, 2010.

281. Brockman, *Romero*, 56.

282. *Ibid.*, 55.

283. Interview of Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, November 12, 2009.

284. Donald Gelpi, S.J., *The Gracing of Human Experience: Rethinking the Relationship between Nature and Grace* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 2001), 292-93 and 297-301.

government and others through public denouncements of this ongoing pattern that defined the “situation in the country” through the end of his life.

The story of the founding of the Mothers of the Disappeared told by Alicia García and her companions gives eloquent testimony to this change in Archbishop Romero produced by what I am calling his *political conversion*. Alicia’s daughter, Patricia, recalls, “Our committee was born through the desperate efforts of mothers searching for their children after the National Guard ambushed the student march from the National University to the Plaza Libertad in San Salvador on July 30, 1975.”²⁸⁵ Rodolfo Cardenal writes that more than two thousand students had taken to the streets that morning to protest government and private contributions of thirty million dollars to host the upcoming “Miss Universe” contest, as well as the National Guard’s brutal repression of an earlier protest by university students in Santa Ana.²⁸⁶ Cardenal says the soldiers surrounded the crowd, cut off all escape routes, and opened fire on the unarmed students “leaving at least 37 dead and several dozen ‘missing.’”

Alicia García, who observed the massacre from the Maternity Hospital where she worked, was forced to enter the chaotic scene of dead and dying victims in order to pick up blood for a transfusion from the blood bank down the street. She was horrified to witness a government steam roller crush the bodies, and her daughter describes what happened three days later.

On August 3rd my mother joined the other women looking for missing relatives when she realized her brother must have been arrested or “disappeared” along with the other students. She went to various prisons until she found him with four young people in custody at San Francisco Gotera, along with 159 others imprisoned there. They discovered that his anus had been seriously injured through torture. When the women left to buy medicine at the pharmacy, however, they were not allowed to reenter the prison. Fortunately they saw a priest and begged him to bring the medicine to the boys. An hour later the priest emerged and said he had attended to all four, including the most seriously injured. That evening they went back to Santiago de María with the priest because it was too far to travel to San Salvador, and he insisted that they stay the night. In the morning they discovered he was Bishop Romero.²⁸⁷

Bishop Romero’s response to the plight of the women and their children fits the pattern of the earlier story, demonstrating real compassion and concern for their suffering. Stories like this provide evidence for the claim of Bishop Rosa

285. Testimony of Patricia García and interview by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, January 5, 2011.

286. Rodolfo Cardenal, *Manual de historia de Centroamérica* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1996), 397.

287. Testimony of Patricia García and interview by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, January 5, 2011.

Chávez and Monsignor Urioste that Romero's heart was open to the suffering of his people before he became archbishop, and that he had made a personal option for the poor. But it is equally true that, like the earlier example of the harvesters, there is no record that Bishop Romero publicly denounced the government's role in either the student massacre of July 30, 1975, or the illegal imprisonment and torture of innocent civilians that followed. Things would change after the death of Rutilio Grande.

Patricia García recalls, "Two years later after he was named archbishop we were excited, so we went to see him." She recalls, however, that the women encountered a different man when they saw him again eight months after the death of Rutilio Grande. She says, "He invited us to the seminary on Dec. 24, 1977, and suggested that we form the committee. Our name was *The Committee of Mothers of Persons Who Were Captured, Disappeared or in Prison*. My mother Alicia asked if we could use his name. But he said, 'Not unless something happens to me.' He loved to call us *the mothers*."²⁸⁸

This testimony points to the change that had occurred in Archbishop Romero who, by December 1977, was now ready to stand publicly with those being tortured and abused, and to publicly denounce those who carried out these acts. This impression is confirmed by a story about Archbishop Romero told to Pope John Paul II by *the Mothers* a couple of years after Romero's death. Patricia García recalls,

The Mothers were invited to Europe in 1982 to talk about our work. When we were in Rome we asked to see the Pope. He was busy, so Mother Alicia went on the radio and said she was sad the Pope couldn't find time to meet with the Mothers of the Disappeared. The next day a message came that the Pope would meet with us for forty-five minutes. We spent two hours with him. He wanted to know what role Monseñor Romero had played with us. My mother said, "Saint Romero was the one who gave us the idea to form this committee. He was with the common people of El Salvador, and he accompanied us in recovering our lost and tortured husbands, wives, sons, and daughters." She also told the Pope that when Monseñor Romero returned to El Salvador after his visit to Rome as archbishop he was very sad. When the Pope asked why he was so sad, Mother Alicia told him, "It was because you didn't understand him. None of the poor were spreading terror. We were just trying to protect ourselves and asking for human rights."²⁸⁹

288. Ibid.

289. Ibid. The account appears to refer to the May, 7, 1979, meeting between Archbishop Romero and Pope John Paul II. Romero's personal diary entry for that day states, "I left, pleased by the meeting, but worried to see how much the negative reports of my pastoral work had influenced him." See Oscar Romero, *A Shepherd's Diary*, trans. Irene B. Hodgson (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993), 215.

Patricia concludes, “The Pope asked her all about the country, and it was after that meeting that he came to visit El Salvador.”

While many things could be said about this recollection, both the Mothers and the Pope seem to recognize that Archbishop Romero had made “a decision to respond to the situation in the country as a pastor.”²⁹⁰ This decision to take public responsibility for the situation of the country is what I am calling a political conversion. Aside from the archbishop’s own words, his actions after this point demonstrate a new willingness to publically criticize the government. Perhaps more than anything else this is what begins to distinguish the ministry of Archbishop Romero after the assassination of Rutilio Grande from that of the compassionate bishop of San Francisco Gotera who remained silent about horrific outcome of the July 30, 1975, student massacre.

The Root of Romero’s Prophecy: Civil Society and the Body of Christ

In the space that remains I will briefly evoke the broad significance for the country’s suffering people and the UCA Jesuits of the three-year ministry of Archbishop Romero as the church’s response to the brutal repression of Salvadoran civil society. The future of that ministry was captured in the response of the archbishop to the violent military repression that followed the assassination of Rutilio Grande.²⁹¹ On May 11, 1977 (two months after the killings), Fr. Alfonso Navarro became the first diocesan priest to die when he was murdered at the rectory of his parish, La Resurrección, in Miramonte, a middle-class neighborhood in San Salvador.²⁹² On May 13 local newspapers published a statement from the notorious right-wing death squad, the *White Warriors Union*, claiming responsibility for the murders.²⁹³ Then on May 19, the army launched a full-scale military siege of Aguilares, appropriately entitled “Operation Rutilio.” Soldiers depopulated the town and broke into the church, shooting an old sacristan frantically ringing the bells, and spraying the altar with bullets. The parish’s three remaining Jesuits were whisked into a waiting car and deported from the country. A state of emergency was declared, and about fifty people, including a number of campesino leaders, were assassinated.²⁹⁴

290. Interview of Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez by Robert Lassalle-Klein, San Salvador, November 12, 2009.

291. Much of the information in this paragraph is from Sobrino, *Archbishop Romero*, 25-31.

292. Jon Sobrino and Rodolfo Cardenal believe it was “La Parroquia de la Resurrección.” Jon Sobrino, correspondence with author, July 24, 1995, and Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., correspondence with author, August 18, 2009. The detail on the neighborhood is from Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, 126.

293. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States, “Report on the Situation of Human Rights in El Salvador,” Chapter II, Case 2336, 9.3., OEA/Ser.L/V/II.46 doc 23 rev. 1 (November 17, 1978), http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/el_salvador78eng/chap.2.htm.

294. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 303.

A month later, on June 19, 1977, the archbishop drove from San Salvador to Aguilares, despite an official ban on entering the area, in order to celebrate Mass with the terrorized community and to install a new pastor (Fr. Jon Cortina, S.J.) with his team. A number of local clergy and church workers, who had been living in a state of siege, accompanied him. In his homily Romero publicly thanked the Jesuits for the work of Fr. Grande and his team, and he thanked the sisters who courageously took the parish after the priests had gone. The campesinos, who had been terrorized with impunity for weeks by paramilitary and army forces, flocked to hear the words of consolation preached by the archbishop. He told them, "We suffer with those who have suffered so much. . . . We suffer with the lost—those who have had to run away and do not know what is happening to their families . . . [and] we are with those who are being tortured."²⁹⁵

Jon Sobrino, who was there, offers a remarkable description of what happened next.²⁹⁶ Mass ended with a procession of the Blessed Sacrament out of the church, Archbishop Romero in the rear and the crowd in front. The crowd flowed out into the square in front of the church in order "to make reparation for the soldiers' desecration of [both] the sacramental Body of Christ, and the living Body of Christ, the murdered campesino." Armed troops were stationed across the square by the town hall looking "sullen, arrogant, and unfriendly." As the procession approached the soldiers the crowd stopped, uneasy, and afraid. Sobrino writes,

We had no idea what might happen. . . . [So] we all instinctively turned around and looked at Monseñor Romero, who was bringing up the rear, holding the monstrance. "*Adelante*" (Forward!), said Monseñor Romero. And we went right ahead. The procession ended without incident. From that moment forward Monseñor Romero was the symbolic leader of El Salvador. He made no such claim. He had sought no such thing. But this is the way it was. From then on Monseñor Romero led us, marching at our head. He had been transformed into the central reference point for the church and for the country. Nothing of any importance occurred in our country over the next three years without our all turning to Monseñor Romero for guidance and direction, for leadership.²⁹⁷

Sobrino concludes, "This miracle does not happen every day. But it happened here. The campesinos of Aguilares came into Monseñor Romero's heart and stayed there forever."

By 1978 the archbishop's 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning homily had become the most popular radio program in the country. Thousands of campesinos who could neither read nor write, along with their more educated urban counter-

²⁹⁵. Ibid., 27.

²⁹⁶. Ibid., 27-28.

²⁹⁷. Ibid., 28.

parts, would tune in to the archbishop's sermon. It was always followed by church announcements, the events of the week in El Salvador, and a reading of the names of persons who had been killed, assaulted, tortured, or kidnapped (no matter who the perpetrator).²⁹⁸ In addition, Romero broadcasted weekly interviews and commentaries on important events via the archdiocesan radio station, YSAX, also allowing the UCA a daily slot.

Ellacuría, de Sebastian, Sobrino, and other Central American Jesuits and UCA faculty became important resources for the archbishop in developing his homilies, commentaries, and interview materials. The Jesuits played an especially important role in helping the archbishop develop his annual Pastoral Letters. Jon Sobrino wrote the basic text of second letter, "The Church, the Body of Christ in History."²⁹⁹ For the third and fourth letters the archbishop provided guidelines to diverse teams who developed several drafts and had numerous meetings both at the archdiocese and the UCA. But according to numerous close observers it would be grossly inaccurate to accept the distorted portrayal offered by the reactionary Bishop Romeo Tovar Astorga that "the Third World clergy manipulated Monseñor Romero and of course that meant the Jesuits."³⁰⁰ Rather, the vast majority of observers agree with the opinion of Hector Dada, a lay economics professor at the UCA and an advisor for the archbishop: "He gathered up the opinions of half the world and so, yes, often he did say things that one of the Jesuits might have written for him. But at other times he'd say the opposite of what I or any Jesuit had advised him."³⁰¹

The UCA Coup: Voice of Reform

In some ways Archbishop Romero's increasingly urgent pleas on behalf of his persecuted people represented the rapidly deteriorating situation of Salvadoran civil society in the face of brutal government repression. In 1977, despite the conviction of U.S. Ambassador Frank Devine that "President [Carlos Humberto] Romero recognized that human rights had become a serious issue,"³⁰² the fraudulently elected regime governed with rigid conservatism over a toxic brew of spiraling mass demonstrations, strikes, military repression, murder of government critics by right-wing death squads, and left-wing kidnappings. The stolen elections were immediately followed on February 28, 1977, by the massacre in

298. Interview with Luis de Sebastian by Tommie Sue Montgomery, Fall 1979. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 96.

299. See Archbishop Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985) (translated from *La voz de los sin voz: La palabra viva de Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero* [San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1980]).

300. Interview of Bishop Tovar Astorga by Teresa Whitfield, Zacoteluca, April 12, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 112.

301. Interview of Hector Dada by Teresa Whitfield, January 9, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 115.

302. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 73.

the Plaza Libertad; the assassination of Rutilio Grande on March 12; the April kidnapping by the FPL (the Popular Forces of Liberation) of Mauricio Borge, minister of external relations; the assassination of Fr. Alfonso Navarro at the rectory of his parish on May 11; the army siege of Aguilares on May 19; the June 20, 1977, threat by the White Warriors Union to assassinate any Jesuit who did not leave the country within thirty days; and the December 24, 1977, founding of the Mothers of the Disappeared at the invitation of Archbishop Romero in response to the sickening wave of government and right-wing kidnappings, torture, and murder.³⁰³

Following a long-standing pattern of reformist coups and reactionary countercoups,³⁰⁴ this bloody spectacle, combined with the government's inability to deal with the worsening economic situation of the country, fomented increasing dissatisfaction among a group of young officers frustrated with General Romero's apparent inability to gain even the smallest political concessions from the military and the oligarchy. In March and April 1979 Lieutenant Colonel René Guerra y Guerra and his brother Rodrigo, a businessman, tried unsuccessfully to find military support to force the new president's resignation. On May 2 the National Police opened fire on several hundred demonstrators, killing twenty-two unarmed citizens supporting the BPR, which had occupied the cathedral to protest the imprisonment of five of their leaders. Then on July 17, 1979, the military was startled to see Anastasio Somoza's hated National Guard landing on Salvadoran beaches in full flight from a revolution with broad popular support from Nicaraguan civil society, which it had brutally repressed. Recognizing that the building crisis could lead to a similar outcome in El Salvador, a group of "young officers" led by Colonel Alfredo Arnaldo Majano and Lieutenant Colonel René Guerra y Guerra began to meet during the summer of 1979 discussing plans for a reformist coup.³⁰⁵

On October 12, 1979, the officers approached Román Mayorga, president of the UCA, with a request that he join the planned junta. Ellacuría's advice was stark: "It's possible you'll be burned by this, or worse, but in the circumstances I don't think you have a choice. It is the only way, if there is one, to avoid bloodshed while at the same time searching for a positive change for the country."³⁰⁶ Mayorga responded to the officer's request with a conditional "yes" based on three demands: (1) he must be allowed to select the new government's proclamation from the three possibilities he had been shown; (2) there must be a purge of military officers who had been engaged in corruption and serious human rights abuses; and (3) the most important political opposition (the

303. Armstrong and Ruben, *El Salvador*, 93; Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 44-48; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 37-40.

304. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 37-39.

305. Rodolfo Cardenal, *Manual de historia de Centroamérica* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1996), 406-7; Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 74; Armstrong and Rubin, *El Salvador*, 112.

306. Román Mayorga, "Recuerdo de diez Quijotes," 11; Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 125.

Popular Forum) must be represented on the junta.³⁰⁷ In the end the junta consisted of five members: Mayorga, president of the UCA; Colonel Adolfo Arnoldo Majano, representing the younger officers; Colonel Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez, who replaced Guerra y Guerra and represented the most conservative military wing; Dr. Guillermo Ungo, director of research at the UCA and the candidate selected to represent the Popular Forum; and Mario Andino, representing the private sector.

On October 15, 1979, the coup dispatched General Romero into exile in Guatemala and published its platform, "Proclamation of the Armed Forces of El Salvador."³⁰⁸ Full of idealism, the document stated that the junta had assumed power in order "to create the conditions so that all Salvadoran can have peace and live with human dignity."³⁰⁹ It promised "to carry out authentically free elections"; "to lay the foundations" for "economic, social and political" change; and "to guarantee the rule of human rights." It proposed to initiate the reconstruction of Salvadoran civil society by "permitting the constitution of political parties of all ideologies," granting "the right to organize in all sectors of the work force," conducting timely elections, and offering "amnesty to all exiles and political prisoners." It also promised "the dissolution of ORDEN,"³¹⁰ the despised security organization, and the reorganization of its much-feared parent, the military-intelligence organization ANSESAL.³¹¹ And finally, the proclamation announced plans to promote an "equitable distribution of the national wealth" through programs promoting agrarian reform, price controls, increased domestic production, and guarantees for "the right to housing, food, education, and health of every inhabitant."³¹²

In many ways the platform represented the last best hope for real economic, political, and military reform, which the UCA had been promoting throughout the 1970s. Indeed, so many officials of the new government came from the university that it was commonly referred to as the "UCA Coup." The *Diario de Occidente* displayed the headline, "People say the Jesuits have taken power in our country."³¹³ And the Jesuit provincial, Fr. Jerez, wrote to Fr. Arrupe in Rome predicting, "If this new attempt fails we will not escape the hatred and the criticism of the extreme Right and the extreme Left, . . . being like a sandwich. We will try to maintain our independence. But being realistic we cannot

307. Interview of Román Mayorga Quirós by Teresa Whitfield, May 1, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 125.

308. "Proclama de la Fuerza Armada de El Salvador," October 15, 1979," in *ECA* 34, nos. 372-373 (October-November 1979): 1167; also in Rafael Menjívar Ochoa, *Tiempos de Locura: El Salvador 1979-1981*, Appendix 2 (San Salvador: Flasco, 2006), 266-68.

309. "Proclama," in Ochoa, *Tiempos de Locura*, 267.

310. *Ibid.*

311. Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 54; and James Dunkerley, *The Long War: Dictatorship and Revolution in El Salvador* (London: Junction Books, 1982), 143.

312. Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 54. Also Cardenal, *Manual de historia de Centroamérica*, 408.

313. *Diario de Occidente*, October 27, 1979. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 127.

escape the image of being participants.”³¹⁴ More than anything, the coup was an attempt to avoid civil war by responding to the demands of Salvadoran civil society for political, economic, and military reform.

The new government made serious efforts to carry out the promised reforms. The junta won the fatal enmity of Major Roberto D'Aubuisson and other military personnel identified with political murder and repression by keeping its promise to move against the abuses of the security agencies, ORDEN and ANSESAL. On October 16, 1979, a general amnesty was declared for all political prisoners and Salvadorans living in exile. In November the junta dissolved ORDEN and created a special commission that identified political detainees and recommended the prosecution of officials involved in torture and illegal detention. And on December 7, decree §43 was issued retroactive to October 15, banning the transfer of properties of more than 247 acres (100 hectares) in preparation for the agrarian reform program (designed with U.S. planners) that followed.³¹⁵ “The Basic Law for Agrarian Reform,” designed with U.S. planners,³¹⁶ was promulgated by the second junta on March 5, 1980.³¹⁷

William LeoGrande explains that Phase One of the proposed program of land reform “expropriated large estates in excess of 1,250 acres and transferred ownership to the resident workers . . . constituting about 14.7% of the nation’s arable land, and about 30,000 families” as beneficiaries.³¹⁸ He continues, “Phase Two called for expropriating estates between 250 and 1,250 acres . . . comprising about 12% of the arable land, and approximately 50,000 families as beneficiaries.” And he concludes, “The affected farms produced 35% of El Salvador’s coffee, 40% of its cotton, and 20% of its sugar.”³¹⁹ Another report done for the Pentagon provides a certain amount of perspective, stating, “Phase II . . . was the most important part of the program affecting the largest number of properties, the most productive acreage, and the agricultural base of the coffee oligarchy.” In fact, “Phase III, sometimes called the land-to-the-tiller program, involved no further land redistribution, but allowed renters and sharecroppers to purchase title for the land that they had been working [and] . . . scheduled

314. Letter from Fr. César Jerez, S.J., to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. (San Salvador: Archives of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus, October 23, 1979). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 145.

315. Segundo Montes, *El Agro Salvadoreño (1973-1980)* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1986), 240.

316. Benjamin C. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building* (Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, 1991), 45.

317. “Ley Básica de la Reforma Agraria,” *ECA* (December 1979): 1114-5. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 45.

318. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 166-67.

319. Ibid., 167. LeoGrande cites the testimony by Roy Prosterman in the U.S. House of Representatives, *Presidential Certification on El Salvador*, Vol. II, 146; John D. Strasma, *Agrarian Reform in El Salvador* (Checchi and Co, USAID, 1983), 168-75; and Nina M. Serafino, *The Post-Election Situation of Agrarian Reform in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1982).

almost half the country's farmland for redistribution to one-half to two-thirds of poor rural households.³²⁰

Unfortunately, the reformist plans captured in the proclamation and the early decrees issued by the *Young Officers' Coup* or *UCA Coup* were never implemented as the military proponents of political repression asserted control over the reins of government. The new regime had tremendous ideas grounded in the values of Catholic Social Teaching, and talented administrators trained in the best social science of the day, but as Mayorga would later admit, "We were forgetting the little detail of military power, and the impossibility that human qualities alone can triumph."³²¹

320. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 45.

321. Mayorga Quirós interview by Whitfield, May 1, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 127.

3

Transforming the Historical Reality of El Salvador (1979-1989)

FROM THE AGENCY OF THE ELITE TO THE HEART OF THE PEOPLE

The armed conflict that wracked El Salvador from 1980 to the signing of the Peace Accords in January 1992 began and ended in a struggle over civil society: over what expression civil society would be allowed to take, over its influence in public debate, over who would control it, and how. The Right fought to protect its own economic power . . . first of all on the ground of civil society, attempting by all means available to subordinate, or subdue, the forces unleashed . . . by church groups, unions, and the Left in the 1960s.¹

Battle for the Soul of Civil Society: State-Sponsored Violence versus the Voice of Prophecy

The trailhead of the path trod by those who murdered Ignacio Ellacuría and his companions was blazed many years before. The U.N. Truth Commission asserts that the assassinations of Archbishop Romero and the University of Central America (UCA) Jesuits, which bracketed the 1980s, were the outcome of long-standing patterns of violence by agents of the state and their collaborators against their critics and opponents in civil society. Reflecting this truth, both right-wing apologists for military repression and National Liberation Party (FMLN) rebels traced their roots to the 1932 slaughter of Salvadoran indigenous and peasant farm workers led by General Hernández Martínez, known simply as “la Matanza” (the Massacre). The massacre was considered by many on the right to have been an unfortunate but necessary means of social control, an attitude emblemized by the infamous 1980s death squad, the General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Anti-Communist Brigade.² On the

1. Michael W. Foley, “Laying the Groundwork: The Struggle for Civil Society in El Salvador,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 67-104.

2. Cynthia J. Arnson, “Window on the Past: A De-classified History of the Death Squads

other hand, the rebel FMLN took its name from the executed leader of the unsuccessful revolt.

In its analysis of the March 24, 1980, assassination of Archbishop Romero, the U.N. Truth Commission states,

Violence has formed part of the exercise of official authority [in El Salvador] . . . throughout the country's history, in a pattern of conduct within the Government and power elites of using violence as a means to control civilian society. The roots of this situation run deep. In the past 150 years, a number of uprisings by peasants and indigenous groups have been violently suppressed by the State and by civilian groups armed by landowners.

A kind of complicity developed between businessmen and landowners, who entered into a close relationship with the army and intelligence and security forces. The aim was to ferret out alleged subversives among the civilian population in order to defend the country against the threat of an alleged foreign conspiracy. When controlling internal subversion became a priority for defending the State, repression increased.³

The report goes on to outline three "stages" in evolution of state-sponsored violence against Salvadoran civil society in the twentieth century

The first period began with the formation of the National Guard, which was "created and organized in 1910," and "cooperated actively with large landowners . . . to crack down brutally on the peasant leaders and other rural groups that threatened their interests."⁴ The report states that "local National Guard commanders . . . hired out guardsmen to protect landowner's materials interests," which spawned a "practice of using the services of 'paramilitary personnel,' chosen and armed by the army or the large landowners . . . [as] a kind of 'intelligence network' against 'subversives' or [as] a 'local instrument of terror.'"⁵ The defining moment of this stage came in the aforementioned 1932 bloodbath carried out by "National Guard members, the army and paramilitary groups, with the collaboration of local landowners . . . [against] peasants in the western part of the country in order to put down a rural insurrection."⁵

The insurrection planned for January 22, 1932, was sparked by a right-wing military coup seven weeks earlier, on December 2, 1931, in which General Martínez overthrew the mildly reformist government of President Arturo

in El Salvador," in Bruce B. Campbell, Arthur David Brenner, eds., *Death Squads in Global Perspective: Murder with Deniability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 86.

3. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador*, March 15, 1993, 132-33.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid. I will say more on this later. See Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 136.

Araujo after the latter proposed modest reforms to assist peasant farmers suffering from the collapse of the coffee market in the Great Depression of 1929.⁶ Municipal and legislative elections followed on January 5 and 10, 1932, in which campesino winners were denied official recognition.⁷ In frustration, farm workers in the west of the country began organizing for a January 22 revolt, and the communist party, led by Agustín Farabundo Martí, agreed to mobilize urban forces in support.

Unfortunately for its supporters, the rebellion was subverted by lack of coordination between the rural campesinos and their urban counterparts when Farabundo Martí was captured four days before the planned uprising.⁸ General Martínez quickly and brutally repressed the insurrection, and unleashed an extended reign of terror against indigenous campesinos that scholars say eventually took somewhere between ten thousand and thirty thousand lives.⁹ Anderson asserts that less than 10 percent of those killed actually participated in the revolt, with the rest being massacred by General Martínez in a general assault against indigenous campesinos and their demands for labor and political reform.¹⁰ Farm worker unions were outlawed, political organizations were prohibited, and a situation of extreme inequality was frozen in place through military control.

Following the 1932 “Matanza,” military governments would rule El Salvador for the next fifty years, until 1982, when the United States demanded elections and a civilian government. The United Nations observes that “from virtually the beginning of the century, a Salvadorian State security force, through a

6. Edward T. Brett, “La Matanza 1932 Peasant Revolt,” in Immanuel Ness, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2009), Blackwell Reference online: http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/book?id=g9781405184649_yr2010_9781405184649; accessed February 4, 2011. U.S. attaché for Central American military affairs, Major A. R. Harris, described the economic situation following his visit shortly after the 1932 Martínez coup: “Roughly 90 percent of the wealth of the country is held by about one half of 1 percent of the population. Thirty or forty families own nearly everything in the country. They live in almost regal splendor . . . , send their children to Europe or the United States to be educated, and spend money lavishly . . . [while] the rest of the population has practically nothing.” On the political side, leftist Salvadoran intellectual Jorge Arias Gómez writes, “December 2, 1931, marks an era in the political life of the nation [in] which . . . the oligarchy ceased to govern directly . . . [and] withdrew from the political game in order to leave it to military tyranny.” See Arias Gómez, “Agustín Farabundo Martí,” *La Universidad* 96, no. 4 (July-August 1971): 181-240. Cited in Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 37.

7. Rodolfo Cardenal, *Manual de historia de Centroamérica* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1996), 383.

8. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 36-37.

9. Anderson uses the figure of 10,000, while UCA historian Rodolfo Cardenal, S.J., says, “The most reliable calculations indicate that some 30 thousand campesinos were shot.” Anderson, *Matanza*, 136; and Cardenal, *Manual de historia de Centroamérica*, 384.

10. Anderson, *Matanza*, 129, 136.

misperception of its true function, was directed against the bulk of the civilian population.”¹¹

The military dictatorships that followed the 1932 massacre kept the government in the hands of a small group of military and civilian elites with a very narrow base of support that “kept itself in power . . . by using ‘selective violence.’” Tommie Sue Montgomery explains that the inherent instability of this arrangement produced the following cycle of coups and countercoups from December 1931 through January 1980: (1) a military coup by reactionary officers followed by consolidation of power through violent repression of dissent from civil society; (2) reaction against the repression by the general public and a progressive military faction culminating in a progressive military counter coup, and the promulgation of reforms; and (3) the reemergence of the most repressive military faction culminating in yet another coup and the use of violence to reconsolidate its power over the military and the state.¹²

The second major period in the evolution of Salvadoran state-sponsored violence against its critics runs from 1967 to 1979.¹³ During this period “General José Alberto Medrano, who headed the National Guard, organized the paramilitary group known as ORDEN . . . to identify and eliminate alleged communists among the rural population[, and founded] the national intelligence agency, ANSESAL.” The United Nations says, “These institutions helped consolidate an era of military hegemony in El Salvador, sowing terror selectively among alleged subversives identified by the intelligence services. In this way, the army’s domination over civilian society was consolidated through repression in order to keep society under control.”

The third major period in the evolution of state-sponsored violence against Salvadoran civil society began with the October 15, 1979, reformist coup, which the United Nations says “altered the political landscape in El Salvador,” and “ushered in a new period of intense violence.”¹⁴ The star of this drama would be ex-major Roberto D’Aubuisson.

D’Aubuisson’s Vision of “National Salvation”

The new government installed by the October 15, 1979, coup won the enmity of right-wing landowners and their traditional agents of repression and social control with its plans for moderate land reform and decrees suppressing the dreaded security agency ORDEN and ANSESAL. As we saw earlier, Phase One of the junta’s program for land reform, largely developed by U.S. planners, proposed to expropriate 14.7 percent of El Salvador’s arable land concentrated in undeveloped estates of over 1,250 acres, transferring it to about

11. Ibid.

12. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 37-38.

13. Ibid., 133.

14. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 134 and 133.

30,000 campesino families working the land.¹⁵ Phase Two planned to move 12 percent of the arable land from estates between 250 and 1,250 acres to about 50,000 farmworker families. This posed a more serious threat to the interests of large landowners since “35% of El Salvador’s coffee, 40% of its cotton, and 20% of its sugar”¹⁶ were grown there. Phase Three, the “land-to-tiller” program, “scheduled almost half the country’s farmland for redistribution to one-half to two-thirds of poor rural households,”¹⁷ providing assistance to renters and sharecroppers hoping to purchase properties under eighteen acres.

The anger of the land barons and military forces opposed to the elimination of ORDEN and ANSESAL crystalized in a toxic brew of furious and ultimately successful opposition to the junta, unleashing a wave of terror against anyone advocating reform. On the one hand, “Members of the army, the Treasury Police, the National Guard and the National Police formed ‘[death] squads’ to do away with their enemies.” On the other, “Private and semi-official groups . . . set up their own squads or linked up with existing structures within the armed forces,”¹⁸ producing a virulent variety of terrorist organizations “supported or tolerated by State institutions [which] . . . operated in coordination with the armed forces[,] and acted as a support structure for their activities.”¹⁹ In the face of the junta’s inability to control the military, the United Nations states that “various circles in the armed forces and the private sector vied for control of the repressive apparatus.” As a result, “Hundreds and even thousands of people perceived as supporters or active members of a growing guerrilla movement . . . were murdered.”

The principal authors of this mayhem, according to U.N. Truth Commission, belonged to “a core of military officers who sought to pre-empt the groups that had staged the coup and also any reform movement.”²⁰ The report highlights the leadership of ex-Major Roberto D’Aubuisson in this group, whose previous access to government intelligence and willingness to use “illegal force” against political opponents “catapulted” him in the view of right-wing leaders “to undisputed national political leadership of the only faction capable ‘of preventing a left-wing takeover.’”²¹

15. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 166-67.

16. *Ibid.*, 167.

17. Benjamin C. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building* (Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, 1991), 45. Also see Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador’s Civil War: A Study of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 52.

18. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 133.

19. *Ibid.*, 134. The report adds, “The Salvadorian armed forces also maintained within the Joint Staff under Department 5, Civilian Affairs, a secret, clandestine intelligence unit . . . [for] the ‘elimination’ of individuals.” See *ibid.*, 136.

20. *Ibid.*, 134.

21. *Ibid.*, 135, and 239 n. 422, citing “General Framework for the Organization of the Anti-Marxist Struggle in El Salvador,” document confiscated at the San Luis estate of Roberto D’Aubuisson on May 7, 1980, order of May 12, 1980, placing the detainees at the disposal of the military examining judge, exhibit no. 4.

D'Aubuisson was a protégé of General Medrano and "third in command of ANSESAL" until 1979, when he resigned from the army after the reformist junta decided to eliminate the agency.²² The ex-military officer took "part of the agency's archives" with him, utilizing them to create a right-wing political-military structure with its own death squads, which he used to assassinate supporters of the reformist junta.

In the fall, following the October 15, 1979, reformist coup, the ex-major met in Guatemala with Mario Sandoval Alarcon, founder of the fascist Nationalist Liberation Movement. Alarcon advised D'Aubuisson and his associates on the politics of political murder and put him in contact with weapons smugglers and wealthy reactionary Salvadoran exiles in Miami.²³ The Miami connection, described in a 1981 memo from the U.S. embassy in El Salvador entitled "Millionaires' Murder, Inc.," provided millions of dollars to finance the wave of repression that descended on El Salvador.²⁴ The cable asserts that six Salvadoran millionaires "have directed and financed right-wing death squads [in El Salvador] for nearly a year, that they are trying to destroy the moderate reformist government by terrorizing its officials as well as the businessmen who cooperate with its reform program[, and] that a wave of recent kidnappings is very likely their work." The cable observes that "many Salvadoran and some official Americans have been aware that rightist death squads are financed and directed by a group . . . in Miami, that the publisher of the *Diario de hoy* N [Enrique] Viera Altamirano is a principal figure," and that "they organize, fund and direct death squads through their agent Roberto D'Aubuisson."²⁵

The 1993 U.N. Truth Commission pointedly notes that the U.S. government under the Reagan administration "tolerated, and apparently paid little official heed to the activities of [these] Salvadoran exiles living in Miami . . . between 1979 and 1983 . . . [who] directly financed and indirectly helped run certain

22. Ibid., 134; Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 76.

23. Craig Pyes, "D'Aubuisson's Fledgling Party Finds a Mentor in Guatemala," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 18, 1983; Craig Pyes, "Right Built Itself in Mirror Image of Left for Civil War," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 18, 1983; Craig Pyes, "A Chilling Plan Maps a Terror Road to Rule," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 19, 1983; Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 87. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 132.

24. This cable was released under the freedom of information act. "Millionaires' Murder, Inc.," secret cable from Mark Dion, U.S. Embassy, San Salvador to Secretary of State, January 5, 1981.

25. "Millionaires' Murder, Inc." Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 133. Note that I have eliminated Montgomery's mistaken interpolation of the name *Napoleon* into the text for the letter N and substituted the name *Enrique*. Napoleon is clearly incorrect since Napoleon Viera Altamirano died August 8, 1977. Further, Ambassador Robert White testified on February 6, 1984, before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Latin America that the group of six included "Enrique Viera Altamirano, publisher of the conservative newspaper *Diária de hoy*"; see Associated Press, "White Says White House 'Created' Salvadoran Rightest Leader," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, Tuesday, February 7, 1984, 5-A.

death squads.”²⁶ The rationale was provided by D’Aubuisson who insisted that the junta had been “infiltrated by Marxist officers,” which he predicted would “be fatal for the independence and freedom of the Salvadorian fatherland if the anti-communists in the population failed to act.”²⁷ And the campaign of murder and intimidation was financed by “wealthy civilians who feared that their interests would be [negatively] affected by the reform program announced by the Government Junta, . . . [and] were convinced that the country faced a serious threat of Marxist insurrection which they had to overcome.”²⁸

As horrific as the activities of the death squads were, however, the armed forces were worse. The United Nations states,

The Commission on the Truth registered more than 22,000 complaints of serious acts of violence that occurred in El Salvador between January 1980 and July 1991. . . . Those giving testimony attributed almost 85% of cases to agents of the State, paramilitary groups allied to them, and the death squads. . . . Armed forces personnel were accused in almost 60% of complaints, members of security forces in approximately 25%, members of military escorts and civil defense units in approximately 20%, members of death squads in more than 10% of cases. The complaints registered accused [the] FMLN in approximately 5% of cases.²⁹

The report goes on to state that “this violence originated in a . . . mind-set that viewed political opponents as subversives and enemies. Anyone who expressed views that differed from the Government ran the risk of being eliminated as if they were armed enemies on the field of battle . . . [through] extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances and murders of political opponents.”³⁰

In this context, then, it is important to understand that the 1979 coup was closely associated with the UCA. When Román Mayorga resigned as UCA president on October 15, 1979 (on the advice of Archbishop Oscar Romero³¹), he and Guillermo Ungo left to join the five-person junta, taking over a dozen faculty members with them.³² Ignacio Ellacuría soon replaced Mayorga as president.

Once in power, the 1979 junta was unable to implement its program while trying unsuccessfully to restrain the increasing military repression until the

26. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 137.

27. *Ibid.*, 134, and 239 n. 421.

28. *Ibid.*, 134.

29. *Ibid.*, 43.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Archbishop Romero states in his personal diary that Román Mayorga Quirós “asked my opinion of his becoming part of the civilian-military junta,” to which he responded that Mayorga Quirós “was the appropriate person” before providing his personal blessing. See Archbishop Oscar Romero, *A Shepherd’s Diary* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993), 355.

32. Charles J. Beirne, S.J., *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 149.

civilians finally resigned en masse a little over two months later.³³ Tommie Sue Montgomery offers a brief account, confirmed by Fr. Cardenal,³⁴ of how the most reactionary elements gained control of the military and sabotaged the goals of the coup.

Despite the months of planning and the socioeconomic commitments of the *golpistas*, their objectives were derailed in the days before and immediately after the coup occurred; [Colonel Jaime Abdul] Gutiérrez and his cohorts thwarted them. First Gutiérrez arranged [the young reformer] René Guerra's removal as one of the two military members of the Junta by calling a meeting of the Young Military (as the conspirators came to be known) to which Guerra and his followers were not invited. Gutiérrez argued that as a lieutenant colonel, Guerra was too junior in rank for such an important position; Gutiérrez was elected in his stead. Second, hours after General Romero departed the country, Gutiérrez, without consultation with or authorization from his colleagues, called Colonel José Guillermo García in San Vicente and offered him the post of minister of defense. Third, García invited Colonel Nicolás Carranza, who was on the CIA payroll at \$90,000 a year [and founder of both ORDEN and ANSESAL], to be vice-minister of defense. In short, before the coup was twenty-four hours old, the most reactionary remnants of the officer corps had reasserted control over the armed forces.³⁵

During its ten short weeks of life the reformist junta careened from one crisis to the next. Death squads controlled by Roberto D'Aubuisson and sectors of the armed forces carried out brutal attacks on civilians. The National Guard and the Treasury Police moved with increasing savagery against demonstrations, strikes, and occupations of embassies and government buildings. And on December 26, 1979, the civilian members of the government were informed that attempts by the junta to control the armed forces would be rejected.

Guillermo Ungo remembers that on December 26 the new vice-minister of defense, Colonel Vides Casanova, declared, "Colonel García gives the orders, not the Junta."³⁶ Vides Casanova would soon rise to be commander of El Salvador's National Guard, serving from 1979 to 1983 during the most horrific period of human rights abuses, including the December 2, 1980, rape and murder of four U.S. church women about which the U.N. Truth Commission found that he

33. Mario Andino, the private sector representative, resigned on January 4, 1980. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 78-79; and LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 42-43.

34. Cardenal, *Manual de historia de Centroamérica*, 409.

35. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 75-76.

36. Interview with Guillermo Ungo by Teresa Whitfield, December 15, 1990. Cited in Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 132.

had substantial information and that he covered up.³⁷ Following this declaration of refusal to accept civilian rule, Mayorga and Ungo resigned with the entire civilian cabinet on January 3, 1980 (except Mario Andino, who resigned a day later), at a meeting at the seminary arranged by Archbishop Romero to mediate the dispute.³⁸ The officers then formed a second junta with civilian allies, and the government took a sharp turn to the right, perpetrating previously unthinkable actions of political terror against every sector of civil society associated with the opposition.³⁹

As predicted by Fr. Jerez, Ellacuría and the UCA Jesuits now topped the lists of D'Aubuisson's death squads and military elements that wanted the first junta to fail. It became common wisdom in the right-wing media that the 1979 reformist coup had been planned at the UCA, and that "the leadership of the FMLN," which declared war a year later, had "been indoctrinated in these centers of Jesuit instruction."⁴⁰

This attitude persisted and was promoted in the media by the radical right during the 1980s. In 1988 D'Aubuisson stated, "With [Ellacuría's] declarations it can be confirmed what has always been said: that the real ringleaders of [the] subversive movements . . . are not in the mountains, but near the UCA."⁴¹ And in 1989, the year of the Jesuit assassinations, a slanderous book entitled *Marxist Infiltration in the Church* charged that the mobilization of Salvadoran civil society from 1977 to 1989 in favor of social, economic, and political reform was "the direct responsibility of a group of foreign conspirators ensconced in [the UCA]. These Jesuits—above all Ellacuría and Sobrino—have been the real brains who have remained hidden behind all the subversive movements that have been stirred up by the clergy in our country."⁴²

37. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 62. Trained in counterinsurgency at the School of the Americas in the United States, Vides Cassanova was appointed minister of defense in 1984 and held the post until 1988, when he immigrated to the United States, where he lives today.

38. See also Dario Moreno, *U.S. Policy in Central America: The Endless Debate* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990), 71-81, esp. 71-74; and Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 53-69.

39. Elements of the preceding account taken from the following sources: LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 40-43; Robert Armstrong and Janet S. Ruben, *El Salvador: el rostro de la revolución* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1983, 1993), 112-29; Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 73-79; Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 120-28; Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 63-64; Thomas M. Leonard, *Central America and United States Policies, 1820s-1980s: A Guide to Issues and References* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1985), 37; Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 53-69.

40. *Diario de hoy*, June 13, 1988. Cited in Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1993), 29.

41. Quote from Roberto D'Aubuisson, *Diario de hoy*, September 17, 1989. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 29.

42. A. Jerez Magaña, *La infiltración Marxista en la iglesia* (San Salvador: Editorial Dignidad, Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales, 1989), 23. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 22.

Here, then, lies the trailhead of the path traveled by the killers to the Jesuit assassinations ten years later. The same logic appears in the words of Colonel Benavides ordering Lt. Espinoza, the former Jesuit student, to carry out the murders: "Alright men, we're playing for all the cards, it's either them or us, seeing as they are the intellectuals who have been directing the guerrillas for a long time."⁴³ There was no room for civilian non-combatants in this world, and neither the church nor the university could expect the space to pursue truth on its own terms.

In the minds of the right the UCA Jesuits had joined other leaders in Salvadoran civil society as military targets. Thus, on December 27, 1979, three bombs exploded outside the UCA computer center. On February 16, 1980, the Jesuit residence of Fr. Ellacuría was fired upon with machine-guns, leaving one hundred bullet holes. On February 18, a bomb destroyed part of the UCA library. On March 22, the National Police entered the UCA campus at 1:15 p.m., shooting their weapons and killing a math student, Manuel Orantes Guillén. And two days later, on March 24, Archbishop Oscar Romero, while saying Mass, was assassinated at "the order" of Roberto D'Aubuisson by "members of his security service, acting as a 'death squad'."⁴⁴

The United Nations offers the following account:

Former Major Robert D'Aubuisson, former Captain Alvaro Saravia and Fernando Sagrera were present on March 24, 1980, at the home of Alejandro Caceres in San Salvador. Captain Eduardo Avila arrived and told them that Archbishop Romero would be celebrating a mass that day. Captain Avila said that this would be a good opportunity to assassinate the Archbishop. D'Aubuisson ordered that this be done and put Saravia in charge of the operation.⁴⁵

Captain Avila then left to pick up the sniper and rendezvoused with the others in the parking lot of the Camino Real Hotel, where the gunman got into a red, four-door Volkswagen driven by Amado Antonio Garay, Saravia's driver. At least two vehicles drove across town to the chapel, waiting as the sniper got out and shot the archbishop through the heart in front of the stunned Mass-goers as he preached his homily. D'Aubuisson later paid 1,000 *colones* to Walter Antonio "Musa" Alvarez, who, in turn, paid the gunman. In September 1981, Alvarez himself was kidnapped and murdered.

Five weeks later, on May 7, 1980, a startling break in the case occurred. Twelve active and retired military personnel with an equal number of civilians were arrested at a wealthy estate in Santa Tecla. The group, led by D'Aubuisson, was formally accused of plotting a coup against the reformist government that

43. Extrajudicial confession of Gonzalo Guevara Cerritos, January 13, 1990, as reprinted in *ECA* nos. 493-494 (November-December 1989): 1161. My translation. Also cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 22.

44. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 127.

45. *Ibid.*

included many former members of the UCA faculty and staff. The arresting officers found three explosive documents in the course of the raid: a list of accusations against Oscar Romero; a diary belonging to former Captain Alvaro Rafael Saravia, which was filled with the details of the planning and logistics of the murder; and a strategic plan for a campaign of assassination of repression entitled “General Framework for the Organization of the Anti-Marxist Struggle in El Salvador.”

The U.N. Truth Commission asserts, “Their goal was to seize power in El Salvador, and their political plan provided for ‘direct action’ . . . [and] ‘activities of combat networks,’ including ‘attacks on selected individuals.’”⁴⁶ Despite this evidence, however, D’Aubuisson and the others were immediately released. Only Saravia was ever charged (seven years later on November 24, 1987!), but the Supreme Court invalidated the evidence. It would be thirteen years before a governmental body (the U.N. Truth Commission) exposed the truth of what happened, chastising the Supreme Court of El Salvador for having “ensured . . . impunity for those who planned the assassination.”⁴⁷

It is no accident, then, that the assassination of Archbishop Romero coincided with the rise of Roberto D’Aubuisson on the Salvadoran scene. Indeed, Romero’s assassination symbolized the apparent triumph of D’Aubuisson’s “doctrine of national salvation” over the visions of other elite groups, including the church’s 1970s vision from Medellín of social reform through the renewal and mobilization of civil society. The U.N. Truth Commission explains that the assassination played an important role in the ex-major’s rise to prominence on the extreme right.

After the assassination of Monsignor Romero, which, in very close circles, D’Aubuisson took credit for having planned . . . , his prestige and influence grew among the groups that wielded economic power, gaining him further support and resources. The San Luis estate incident and his temporary stay in Guatemala did not interrupt his political plans, since it was in Guatemala that he was able to establish contact with internationally linked anti-communist networks and organizations and individual anti-communists such as Mario Sandoval Alarcon, Luis Mendizábal and Ricardo Lao.⁴⁸

As noted above, the UCA Jesuits, and especially Ignacio Ellacuría, soon joined the reformist leaders of Salvadoran civil society at the top of D’Aubuisson’s list.

Accordingly, on June 29, 1980, three months after Romero’s assassination, and six weeks after D’Aubuisson’s brief arrest, the Salvadoran Anticommunist Army detonated two bombs at the UCA, destroying the printing press and a student center. On October 24, two powerful bombs exploded at the residence of Fr. Ella-

46. *Ibid.*, 129 (§399).

47. *Ibid.*, 131 (§415).

48. *Ibid.*, 135 (§424).

curía, where ten Jesuits were sleeping. On October 27, the residence was bombed again, becoming uninhabitable. And on November 26, Ellacuría sought refuge in the Spanish embassy, fleeing the next day for a seventeen-month exile after a tip from Captain Francisco Mena Sandoval, one of the plotters of the reformist Young Officers Coup, warning that the Jesuit would be assassinated that night.⁴⁹ Thus, the decade began with the same sterile logic of state-sponsored violence against political opponents in civil society with which it would end.

Revolution or Death! Civil War in Defense of the People

After the Junta collapsed, events in El Salvador accelerated rapidly toward war. On January 22, 1980, guards and snipers fired from the roof of the National Palace, killing between twenty and fifty-two civilians gathered in the national square for the largest demonstration in Salvadoran history.⁵⁰ On February 8, 1980, the second junta said it would recognize the Constitution of 1962 only “where it was compatible” with the rulers’ “line of government.”⁵¹ In mid-month Roberto D’Aubuisson publicly accused Mario Zamora Rivas, leader of the Christian Democratic Party and attorney general of El Salvador, of being a communist and a member of “a revolutionary group, the FPL.” The U.N. Truth Commission states that a few days later, on February 23, 1980, six “members of a state security force” in ski masks entered Mr. Zamora’s home through the roof carrying weapons with silencers, and executed him in the bathroom.” The Commission adds that the Military High Command worked “to conceal the identity of the perpetrators . . . with the result that the necessary investigation was never made.”⁵²

On March 6, 1980, a national state of emergency was declared suspending significant legal rights and protections. Though it had to be renewed every thirty days, the emergency would continue (with one brief interlude) for seven years! And in March 1980, most of the remaining civilians resigned from the government. The collapse of this “second” junta put the military completely in control of the government and foreclosed participation from the center and the left. Then, at the behest of U.S. advisors, on March 9, 1980, University of Notre Dame graduate José Napoleon Duarte agreed to represent the Christian Democrats on the junta, ostensibly because “the objective” of Zamora’s murder had been “to force us out of the government, [and] we were determined not to let them succeed.”⁵³ This provided the Salvadoran military and the U.S. govern-

49. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 304; also Beirme, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 165.

50. “Central America 1980: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala,” 18; *Amnesty International Annual Report*, 1980, 134. Cited in Americas Watch, *El Salvador’s Decade of Terror: Human Rights since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 8.

51. Decree 144, Article 1. Cited in America’s Watch, *Decade of Terror*, 8.

52. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 140, 141.

53. José Napoleon Duarte, *My Story* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1986), 113-15; cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 136.

ment with political cover for Washington's increasing financial and logistical support. The new government lasted two years, until March 28, 1982, when Roberto D'Aubuisson was elected president of the National Assembly after the United States brokered a deal to keep him from being appointed provisional president by the military-related party, ARENA, which had formed a coalition of parties to achieve plurality with him as their candidate.

In April 1980, Guillermo Ungo, Duarte's running mate in the infamous 1972 election, which the UCA showed had been stolen by Colonel Molina, led to the unification of many former government officials, civilian political groups, nonaligned trade unions, and professional organizations in the formation of the Democratic Front (FD). The group negotiated a common platform with the Revolutionary Coordinator of the Masses and formed the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). The FDR then began to function as the political branch of the armed revolutionary opposition. Finally on October 10, 1980, the various revolutionary organizations united to form the FMLN.⁵⁴

The political space for reform and opposition had almost completely collapsed. Following the resignation of the first junta, *ECA* published a statement from the university superior counsel recognizing the sad state of affairs.

The important thing is to notice that a group of capable and honest people, after placing all their dreams and their talents at the service of profound reforms, became witnesses to the impossibility of accomplishing this goal in a society in which opponents of change hold sway, and when the process is headed by armed forces whose institutional, historical and psycho-social characteristics have rendered them incapable of defending the real interests of the popular masses.⁵⁵

Ellacuría's editorial in the March 1980 edition of *ECA* provisionally endorsed the FDR's political platform. Noting certain "grave difficulties," it concluded, "After examining as a totality all objective and subjective conditions, those favorable and unfavorable, and in the light of the experience of the centrist solution of these past six months, it is not unreasonable to affirm that the FDR, from the political point of view, offers better prospects as a new national project which might lift the country from its current desperate situation."⁵⁶ The September 1980 editorial conceded the inevitability of civil war and appealed to both sides to act in a humane manner.⁵⁷

Finally on January 10, 1981, the FMLN launched its long-expected "final offensive." It came almost exactly a year after the January 3, 1980, resignations of Mayorga and Ungo, and the failure of the "UCA coup." The FDR had prepared for the offensive by calling two general strikes the year before. The first on June 24-25, 1980, virtually shut down the country for forty-eight hours. The

54. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 110, 101-26.

55. *ECA* 35 (January-February 1980): 5-18.

56. *ECA* 35 (March 1980): 172.

57. *ECA* 35 (September 1980): 793-98.

second strike was called on August 13-15, 1980, in order to mobilize and test the organizational structure for a general insurrection.⁵⁸ Three levels were examined: guerrilla units oriented to armed combat; civilian militias composed of peasants and workers for civilian self-defense, vigilance, and military engineering; and neighborhood committees with responsibility for supplies, logistical support, and grassroots political education.⁵⁹ Preparations for the offensive had begun three months before when the FMLN was officially formed on October 10, 1980.

At 6:30 p.m. on January 10, 1981, guerrilla units took control of several radio stations in San Salvador and broadcast the call of Salvador Cayetano Carpio for a general insurrection, which the FMLN General Command was convinced would follow.

The hour to initiate the decisive military and insurrectional battles for the taking of power by the people and for the constitution of the democratic revolutionary government has arrived. We call on all the people to rise up as one person, with all the means of combat, under the orders of their immediate leaders on all war fronts and throughout the national territory. The definitive triumph is in the hands of this heroic people. . . . Revolution or death. We will triumph! [*Revolución o muerte. Venceremos.*]⁶⁰

During the first forty-eight hours, the FMLN commandeered the military base at San Francisco Gotera in Morazán, where Captain Mena Sandoval, who helped plan the 1979 reformist coup and warned Ellacuría of his impending assassination, with another officer led eighty soldiers from the Second Brigade at Santa Ana to join the revolt. Mark Danner explains that Mena Sandoval proved to be an important asset in a series of battles in the following weeks with the elite Atlactl Battalion, perpetrators of the 1989 UCA murders, because he “had the foresight to steal an Army radio when he came over to the guerrillas.” Mena Sandoval’s “knowledge of the enemy’s codes” allowed the rebels “to keep one crucial step ahead of their opponents,” and to inflict casualties while avoiding capture and losses.⁶¹

But while some like Mena Sandoval and his colleagues interpreted the demand of Archbishop Romero a year earlier to “stop the repression!” as a call to join the rebels, the promised “general insurrection” did not occur. The Salvadoran armed forces retained control of the capital and many other areas

58. Adolfo Gilly, “Experiencias y conquistas de una huelga limite,” *Uno más Uno*, August 21, 1980. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 112.

59. See “En los Cerros de San Pedro el FMLN construye el poder popular,” *Venceremos* 1, no. 2 (January 1982): 8. Also Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 111-13.

60. Press release, *SALPRESS*, Mexico City, January 12, 1981. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 112.

61. Mark Danner, “The Truth of El Mozote,” *The New Yorker*, December 6, 1993, <http://www.markdanner.com/articles/print/127>; accessed August 16, 2011.

while the FMLN retreated to its home bases in the north and the east of the country.⁶² As a result, it soon became clear that the government would not fall anytime soon, and that the FMLN had no unified plan and insufficient coordination for waging a sustained war. Thus, judged as a “final” effort, the offensive failed to achieve its objective of a Nicaraguan-style overthrow of a repressive regime. Instead, the government and the FMLN seemed destined for a long and bloody civil war.

Captain Mena Sandoval, however, and his colleagues provide a dramatic contrast to the Atlacatl Battalion, who Danner reveals “had been trained, in large part by . . . Mena Sandoval” at the San Francisco Gotera Commando Center not long before the offensive. Sadly, eight months after the aforementioned exchange, the U.N. Truth Commission reported that the Atlacatl Battalion committed one of the worst human rights atrocities of the decade in the village of El Mozote, Morazán.⁶³ The report offered the following facts: “On December 10, 1981, in the village of El Mozote . . . Morazan, . . . the Atlacatl Battalion detained, without resistance, all the men, women and children who were in the place. The following day, December 11, . . . they were deliberately and systematically executed . . . over 200. The figure is higher . . . [with] unidentified victims.”⁶⁴

The report continues:

During the morning, they [the troops] proceeded to interrogate, torture and execute the men in various locations. Around noon, they began taking out the women in groups, separating them from their children and machine-gunning them. Finally they killed the children. A group of children who had been locked in the convent were machine-gunned through the windows. After exterminating the entire population, the soldiers set fire to the buildings.⁶⁵

The massacre was planned as part of a larger operation involving other military units entitled “Operation Rescue,”⁶⁶ which perpetrated over a period of days similar slaughters of women and children in the surrounding villages of La Joya, La Rancheria, Los Toriles, Jocote Amarillo, and Cerro Pando. The United Nations states that the Armed Forces High Command of El Salvador then “repeatedly denied the massacre occurred” while its own chief of staff, who “was aware that the massacre had occurred, . . . failed to undertake any investigation.”⁶⁷

62. These details from Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 112, 113.

63. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 114-21, esp. 114.

64. *Ibid.*, 114.

65. *Ibid.*, 115.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*, 121.

Thus, with all other avenues seemingly closed, the words of Archbishop Romero to the journalist José Calderón Salazar two weeks before the prelate's assassination epitomized the flickering hopes of those committed to the church's vision of reform through the mobilization and renewal of Salvadoran civil society.

I have often been threatened with death. [But] I must tell you, as a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am killed, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people. I say so without boasting, with the greatest humility.

As a shepherd, I am obliged by divine mandate to give my life for those I love—for all Salvadorans, even for those who may be going to kill me. If the threats are carried out, from this moment I offer my blood to God for the redemption and for the resurrection of El Salvador.

Martyrdom is a grace of God that I do not believe I deserve. But if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, let my blood be a seed of freedom and the sign that hope will soon be reality. Let my death, if it is accepted by God, be for my people's liberation and as a witness of hope in the future.

You may say, if they succeed in killing me, that I pardon and bless those who do it. Would, indeed, that they might be convinced that they will waste their time. A bishop will die, but God's church, which is the people, will never perish.⁶⁸

Sadly, what some see as the fulfillment of Romero's prophecy that he would rise in the Salvadoran people would be preceded by another decade of murder and grievous persecution against Salvadoran civil society.

Hypocrisy and Failure: U.S. "Nation Building" in El Salvador

Four days after launching its general offensive, the FDR-FMLN announced the formation of a Political-Diplomatic Commission, implementing its plan to be recognized by the government as a "representative political force"⁶⁹ for peace negotiations. At this point the conflict was still essentially a local matter, and at least some of the combatants recognized the futility of an extended war. But the United States had a different view.

68. James R. Brockman, *Romero, A Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989, 2005), 247-48.

69. This was the term used in the Mexican-French proposal for peace negotiations immediately after the offensive. See Ignacio Ellacuría, "La declaración conjunta mexicano-francesa sobre El Salvador," *ECA* 36, no. 395 (April-May 1981): 845-66. Reprinted in Ignacio Ellacuría, *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989): Escritos políticos* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991), 1235-69.

In 1977 a State Department official testified to Congress that the United States had “no strategic interests” in El Salvador.⁷⁰ However, the July 19, 1979, triumph of the Sandinistas in the Nicaraguan revolution led the United States to view developments in El Salvador through a Cold War lens. Thus, four days after the beginning of the FMLN offensive the Carter administration reinstated military aid, increasing it again on January 17 with a pledge to “support the Salvadoran Government in its struggle against left-wing terrorism supported covertly . . . by Cuba and other Communist nations.”⁷¹ In 1982 the new Reagan administration targeted the FMLN insurgency as the most important Cold War conflict since Vietnam, announcing the United States would “draw the line” in El Salvador against “communist aggression”⁷² with an ambitious counterinsurgency campaign. Thus, the explicit goal of successive Republican administrations during the 1980s became the military defeat of the FMLN.

A 1991 report prepared by the Rand Corporation for the Pentagon [“Pentagon Report”] explains that the Reagan administration saw the Salvadoran civil war as the “ideal testing ground”⁷³ for post-Vietnam “low-intensity conflict doctrine.”⁷⁴ The official U.S. Army/Air Force statement on counterinsurgency stated that low-intensity conflict comprised “the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The strategy focuses on building viable political, economic, military and social institutions that respond to the needs of society.”⁷⁵ The report notes with some cynicism that the strategy was known as “nation building.”

The seriousness of U.S. involvement in this “experiment” is reflected in the financial commitment it entailed. The Pentagon report states,

The conflict there has been the most expensive American effort to save an ally from an insurgency since Vietnam. El Salvador has absorbed at

70. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on International Organizations, the Recent Presidential Elections in El Salvador: Implications for U.S. Policy. Hearings, March 9 and 17, 1977, 95th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 15. Cited in America's Watch, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror*, 177.

71. U.S. Department of State, Press Statement, January 17, 1981, 1, cited in Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America: 1976-1993* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 51.

72. William LeoGrande, “A Splendid Little War: Drawing the Line in El Salvador,” *International Security* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1981): 27; Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 344.

73. Lewis Tambs and Lt. Com. Frank Aker, “Shattering the Vietnam Syndrome: A Scenario for Success in El Salvador,” unpublished manuscript, 11. Cited in Michael Klare and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Random House, 1988), 112.

74. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 1.

75. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force, *Military Operation in Low Intensity Conflict*, FM 100-20/AFM 2-X4, Final Draft, June 24, 1988 (1988), 2.14-2.15. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 7.

least \$4.5 billion, over \$1 billion of which is in military aid. When combined with over \$850 million in unsubsidized credits and an estimated CIA investment of over \$500 million, the total expenditure approaches \$6 billion. Only five countries receive more American aid each year than El Salvador, a nation of 5.3 million people.⁷⁶

But every war needs a public rationale, and this one found its classic statement in the January 10, 1984, report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America chaired by Henry Kissinger, former secretary of state under Richard Nixon.⁷⁷ The Pentagon study says the Kissinger Commission committed itself to a thorough application of counterinsurgency doctrine in El Salvador, marking the first time “a comprehensive strategy for meeting the threat of instability and insurgency in the Third World had been given the status of national policy.”⁷⁸

Designed as a lofty apologetic for the application of U.S. counterinsurgency policy in El Salvador, the Kissinger Commission stated that increases in military aid would

be made contingent upon the Salvadoran government’s demonstrated progress toward free elections; freedom of association; the establishment of the rule of law and an effective judicial system; and the termination of the so-called death squads, as well as vigorous action against those guilty of crimes and the prosecution to the extent possible of past offenders.⁷⁹

The Pentagon report asserts, however, that Kissinger and his co-authors rendered these claims meaningless with an endnote, “which declared, in effect, that since the survival of the Salvadoran regime was crucial to American security, the United States could not allow human rights abuse to stand in the way of its support of El Salvador.”⁸⁰ This line of reasoning would insure U.S. support for a decade of murder and sorrow in El Salvador, driven by the underlying demands of U.S. Cold War electoral politics.

The U.N. Truth Commission outlines the real-life implications of this approach, offering the infamous El Mozote massacre carried out by the U.S. trained Atlacatl Battalion as an example of its impact on U.S. counterinsurgency

76. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 2.

77. National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, *Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America* (January 10, 1984). Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 10-11.

78. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 11. The quotation is a citation from Christopher M. Helman, “Protracted Insurgent Warfare: Development of an Appropriate U.S. Doctrine,” in Richard H. Schultz, et al. (eds.), *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency: U.S.-Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 127.

79. National Bipartisan Commission, *Report*, 102.

80. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 12. For the statement in question see National Bipartisan Commission, *Report*, 130.

policy in El Salvador. The United Nations explains that the Atlacatl Battalion was a Rapid Deployment Infantry Battalion (BIRI) “specially trained for counter-insurgency warfare.” In fact, “It was the first unit of its kind in the armed forces and had [just] completed its training, under the supervision of United States military advisers, at the beginning of that year, 1981.”⁸¹ The United Nations warns, however, that the massacre should not be misunderstood as a wartime aberration or divergence quickly corrected by U.S. trainers, but rather as indicative of a pattern of serious human rights violations by a U.S. trained battalion that spanned the decade, including 1989 murders of UCA martyrs.

The Pentagon report is even more insistent on this point.

The very battalion whose members murdered the Jesuits had been created, trained, and equipped by the United States; it was, indeed, the first Salvadoran battalion designed to serve as a model of a clean efficient weapon in the fight against the FMLN.⁸² The Atlacatl Battalion has had a particularly ferocious history, massacring [over 200] peasants in El Mozote in 1981, killing dozens of villagers from Tenancingo and Copapayo in 1983, and slaughtering 68 in the hamlet of Los Llanitos and 50 at the Gualsinga River in 1984.⁸³

Indeed, the Atlacatl Battalion would interrupt a 1989 training session with U.S. advisors in order to carry out the UCA assassinations, but we will say more about that later. Thus, the Pentagon report insists that the activities of the battalion must be understood as an element of U.S. counterinsurgency policy in El Salvador. This is particularly disturbing in light of the U.N. report that in the convent where the soldiers locked the children, “143 bodies were identified, including 131 children under the age of 12 [whose] . . . average age . . . was . . . six.” The United Nations adds that they were all murdered with “United States-

81. National Bipartisan Commission, *Report*, 116.

82. FMLN is an acronym for the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. It was officially formed on October 10, 1980, when several of the most important political-military organizations working to overthrow the government of El Salvador united under its banner (the following five organizations would eventually constitute the FMLN). In 1970 the first of what would become the five political-military organizations constituting the FMLN was founded when Salvador Cayetano Carpio resigned from the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS), went underground, and founded the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL). In 1972 the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP) also emerged from the Communist Party with a different, younger, and more diverse constituency. In 1975 the Armed Forces of the National Resistance (FARN) was formed by a group that left the ERP when a hard-line faction assassinated Roque Dalton, El Salvador’s most important living poet (then a member of the ERP), ostensibly because of his insistence on the need to emphasize political as well as military revolutionary activities. The following year, on January 26, 1976, the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC) was founded during a congress of union workers, individuals who had left the group that founded the ERP in 1972, and others. Finally, in 1979, the PCS itself formed the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL).

83. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 35-36.

manufactured M-16 rifles,” firing ammunition “manufactured for the United States Government at Lake City, Missouri.”⁸⁴

In what follows I will briefly summarize the Pentagon report’s evaluation of the three defining aspects of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine in El Salvador: (1) military reform; (2) land reform, and (3) political reform.

The Failure of Military Reform

The analysis begins with an illuminating post-mortem of the failure of Salvadoran military reform in light of the supposed twin pillars of U.S. counterinsurgency policy: military effectiveness (or “tactical performance”) and human rights.⁸⁵

It notes that the 1981 “Report of the El Salvador Military Strategy Assistance Team,” written a decade earlier, concluded that the Salvadoran armed forces would require a thorough restructuring in order to carry out U.S. policy on counterinsurgency war. The list of undesirable characteristics included a disengaged officer corps; a “nine-to-five, five-day-a week” force mired in a “garrison [bound] mentality”; forced service by conscripts (as young as fourteen) with little will to fight; excessive reliance on long-distance firepower and helicopters rather than on ground troops for holding territory; and a highly motivated enemy. In light of this shortcoming, U.S. advisors proposed the creation of “hunter-killer” squads, “imaginative psychological warfare,” and the resurrection of “civil defense units.”⁸⁶

In the following decade, however, U.S. advisors found Salvadoran military forces “stubbornly resistant to change” for a variety of reasons. First, the “tanda” system, in which each graduating class from the military academy moved up together through the ranks proved to be a major obstacle. U.S. advisors quickly discovered that the Salvadoran military “operated not through a clear chain of command but through a complex system of consensus within and between tandas.” Described as “a sort of West Point Protective Association gone berserk”⁸⁷ in another influential 1988 Pentagon study known as the *Colonels Report*, class members shielded one another from prosecution and punishment during the 1980s for even the most egregious of human rights violations. A 1990 report by the Congressional Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus noted the pervasive influence of this system:

84. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 117 (§354), 118 (§357), 119 (§366).

85. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*; see especially “The Effort to Transform El Salvador: Military Reform,” 17-43.

86. *Ibid.*, 17-18.

87. A.J. Bacevich, James D. Hallums, Richard H. White, and Thomas F. Young, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Pergamum, Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1988), 26. Cited in Americas Watch, *El Salvador’s Decade of Terror*, 21.

Of the 15 primary commanders [of the Salvadoran armed forces], 12 are members of the Tandona . . . [of] 1966. . . . This unprecedented concentration of power permits the Tandona to protect its members from removal for corruption, abuses or incompetence. The Tandona at times shows more loyalty to its members than to the rule of law or even to the president.⁸⁸

The same report found that fourteen of the fifteen highest-ranking army officers in May 1990 had commanded troops who committed atrocities at some point during their careers.⁸⁹

Second, the Pentagon report finds the 1980s' Salvadoran military rife with "self-serving interests and . . . institutional barriers" to advancement for those who did not enter through the military academy. Citing a "tradition that views the structure of the armed forces as comprising only a commissioned officer elite and peasant conscripts who serve it,"⁹⁰ it says this attitude was reinforced by institutional corruption in which officers embezzled the salaries of non-existent conscripts.

Every year 20,000 pay slots for soldiers are divided among the Salvadoran Army's regional commanders. Since the Salvadoran armed forces have no central roster and hence no way to detect fraud, most commanders fill a portion of these slots with nonexistent soldiers, collecting the "ghost soldier" salaries themselves. Brigades generally have at least one 50-man "ghost" company that brings the brigade commander \$60,000 annually. The salary of a re-enlistee is nearly double that of a conscript. Imaginary re-enlistees are therefore quite profitable to an individual commander, and many actively discourage genuine re-enlistment because it would cut into their ghost soldier profits.⁹¹

Compounding the problem, a portion of every soldier's salary was matched by the Salvadoran government and paid into the armed forces' social security fund. At \$150 million, this fund constituted the largest source of liquid capital in the country in 1991, allowing the military to maintain their own commercial bank and investment portfolio. However, though all contribute to the fund, "the only members of the armed forces eligible to receive these benefits are officers and a very small number of re-enlistees."⁹²

Third, the Pentagon study cites "corrupt and ubiquitous practices [such] as commanders selling goods at inflated prices to their men, siphoning funds from

88. Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, "Barrier to Reform: A Profile of El Salvador's Military Leaders," May 21, 1990, 2. Cited in Americas Watch, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror*, 21.

89. Ibid.

90. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, "The Effort to Transform El Salvador," 19. He is citing Bracevich et al., *American Military Policy*, 27-28

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid., 20.

food and clothing budgets, and leasing their troops as guards and laborers to landowners and businessmen.”⁹³ The report notes, “Many officers have detailed knowledge of each others’ questionable financial activities and can use this information to blackmail those officers who might otherwise . . . bring human rights abusers to justice.”⁹⁴

Fourth, the report draws the devastating conclusion that “the Salvadoran military does not wish to win the war because in so doing it would lose the American aid that has enriched it for the past decade.”⁹⁵ It notes that when the United States began pouring more than a million dollars a day into El Salvador and quintupled⁹⁶ the size of the army between 1980 and 1987, the opportunities for self-enrichment multiplied. To appreciate the institutional momentum toward insularity and corruption created by U.S. intervention, consider the incredible reach into civilian society attained during the 1980s by military owned financial institutions (all ending in “FA”) including: the Armed Forces Mutual Savings Bank (CAMFA), a press and propaganda office (COPREFA), a chain of drugstores (CEFAFA), a supermarket and department store (COOPFA), an electronics center (CITFA), a mortuary (FUDEFA), and a rehabilitation and job placement center for disabled veterans (CERPROFA).⁹⁷ Accordingly, the report concludes that outdated structures, corruption, brutal human rights practices, and incredible wealth generated by U.S. aid helped to create (1) a closed, insular, apparently unreformable culture; and (2) an institutional self-interest on the part of the Salvadoran military leadership in the indefinite continuation of a brutal civil war.

Cynicism and Deceit

The Pentagon report predictably states that U.S. counterinsurgency policy promoted respect for human rights as a sine qua non for gaining popular support and government legitimacy. However, it notes that U.S. counterinsurgency expert Colonel John Waghelstein characteristically subordinated such U.S. values to strategic concerns when he argued, “the only territory you want to hold is the six inches between the ears of the campesino.”⁹⁸ And the report frankly concedes that efforts to promote human rights were frustrated throughout the decade by “the military’s killing and brutalizing of civilians.”⁹⁹

The real-life meaning of this statement, and the absurdity of trying to win “hearts and minds” through brutal repression, is well illustrated by the story

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid., 21.

95. Ibid.

96. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 199.

97. The information in this sentence is from Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 199-200.

98. Speech by Colonel John Waghelstein, “LIC in the Post-Vietnam Period” (American Enterprise Institute: January 17, 1985). Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 22.

99. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 24.

of Rosa Marina Zavala and her family, rural peasants from the village of Santa Marta, El Salvador.¹⁰⁰ About 5:00 in the afternoon March 17, 1981, the deafening sound of exploding bombs and bullets filled the streets as Marina (age 24), her future husband, José Antonio (age 28), and thousands of terrorized men, women and children grabbed whatever they could and fled.

The situation in the countryside was desperate. The U.N. Commission provides the historical context: “During the years 1980, 1981 and 1982 [the U.S. backed Salvadoran government carried out] . . . mass executions . . . in which members of the armed forces, in the course of anti-guerrilla operations, executed peasants—men, women and children who had offered no resistance—simply because they considered them to be guerrilla collaborators.”¹⁰¹ An adaptation of U.S. counterinsurgency tactics from the Vietnam War, it was part of “a deliberate strategy of eliminating or terrifying the peasant population in [order] . . . to deprive the guerrilla forces of . . . supplies and information and of the possibility of hiding. . . .”¹⁰²

The Pentagon report explains that rural pressures for land reform had reached critical mass by the beginning of 1980, driven by the fact that “over 70% of the land was owned by only 1% of the population, while over 40% of the rural population owned no land at all and worked as sharecroppers on absentee owners’ land or as laborers on large estates.”¹⁰³ Norberto, a peasant farm worker, remembers, “We would go to the coffee plantations, . . . to the cotton plantations and . . . the sugar cane fields,” but “the wages were unfair . . . and our children were naked.”¹⁰⁴ Eventually, he recalls, “the people got organized and said, ‘Now we are going to protest,’ . . . but they answered us with death, and a great repression.”

By 1981 peasants like Marina and her family knew exactly what this meant. Thus, she recalls, “The Salvadoran army invaded Santa Marta, so we fled with most of the village on foot.” Their plan was to sneak with thousands of terrified neighbors through the deadly cordon encircling and bombarding the town, and to flee north with whatever they could carry in hopes of crossing the Lempa River and finding refuge in Honduras. Normally a two-and-a-half-hour walk, Marina says that it took hours and hours because of “pregnant women with

100. This account and all quotes unless otherwise noted are from José Antonio Zavala and Rosa Marina Zavala, interview by author, June 24, 2010, Pittsburg, CA, transcript, files of author; and José Antonio Zavala and Rosa Marina Zavala, interview by Marybeth, 1990, Oakland Catholic Worker, transcript, files of author. U.S. federal immigration judge Bernard J. Hornbach of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals granted political asylum to José Antonio Zavala and seven other family members on January 31, 1990, based on an expanded version this account and supporting documentation.

101. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 126.

102. Ibid.

103. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 44.

104. “Norberto, Mesa Grande,” in Renato Camarda, *Forced to Move: Salvadorean Refugees in Honduras* (foreword Ronald V. Dellums; San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1985), 8.

swollen stomachs, small children, old people, and people who were injured or sick on stretchers.” To avoid being heard, mothers squeezed crying children so tightly to their chests that some were asphyxiated. Thousands of peasants joined the march from other villages similarly under attack so that, “When we reached the Lempa River we were about 11,000 people.”

José Antonio describes what happened next. “We got to the river at about 11:00 that night. Most of the people did not know how to swim, so we looked for tires, boards, or whatever could serve as a raft.” Since he knew “a little bit” how to swim, José Antonio grabbed a branch and began swimming back and forth, ferrying frantic riders across the river. “By 3:00 in the morning I couldn’t take it anymore,” he recalls, but thousands more continued their desperate attempts to cross.

A rope had been stretched across the river so that the people could grab it and try to make it over. Many people entered the river carrying children on their shoulders, using their hands to hold the few things they had brought. This worked fine until they got to the middle where it was too deep to stand and the weight made them drown, including the children. Sometimes we were able to save one or two who could swim a bit, but many disappeared. At about 6:00 in the morning when the Salvadoran and Honduran armies woke up they came to the high ground on either side of the river and began throwing grenades and firing machine guns at the people crossing in the water. A terrible cry filled the air. The bullets fell on the water like rain.¹⁰⁵

Everyone ran for cover, dragging bloody and dying relatives under rocks and whatever cover they could find. José Antonio has a vivid memory of when the firing started, “I carried Marina’s little brother, Adán, on my last trip across the river. When we reached the middle a mortar fell on the river bank we had just left, and we saw a mother and her child blown to pieces. Adán panicked and tried to break free, but I wouldn’t let go until we got to the other shore and were able to hide in the underbrush.” Rosario, a young eighteen-year-old mother, was not so lucky,

It was a massacre. . . . They shot my baby in my arms and wanted me to fall into the river and be swept away in the current just like those five hundred who were swept away at the Sumpul River massacre. I carried my baby through the long hike to Los Hernández [two miles away]. All the while I was thinking, “I can’t bear this.” The women had to forcibly take her out of my arms that night and I watched them bury her just as she was, wrapped in a cloth.¹⁰⁶

105. Ibid. For photographs of the crossing, an asphyxiated child with her grieving father, the flight to the refugee camps, and other firsthand accounts of the massacre, see Camarda, *Forced to Move*, esp. 18-21.

106. Yvonne Dilling, “Suffering Together at Valle Nuevo,” Center for Christian

Remembering their near escape, José Antonio concluded, “Maybe God helped me.” Marina reflected, “I prayed to the Virgin, I believed she would save us. They were firing bullets that just missed our heads. It was a miracle. We should have died that day. I felt that the Virgin was protecting me with a covering. I could feel the bullets flying on either side of my head.”

Marina and José Antonio survived and were eventually forced to move to the Mesa Grande United Nations refugee camp, where they lived as refugees in very poor conditions for most of seven years. They were married there by Archbishop Rivera Damas of El Salvador, who succeeded Archbishop Romero after his assassination by Roberto D’Aubuisson, intent on silencing his protests against the repression. Marina and José Antonio had four children in the camp, Oscar, Elmer, Elsi, and Wil, and finally returned to their village in El Salvador in December 1987 with thousands of other refugees over protests from the military. But the U.S.-backed war was raging, and campesinos living in areas controlled by the rebels were still considered enemy collaborators. Marina recalls, “The army was killing many of the people who had returned from Honduras. And the civilian paramilitary groups would kill people, cut off the head, and bring it to military where they would receive extra points. They did this to Danielito Rivera, the husband of my cousin, Carmela Zavala.”

Knowing they were certainly next, José Antonio and his cousin Chepe, a church worker who had been captured and tortured, found a *coyote* and immigrated illegally to the United States. Both were captured by the border patrol on January 31, 1987, and signed claims for political asylum, which were eventually granted nine years later. The moment of decision arrived for Marina and the children in mid-1988. “The area commander came to my mother’s house and told her he was going to kill all of us. He said we had come from Honduras and that we were all guerrillas.” Marina immediately wrote to José Antonio who recalls, “I was really concerned when I heard what had happened, and realized that the only way I would ever see Marina and the children alive was if they fled to the U.S.” They arrived with the help of human rights workers in December 1988.

In 1989, a former high-ranking State Department official commented with some cynicism that the Salvadoran armed forces have “always found it a lot easier to kill labor leaders than guerrillas.”¹⁰⁷ This assessment was sadly reflective of the 1983 evaluation offered by U.S. Army Major Victor Rosello of the Salvadoran military’s “National Plan” to win hearts and minds:

Any gains made by the National Plan are quickly offset by government linked or sponsored repression. Even if one were to assume that the government officials are not involved in unlawful detentions, arrests,

Ethics at Baylor University (Copyright © 2005), <http://www.baylor.edu/christianethics/SufferingarticleDilling.pdf>.

107. Interview with unnamed former high-ranking State Department official by Benjamin C. Schwarz, November 1989. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 25.

tortures, or murders, the success of counterinsurgency is threatened by the fact that the government . . . cannot guarantee public safety. . . . It is ludicrous to sponsor a counterinsurgency program under these conditions.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, in light of the record, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the supposed emphasis of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine in El Salvador amounted to a secondary concern (at best), or simply propaganda.

As we saw, the 1984 the Kissinger Commission report recommended military aid be “conditioned” on the “establishment of a rule of law and an effective judicial system.”¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, shortly after his inauguration in 1984 President José Napoleon Duarte formed a U.S.-financed team to investigate the 1980 murder of Archbishop Romero; the 1981 “Sheraton Murders” of two U.S. labor advisors and the head of El Salvador’s agrarian land reform program; two peasant massacres; and the 1980 killing of a U.S. journalist. The report notes, however, that the commission was disbanded fifteen months later “without having achieved any of its objectives.”¹¹⁰ In 1985 another commission was formed that added several other cases of political violence to the previous commission’s mandate. The Pentagon report notes, however, “Despite \$15 million in American aid for this body . . . six years later none of the cases with which they have been concerned has been adequately resolved, and the commission has forgone investigations of human rights abuses, focusing instead on common crimes.”¹¹¹

The report then offers a stunning list of judicial failures to effectively prosecute outrageous military crimes:¹¹² (1) a kidnap-for-profit ring cracked by the F.B.I. during 1986 in which death squads posed as leftist rebels while abducting the nation’s wealthiest businessmen; (2) the 1987 political amnesty law that liberated two enlisted men convicted for the Sheraton murders, and effectively pardoned “tens of thousands of human rights violations”;¹¹³ (3) the September 1988 massacre of peasants living in the village of San Sebastian; (4) the 1988 ruling by the Salvadoran Supreme Court that dismissed testimony considered “convincing” by U.S. diplomats implicating ex-Major Roberto D’Aubuisson of the murder of Archbishop Romero; and (5) the November 16, 1989, murder of the UCA Jesuits and the two women by the Atlacatl Battalion.¹¹⁴ After review-

108. Major Victor Rosello, “An Assessment of the National Campaign Plan for El Salvador: Planning for Success or Failure?” DTIC AD-A139932 (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, March 1984), 49. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 25.

109. National Bipartisan Commission, *Report*, 104.

110. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 26.

111. *Ibid.*, 26-27.

112. *Ibid.*, 27.

113. The United Nations Truth Commission charges that the UCA assassinations were ordered by the chief of staff of the El Salvadoran Military High Command in collusion with other members of the high command. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 53.

114. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 25-35.

ing this atrocious list, the report arrives at the following unavoidable and certainly understated conclusion:

Attempts to investigate and punish human rights abuses have been blocked by the armed forces, death squads linked to those forces, and a rightist-dominated court system and legislature. Such obstacles . . . are certainly counterproductive to an effort to win hearts and minds. The conviction of only two officers, in a situation in which up to 40,000 political murders have been attributed to the armed forces and death squads operating with or by them, constitutes a violation of the state's obligation to investigate, prosecute, and punish crimes, particularly those committed by its agents.¹¹⁵

One wonders, then, why U.S. funding for this barbarity continued. The report notes (with some irony) that "forgetting that between 1965 and 1977 the United States had trained the majority of the Salvadoran officer corps and that it was precisely these officers who carried out the worst bloodletting in Central American history," the 1984 Kissinger Commission had nonetheless portrayed the brutality of the Salvadoran armed forces as a "technical problem of inadequate training."¹¹⁶ The 1991 Pentagon report rejects this thinking, however, as naive at best, citing the example of the Atlacatl Battalion, which bracketed its bloody decade with the El Mozote massacre and the Jesuit assassinations.¹¹⁷

As evidence, the report cites still other aspects of Salvadoran military activity that the United States tolerated throughout the decade, including the tendency to temporarily reduce human rights violations for a short period so as to maintain U.S. aid while avoiding real reform,¹¹⁸ the ongoing role of the death squads in the Salvadoran military,¹¹⁹ and the conviction of Salvadoran military leaders that the issue of human rights was at best ancillary to the real goal of U.S. policy in El Salvador: the military defeat of the FMLN. Indeed, Alfredo Cristiani, Salvadoran president at the time of the Jesuit assassinations, criticized the United States for bogging down the war effort with its "human rights psychosis."¹²⁰

115. Ibid., 34-35.

116. Ibid., 35.

117. Ibid., 35-36.

118. Ibid., 35-37.

119. Ibid., 41-43. See U.S. Congress, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *U.S. Intelligence Performance on Central America: Achievements and Selected Instances of Concern*, Staff Report of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Evaluation, 97th Congress, 2nd Session, September 22, 1982. According to this report, a U.S. Embassy study found that "both on and off duty members of the security forces are participants" in the death squads and that it was "unofficially confirmed by right-wing spokesman Robert D'Aubuisson that security force members used the guise of the death squad when a potentially embarrassing or odious task needed to be performed." Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 41.

120. Brook Larmer, "The Politics of Polarization," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 24, 1988. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 39.

The culminating effect of such transgressions was to undermine support for the war in the United States. Indeed, the United States was directly implicated in these violations by virtue of its massive commitment to military funding, and by the presence of its advisors at many levels of the conflict.¹²¹ U.S. personnel had direct and indirect knowledge of, and roles in covering up, the brutal and systematic violations of human rights at El Mozote and elsewhere, all paid for by U.S. dollars and carried out, as noted above, with M-16 cartridges made in Lake City, Missouri.

The Failure of Land Reform

The second pillar of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in El Salvador was the land redistribution program announced by the 1979 junta. Partially implemented by succeeding governments in the 1980s, it was designed by U.S. experts, financed by U.S. aid, and mainly implemented by U.S. organizers and technicians. The Pentagon report recognizes the inherent logic in the FMLN cause, arguing that El Salvador's "highly concentrated pattern of ownership caused a gross maldistribution of wealth . . . and hence appalling poverty for the majority of the population and gross political inequality."¹²² As noted earlier, the U.S. supported plan was designed to change this intolerable situation in three phases.¹²³

The report argues that the story of the failure of this promising land reform program "reflects the political history of El Salvador since the program's inception." While the reformist junta of October 1979 helped develop the program with a "progressive vision of reforming the agrarian structure of the country," by the middle of the following year "military hardliners and the traditional agrarian oligarchy supplanted most of the reformers." The result was that "land reform thus fell under the control of those who had historically opposed it."¹²⁴

Reviewing what was achieved, the report notes that Phase I was implemented in 1980 after the collapse of the reformist junta. It expropriated 14.7 percent of the country's arable land, though 69 percent had been deemed suitable only for cattle grazing, while only 9 percent included coffee growing areas. In response,

121. On May 29, 1983, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* presented the front-page headline: "How U.S. Advisers Run the War in El Salvador." While it was difficult to prove at the time, journalist Rod Norland explained that "American officers have moved quietly into the top levels of the Salvadoran military and are . . . actually making critical decisions about the conduct of the war. . . . [They serve] as strategists, tacticians and planners." (See Rod Norland, "How U.S. Advisers Run the War in El Salvador," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 29, 1983. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 166.) Montgomery notes that by the late 1980s, every brigade and battalion in the country was accompanied by U.S. military advisors. Indeed, during the November 1989 offensive, U.S. journalists reported overhearing a U.S. military advisor giving combat intelligence to Salvadoran troops on the ground. (See Frank Smyth, "Caught with Their Pants Down," *Village Voice*, December 2, 1989, 17.)

122. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 45.

123. *Ibid.*

124. *Ibid.*, 46-47.

however, the armed forces declared a state of siege (which lasted from March 1980 until January 1987!) and expropriated recently distributed estates, allowing the landowners to “intimidate peasants into abandoning the cooperatives or not applying for title to them in the first place.” The net results were disastrous for the program’s supposed beneficiaries:

The number of peasants killed by security forces in 1980 was highest in those areas affected by Phase I; over 500 peasant leaders, dozens of land reform officials, and hundreds of peasant union and cooperative members were assassinated. The military also rampantly demanded extortion payments from the newly formed cooperatives; these efforts were so effective that by 1982, 78 cooperatives had been abandoned or had reverted to their former owners. Intense intimidation of cooperatives by the military and civil defense forces, often directed by the oligarchy, continued until 1983, by which time thousands of cooperative workers had been killed.¹²⁵

D’Aubuisson was elected head of the Constituent Assembly in March 1982, and “Phase II, the centerpiece of the program, was gutted by ARENA in 1983.”¹²⁶ Two mechanisms were inserted into the constitution and the legislation itself, allowing large landowners to circumvent the reform. The report notes glumly that “No Phase II land has been redistributed.”

Finally, Phase III, the land-to-the-tiller program allowed 52,000 families to buy about 24,000 acres. However, an audit by the General Accounting Office found that by 1984 one-third of the applicants “were not working the land because they had been threatened, evicted, or had disappeared.”¹²⁷ The redistributed land contained “the country’s poorest and most exhausted soils, and were mostly located in areas where the fighting was the worst. The report concludes, “Many of those who did benefit received too little land to feed their families, or land only marginally suitable for farming.”¹²⁸

The report’s overall evaluation of Salvadoran land reform efforts during the 1980s concludes on a sobering note: “Instead of regarding land reform as a means to defeat the insurgency, the right has attacked the program with tenacious hostility, first seeking to prevent it and then succeeding in eviscerating it. . . . And despite a decade of reform, 80% of farm land still belongs to its original owners.”¹²⁹ As a result, “In the 11 years since the program began, wealth has become more concentrated in El Salvador, and the disparity between rich and poor has grown.”

125. *Ibid.*, 45–46.

126. *Ibid.*, 47.

127. Quotation from “Salvadoran Land Program Is Criticized,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1984. Cited by Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 47.

128. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 47, 48.

129. *Ibid.*, 48.

The Failure of Political Reform

The third leg of U.S. counterinsurgency in El Salvador was political reform. The report outlines the fate of three “civil-military pacification programs” developed and “imposed” by the United States on a reluctant Salvadoran government and its military. It explains, “The ultimate goal of these programs is to erase the population’s perception of the military as an oppressive force and to promote a more benign image of the central government.”¹³⁰ The first program was the 1983 National Campaign Plan. It proceeded in three phases attempting, first, to clear the FMLN from the economically vital southern half of El Salvador. The second phase called for massive funding by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) to be funneled to the Salvadoran National Commission for Restoration of Areas (CONARA) and focused on “reconstructing damaged housing and infrastructure, implementing the land reform program, and providing basic services such as water and electricity. The third phase attempted to establish local civil defense units.”¹³¹ The report notes that the plan failed to clear the FMLN from the area, that “the notoriously corrupt CONARA swallowed American aid,” and that “the peasants perceived civil defense units to be ugly symbols of uncontrolled repression.”¹³²

The second civic-action program of the mid-1980s, United for Reconstruction (UPR), followed the pattern of the first and suffered the same fate. The third, Municipalities in Action (MEA), provided funds directly to mayors with the idea that local communities could then decide how to spend them. However, while one study characterized MEA as “the most effective counterinsurgency strategy”¹³³ of the decade, its very success was premised on circumventing the Salvadoran government and its military. The report concludes with a sober and realistic assessment of the mistaken premises underlying the entire effort:

Civic action . . . assumes that the rural populace is either ignorant of political issues or that its loyalty can . . . be purchased. Failure to recognize the real issues at the root of the insurgency . . . [has meant that] civil action in El Salvador has thus far failed to uproot either poverty or mistrust. . . . The means employed by civic action will not—cannot—accomplish the goals desired. Those goals will be reached only when El Salvador transforms itself from an unjust, corrupt, brutal, and divisive society. . . .¹³⁴

The Pentagon report finally attributes U.S. efforts to stimulate political reform in El Salvador to the misguided “pretense” that “America . . . can create

130. *Ibid.*, 50.

131. *Ibid.*, 51.

132. *Ibid.*, 52.

133. Research Triangle Institute, CONARA Impact Evaluation, September 20, 1988, 11. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*.

134. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 55-56.

democracy abroad.”¹³⁵ The report notes that by October 1988, reporter Brook Larmer captured the almost total collapse of the counterinsurgency rationale when she wrote, “Nearly everyone here, from conservative Army colonels to leftist political leaders, openly criticizes the U.S. ‘project,’ questioning whether it can produce genuine change or end the war.”¹³⁶ Still, the war and U.S. funding would continue through 1991.

The report appropriately cites the realism of a U.S. diplomat who states, “We say we are here to fortify democracy. Well, hell, we could be doing that forever,”¹³⁷ and highlights the “ludicrous positions” created by this “democracy” rationale. For instance, the United States spent between \$6 and \$8 million organizing the 1982 elections. Yet when it became clear that “ARENA and the other radical right-wing parties that controlled the Assembly would elect . . . D’Aubuisson as president,” the U.S. pre-empted the process and forced the democratically elected Assembly to select a candidate more to its liking.¹³⁸

Similarly, the United States spent \$10.4 million in the 1984 presidential elections: “AID paid organizers to encourage workers and peasants to vote for Duarte over D’Aubuisson, and the CIA channeled funds to the Christian Democrats to prevent what was considered to be a likely D’Aubuisson victory.”¹³⁹ Yet the United States later found its ally manipulating and damaging the credibility of El Salvador’s key democratic institutions, the legislature and the judiciary, precisely in order to defeat the U.S. program of military, agrarian, social, and political reform. The report asserts that the United States was well aware of these actions on the part of the Salvadoran government. Yet it continued to fund its activities, all the while promising the public at home that it could reshape the Salvadoran government and military in the United States’ own image.

After more than a decade of this, the Pentagon report finally had the sanity to ask the following question:

If a regime is incapable of governing—controlling its own territory, imposing order among its population, winning support when it has been given reasonable assistance sufficient to compensate for help given to its internal enemies—it then becomes necessary to question whether that regime will survive and whether it deserves to survive.¹⁴⁰

The same question had provoked the reformist 1979 coup and the slide toward civil war a decade before. One wonders what took the U.S. policy makers so long

135. Ibid., 71.

136. Brook Larmer, “The Shifting Battlefield,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 20, 1988. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 71.

137. James LeMoyné, “The Guns of El Salvador,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 5, 1989, 55. Cited in Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 73.

138. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 72.

139. Ibid., 72.

140. Ibid., 73.

to ask it? Were they unaware of the struggles of the 1970s, blinded to the reality of El Salvador by anti-communist ideology, or cynically ready to sacrifice El Salvador on the altar of Cold War politics?

***In the Name of God, Stop the Repression!
The UCA Follows Archbishop Romero***

For those committed to reform and social change, the brutal repression of Salvadoran civil society, the failure of the reformist 1979 Young Officers Coup, the assassination and apparent eclipse of Archbishop Romero by Roberto D'Aubuisson, and the disappointment of the FMLN's hopes for a general insurrection closed the door for the foreseeable future on the major projects of the 1970s. The only realistic alternatives seemed capitulation or war.

In this section I will briefly explain how this situation and the events that followed drew the UCA away from a focus on El Salvador's elites toward a university praxis emphasizing the role of Salvadoran civil society in creating a peace process and achieving a negotiated solution to the war. We will examine how the UCA Jesuits and their companions learned from the example of Archbishop Romero to operationalize their option for the poor in a university-style engagement with El Salvador's disenfranchised, and mostly poor, majorities. From Archbishop Romero they would learn to trust the common people, and to promote the emergence of a functioning civil society capable of developing its own alternatives to the projects of various competing elites: the military, the FMLN and the left, the land barons and their allies on the right, those in charge of the state, and their patrons in the United States. As we shall see, this important new development would become the vehicle for what some regard as the ultimate realization of Archbishop Romero's prophecy.

U.S. Cold War Politics Extend the War

The failure of the FMLN's "final offensive" created a new historical moment: the possibility of serious negotiations between the right, which controlled the government, and the left, represented by the FMLN. In a February 1981 cable to Washington, U.S. Ambassador Robert White described "both sides fighting to a draw."¹⁴¹ The FMLN began to promote a negotiated settlement to the conflict, and a variety of voices, including acting Archbishop Rivera Damas, urged the beginning of negotiations. Ignacio Ellacuría and the UCA Board decided to press for a "mediated negotiation,"¹⁴² a position they held through the end of the war. Román Mayorga, who had gone into exile in January 1981, called for negotiations in *ECA* saying prophetically, "Neither of the two sides in the conflict has sufficient strength to achieve a total victory over the other, even though each

141. U.S. Embassy/State Department cable, February 18, 1981, no. 1363, "NSA's El Salvador: The Making of U.S. Policy." Cited in Arnsion, *Crossroads*, 145.

142. Minutes of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, José Simeón Cañas (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America, March 11-12, 1981).

will be able to inflict significant damage for an indefinite period of time. This could become extraordinarily long and costly in suffering, human lives, and the economic future of El Salvador.”¹⁴³ U.S. Ambassador Robert White promoted “a political solution.”¹⁴⁴ And on August 28, 1981, Mexico and France offered a proposal for negotiations based on recognizing the FDR-FMLN coalition as a “representative political force.”¹⁴⁵

The incoming Reagan administration, however, was determined to internationalize the essentially local Salvadoran conflict using it to symbolically “draw the line”¹⁴⁶ against international communism. Thus White was immediately removed as ambassador by the new administration. And on February 23, 1981, an administration White Paper was released entitled, “Communist Interference in El Salvador,” which argued, “the insurgency in El Salvador has [become] . . . another case of indirect armed aggression against a small third world country by communist powers acting through Cuba.”¹⁴⁷

For its part, the leadership of the church in El Salvador was convinced that Washington’s Cold War ideology was getting the better of historical reality. Acting Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas wrote to Vice-President Bush on April 6, 1981, arguing that the new administration was misreading the Salvadoran situation. He writes,

The Administration does not understand the composition and nature of the Junta. Specifically, I think you underestimate the power and resistance of the right-wing military to true political change, including the kind of political dialogue which I am sure is the only road to peace in our country. . . . The United States must clearly indicate it is in favor of a political solution through negotiations or [they] will not occur.¹⁴⁸

But the archbishop’s appeal fell on deaf ears. The administration had already faced this question and accepted the downsides of a military approach. Indeed,

143. ECA 36, no. 395 (April-May 1981): 367-82.

144. Testimony of Hon. Robert E. White, U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, *U.S. Policy toward El Salvador*, March 11, 1981 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 133. Cited in Arnson, *Crossroads*, 146.

145. Ignacio Ellacuría, “La declaración conjunta mexicano-francesa sobre El Salvador,” ECA 36, no. 395 (April-May 1981): 845-66. Reprinted in Ignacio Ellacuría, *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989): Escritos políticos* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991), 1235-69.

146. These words were used by Reagan’s first secretary of state, Alexander Haig, in a briefing for the congressional leadership on the State Department’s White Paper “Communist Interference in El Salvador.” See LeoGrande, “A Splendid Little War,” 27. He also used this phrase in briefing the National Security Council. See Cannon, *President Reagan*, 344.

147. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Communist Interference in El Salvador,” Special Report No. 80, February 23, 1981. Cited in Arnson, *Crossroads*, 56.

148. Letter of apostolic administrator of San Salvador, Arturo Rivera Damas, to Vice-President George Bush, April 6, 1981. Cited in Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 147.

on February 25, 1981, two days after the aforementioned White Paper, former Ambassador White had starkly posed the following question to U.S. policy makers on the first day of congressional hearings regarding Reagan policy in El Salvador.

The security forces in El Salvador have been responsible for the deaths of thousands and thousands of young people, and they have executed them on the mere suspicion that they are leftists or sympathize with leftists. The real issue is how do you supply military assistance to a force that is going to use that military assistance to assassinate, to kill, in a totally uncontrolled way? Do you want to associate the United States with the type of killing that has been going on down there in El Salvador?¹⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the Reagan administration's unapologetic acceptance of such liabilities as part of the cynical calculus of Cold War politics would find an ambivalent but reliable collaborator in Congress, establishing a pattern that would continue for the next decade.

Ellacuría Shifts to Negotiations and Civil Society

As we saw, the failure of the reformist 1979 coup led the UCA not only to accept the "inevitability" of the offensive, but to place some hope in it (albeit with much ambivalence) as a possible solution. The *ECA* editorial of December 1979 formulated the dilemma as follows:

In the face of the utter failure of the most generous, technically qualified and motivated effort seen in recent years, we are confronted brokenheartedly with the question: is it that even a profound reformism is not possible in El Salvador? The least we can say is that it has not been possible with this approach, with these men, and with this political project. And that is not because they were not competent. Rather, it is that maybe the reformist model is no longer viable in our country, and that in order to change something it is necessary to carry out a true revolution.¹⁵⁰

A month and a half after the failure of the FMLN's "final offensive," however, Ellacuría came out in favor of "A Process of [Political] Mediation for El Salvador,"¹⁵¹ a position that he held for the rest of his life. The Jesuit's think-

149. Testimony of Robert White, U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations for 1982, Hearings, Part 1, 97th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 3, 17. Cited in Arnsion, *Crossroads*, 58-59.

150. *ECA* 34, no. 374 (December 1979): 1038.

151. "Ignacio Ellacuría, "Un proceso de mediación para El Salvador," *ECA* 36, nos. 387-388 (March 1981): 3-16.

ing was shaped not only by the military reality that neither side had sufficient strength to win, but he also questioned whether the government or the FMLN truly represented the majority of the Salvadoran people.

In August of 1981,¹⁵² Ellacuría expanded his argument in favor of negotiations, invoking a principle that Juan Hernandez Pico believes emerged from Ellacuría's involvement in the 1971 ANDES strike: the need for "a strong civic society capable of being a social force over against political forces such as the state and political parties."¹⁵³ In this article Ellacuría introduced the concept of *third forces* whose interests were directly represented by neither the government nor the FMLN. This idea would lead Ellacuría and the university to devise ways during the 1980s of interacting more directly with the vast array of grassroots groups through which disenfranchised, poor, and unrepresented Salvadorans had begun to act as agents of their own destiny. As an FMLN comandante would explain looking back a decade later,

The contribution of Ellacuría was that he understood that this country is sadly polarized, and that the positions of the two sides, the two poles, have radicalized. But between one camp and the other there are an enormous number of people who are not expressing themselves politically, people who want to see a solution to the problems of the country without being connected either to the FMLN or the government. Ellacuría insisted on the need for these forces to express themselves and play a real role in society.¹⁵⁴

The failure of the FMLN offensive and the prospect of a long and bloody civil war pushed Ellacuría and the UCA to identify this reality as an important force in favor of negotiations and a foundation for a political future.

Archbishop Romero Teaches UCA to Trust the Common People

Reflection on the life and ministry of Archbishop Romero among the country's poor majorities played a crucial role in drawing the UCA's attention from El Salvador's elites to its common people. In 1985 the UCA presented a posthumous doctorate to Archbishop Romero, and Ellacuría insisted that, while the UCA offered consultation during the archbishop's tenure, "no one doubted who was the teacher and who was the assistant, who was the pastor setting the direction and who was the implementer, who was the prophet revealing the mystery and who was the follower, who was the one who encouraged and who was the one

152. Ignacio Ellacuría, "La responsabilidad de las 'terceras fuerzas,' editorial, *ECA* no. 394 (August 1981): 750.

153. Letter from Juan Hernández-Pico, S.J., to Charles J. Beirne, S.J., July 1993. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 103.

154. Interview with Gerson Martinez by Teresa Whitfield, March 18, 1991. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 294.

encouraged, who was the voice and who was the echo.”¹⁵⁵ But what was it the UCA learned from Romero? Ellacuría explained that the award represented “a commitment to do in our university way what he did in his pastoral way.”¹⁵⁶ And Jon Sobrino has suggested that the UCA learned how to fulfill its mission as a university by watching what it meant to run an institution like the archdiocese from the perspective of a preferential option for the poor.¹⁵⁷

In a liturgy celebrated at the UCA eight months after the March 24, 1980, assassination, Ellacuría offered four points summarizing what the UCA had learned from its self-proclaimed mentor.¹⁵⁸ First, Ellacuría says that the UCA believed the archbishop offered a new model of how “to historicize the power of the Gospel”¹⁵⁹ in the Salvadoran context. Second, just as Oscar Romero had learned from Rutilio Grande how to historicize the gospel in the present moment, so the UCA was committed to learn from both of them what it meant to be “dedicated . . . to evangelizing the poor” in a way that “led the poor to historicize their own salvation” and to give “historical flesh to the eternally new word of God.”¹⁶⁰

Third, Ellacuría says the archbishop taught the university that its initial conversion to God’s preferential option for the poor should be historicized by letting the crucified people become “the guiding light” of its apostolic ministry. As a result Romero “changed his location, he changed his situation, and what had been an opaque, amorphous and ineffective word became a torrent of life to which the people drew near in order to quench their thirst.”¹⁶¹ Fourth, the archbishop taught the university to look to the common Salvadoran people themselves in order to find the salvation preached by their mentor. Thus, while universities are by nature institutions for the elite, Archbishop Romero showed the UCA that the purpose of the university was to empower the “poor majorities of El Salvador” to become active participants in shaping their future.¹⁶²

Though the university had been living with the option for the poor for over a decade, these words would suggest that it was just learning how to make it into an effective “historical force.” While the frustration and failures of the strategic visions nurtured by the UCA, the church, and the left during the 1970s seemed to block the way forward, their apparent failure drew the UCA’s attention away from the agency of El Salvador’s political, economic, ecclesial, and university

155. Ignacio Ellacuría, “La UCA ante el doctorado concedido a Monseñor Romero,” *Escritos teológicos*, III (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 2002), 104; reprinted from *ECA* no. 437 (1985): 168.

156. *Ibid.*, 102.

157. Interview of Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein, May 8, 1994, 4.

158. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Monseñor Romero, un enviado de Dios para salvar a su pueblo,” *Escritos teológicos*, III, 93-100; reprinted from *Sal Terrae* 811 (1980): 825-32 and *ECA* 19 (1990): 5-10.

159. Ellacuría, “Monseñor Romero,” 94.

160. *Ibid.*, 96.

161. *Ibid.*, 98.

162. *Ibid.*, 100.

elites toward the renewal of Salvadoran civil society taking place through the emerging agency of the country's dispossessed majorities. And it soon became clear to Ellacuría that the vast majority of Salvadorans wanted political, economic, social reform, *and* an end to the war.

Gradual Emergence of a New Kind of Christian University

At the end of the 1970s, therefore, the UCA's emerging model of the university was influenced by watching Archbishop Oscar Romero run the archdiocese grounded in a commitment to Medellín's preferential option for the poor.¹⁶³ Drawing on the 1985 speech in which Ellacuría presented an honorary doctorate to the deceased archbishop, the UCA found in Archbishop Oscar Romero (1) a model of how to historicize the force of the gospel, (2) through a liberating evangelization of the poor, (3) which the vast majority of Salvadorans experienced as consistent with the gospel, (4) with such force that many were disposed to live their Christian vocation by imitating his example.

In this section, therefore, I will briefly outline how the UCA tried to implement what it learned from the archbishop through a variety of initiatives designed to enact the mission articulated in the 1979 document summarized above.¹⁶⁴ The reader will recall that the document asserted the UCA should be "for social change," "in a university manner," driven by "Christian inspiration."¹⁶⁵ In what follows, then, I will first examine how the UCA tried to historicize this mission through the creation of innovative practical programs for social outreach. Second, I will examine how and why the UCA began actively promoting a military-political solution to the war after the failure of the FMLN's "final offensive" in 1981. And third, I will examine some of the ecclesial politics generated by the UCA's way of implementing its understanding of the role of a Christian university in society. These elements will then prepare us to examine the gradual realization by Ellacuría and the UCA that a military-political solution depended on the continued emergence of El Salvador's socially marginalized majorities as the primary agents for a solution to the conflict.

Practical Vehicles for a University-Style Preferential Option for the Poor

As noted earlier, on December 2, 1975, the UCA Board approved the foundation of the Center for Political and Social Documentation¹⁶⁶ in order to provide basic research data for teaching, research, and social outreach (the university's three basic functions). This realized one aspect of the long-range "planning for

163. Interview of Jon Sobrino by Robert Lassalle-Klein, May 8, 1994, 4.

164. "Las funciones fundamentales de la universidad y su operativización," in *Planteamiento*, 37-121. For more information on this point, see section of this chapter entitled "The Synthetic Statement of 1979."

165. See "Las funciones fundamentales," 47.

166. The Spanish title was Centro de Documentación y Apoyo a la Investigación (CIDAI).

... the second decade of the University” initiated in 1975 by the UCA’s new president, Román Mayorga, after the “liberation thesis” gained the support of a majority of the Board. Recall that Mayorga had initiated the planning process in order to help the UCA “consider the question of how to use its institutional influence for the liberating transformation of society.”¹⁶⁷ Thus it was felt that the university would need a center to better understand the “national reality” it so hoped to transform.

After Ellacuría became president, in May of 1980 the Center for Political and Social Documentation became the Center for Information, Documentation, and Research Support (CIDAI), under the direction of Ricardo Stein. In the 1980s CIDAI and its weekly publication, *Proceso*, would become the most important source of independent documentation and analysis of current events in El Salvador. While Ellacuría was in exile from November 1980 to April 1982 he supported an increased role for CIDAI in helping the Board to analyze and adapt to rapidly evolving events.

Accordingly, on March 11-12, 1981, the Board considered input from Ellacuría on this and other questions conveyed through former provincial Miguel Estrada, S.J., before developing its plan for the first semester of 1981 (March-July). Following a schema presented at the March 9, 1981, meeting by recently appointed acting vice-president, Ignacio Martín-Baró,¹⁶⁸ the Board discussed how CIDAI might be integrated into “the directing and thinking nucleus of the UCA”¹⁶⁹ in order to provide the university’s “analysis and reflection with the maximum academic quality.” Confirming this direction, Ellacuría’s subsequent April 1981 letter to the Board explicitly emphasized the importance of CIDAI in “clarifying and grounding [the] analysis” guiding the university’s social outreach “from which all its activities receive their overall orientation.”¹⁷⁰

The key point here is that the Board realized the need for sophisticated yet practical tools through which to document and analyze the rapidly evolving national reality of El Salvador. Thus, while the pages of *ECA* had provided insightful analysis since 1969, the 1980s witnessed a quantum leap in the UCA’s practical ability to document and analyze unfolding events. Indeed, by mid-decade the UCA was publishing seven scholarly journals analyzing economics, social psychology, sociology, theology, national issues, and the documentation of key events. In 1985 Segundo Montes would found the Human Rights Institute of the UCA (IDHUCA), and in July 1986 Ignacio Martín-Baró led the creation of the University Institute for Public Opinion (IUDOP). Together these centers

167. Mayorga Quirós, *La Universidad para el cambio social*, 65.

168. Ignacio Martín-Baró, “La UCA en El Primer Ciclo Académico de 1981,” Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, March 9, 1981 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America), appendix.

169. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, March 11-12, 1981 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America), 2.

170. Letter from Rev. Ignacio Ellacuría to the Board of the University of Central America, José Simeón Cañas (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America, April 27, 1981), 1, 2.

would make the excruciating reality of El Salvador's suffering majorities available to the nation itself and interested parties abroad. The importance of this achievement cannot be overemphasized in light of the brutal suppression of El Salvador's independent media by the government and the military, and the consistent attempt by the U.S. mission to downplay the grotesque human rights violations of its ally. Two examples must suffice.

First, starting in 1985 Segundo Montes began to publish annual studies (1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989)¹⁷¹ that brought international attention to the startling reality that the war had made refugees of between 20 and 25 percent of the population of El Salvador. These played an important part in exposing the insensitivity of U.S. administrations during the 1980s to the human rights violations suffered by refugees seeking political asylum in the United States and helped to refute the logic of the repression. Montes's 1987 study presented data that led to the incredible conclusion (unrefuted as far as I know) that Salvadoran refugees living abroad (primarily in the United States) represented the largest source of foreign capital in the country.¹⁷² One important political implication of this discovery was that it directly contradicted claims that either the flourishing wealth of the oligarchy or U.S. economic aid was the most important factor for the economic survival of El Salvador.

Second, under the leadership of Ignacio Martín-Baró, IUDOP offered the average Salvadoran a "social mirror" providing an objective basis from which to conclude that their own dangerous opinions against the war were, in fact, shared by many, if not most other citizens.¹⁷³ IUDOP pointed out that, for instance, in May 1988 over 40 percent of the population supported a negotiated solution to the war, even though one could be executed for voicing this opinion publicly!

Martín-Baró compared the empowering effect of such information to the homilies of Archbishop Romero, which, as we saw, documented the reality of the nation on his weekly broadcasts. He argued that "public opinion polls can be a way of returning their voice to the oppressed peoples, an instrument that, as it reflects the popular experience with truth and meaning, opens the consciousness to a sense of a new truth to be constructed in history."¹⁷⁴ To this end IUDOP conducted twenty-three such surveys under Martín-Baró from July

171. Segundo Montes, *El Salvador 1985: Desplazados y refugiados* (San Salvador: IDHUCA, 1985); *El Salvador 1986: En busca de soluciones para los desplazados* (San Salvador: IDHUCA, 1986); *El Salvador 1987: Salvadoreños refugiados en los Estados Unidos* (San Salvador: IDHUCA, 1987); co-author with J. J. García, *Salvadoran Migration to the United States: An Exploratory Study* (Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance, Georgetown University Press, 1988); *Refugiados y repatriados, El Salvador y Honduras* (San Salvador: IDHUCA, 1989).

172. Montes, *El Salvador 1987*, 103-21, esp. 120-21.

173. Ignacio Martín-Baró, "La encuesta de opinión pública como instrumento desideologizador," *Revista de psicología de El Salvador* 35 (January-March 1990), 11. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 253.

174. Martín-Baró, "La encuesta de opinión pública," 21. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 253.

1986 to September 1989. These studies not only reflected the national reality but helped to shape it by articulating and reinforcing the opinions of El Salvador's underrepresented majorities as an important social force.

Ready access to such material also put Martín-Baró in a position to make extremely important and internationally recognized scholarly contributions to the study of the psychological reality of the country. In a 1988 article published in the UCA's journal of social psychology Martín-Baró asserted that the military, with the help of U.S. advisors, had shifted the focus of its efforts from the "dirty war of the early eighties" to a "psychological war," which was having serious effects on the mental health of the nation. He explained the logic of this shift in terms of the Salvadoran military's appropriation of the U.S. counterinsurgency project suggesting, "The primary goal of the North American project is the elimination of the revolutionary movement; the restoration of democracy in the country is only secondary, or derivative."¹⁷⁵ Referring to the first half of the decade, he notes, "That is why, when the time was propitious, the project set out to get rid of all insurgent groups, rapidly and brutally, combining military action with a massive campaign of repression against the civilian population." However, "When this campaign failed, the project entered into a new phase that sought to achieve the same objective through democratic forms that would justify the project itself." He also revealed the roots of this shift in the exigencies of U.S. politics: "Essentially, the North American project for El Salvador had to find a form of dirty war that would allow it to realize its goals but spare it from having to pay the political costs. And the answer was thought to have been found in psychological warfare."

The article then goes on to explain that the dirty war and the psychological war shared three important objectives: (1) a dismantling of the grassroots mass organizations; (2) an elimination of many of the most significant opposition figures; and (3) a weakening of the support bases of the revolutionary movement in virtually all sectors of the overall population.¹⁷⁶ Both employed violence, polarization, and the institutionalized lie. But the psychological war was able to use terrorist repression more selectively, thereby reducing it to levels acceptable in the United States and emphasized psychological tactics geared to producing psychic trauma, insecurity, inhibition, flight, and moral discrediting of politicizing themes.

In another 1988 article published in the same UCA journal, "Political Violence and the War as Causes of Psychosocial Trauma in El Salvador," Martín-Baró goes on to document how this campaign produced a national epidemic of "psychosocial trauma, which is to say, the traumatic crystallization of dehumanized social relations in persons and groups. The social polarization tends to be somatized, the institutionalized lying precipitates grave identity problems, and

175. Ignacio Martín-Baró, in *Towards a Society That Serves Its People*, 307; reprinted from "From Dirty War to Psychological War: The Case of El Salvador," in A. Aron, ed., *Flight, Exile, and Return: Mental Health and the Refugee* (San Francisco: CHRICA, 1988).

176. *Ibid.*, 308-9.

the violence occasions a militarization of the very mind.”¹⁷⁷ He then concludes, “These realities make it urgent to undertake a psychosocial project of depolarizing, deideologizing and demilitarizing the country.” His strategy would include a negotiated end to the conflict.

One other innovation worth mentioning is Ellacuría’s 1984 creation of a “Chair for the National Reality.” As we have seen, U.S. advisors tried to moderate the all-out government-sponsored war on civil society that had characterized the early 1980s. As a result, a small space opened for unions, grassroots organizations, and political parties to operate, and the UCA found itself in a good position to create a forum for the public exchange of ideas, something sorely lacking at the time. As a result, Ellacuría’s *Cátedra de la Realidad Nacional* quickly became the most important national forum for virtually every major policy proposal regarding the future of the country. The forum also energized the other dimensions of the UCA’s program of social outreach. For instance, the 1987 November–December *ECA* was totally dedicated to a *Cátedra* on the Esquipulas II peace proposal, which included labor groups, Archbishop Rivera Damas, and virtually the entire political leadership of the country except ARENA.

From the 1970s Visions of the Elites to the Majority’s Wish for Negotiations and Peace

Two documents written in 1981 capture the essence of the “negotiated solution” to the conflict promoted by Ellacuría and the UCA Board after the failure of the FMLN’s “final offensive” in 1981. In this section I will briefly summarize these documents as examples of the aforementioned shift away from the agency of elites toward the concerns of everyday Salvadoran civil society in the UCA’s efforts to “historicize” the gospel at the beginning of the decade.

As mentioned above, though Ellacuría would remain in exile from November 27, 1980, to April 1982, he continued to play an active role in decision making through regular contact with the Board and other elements of the university leadership. Following this pattern the Board traveled to San Jose, Costa Rica, on March 28, 29, 1981, to meet with their leader while considering a global and strategic reevaluation of the many “functions of the UCA” in light of the current “situation of El Salvador.” In the minutes Ellacuría is listed as president while the acting president, Axel Solderberg, appears merely as vice-president.¹⁷⁸

After the meeting Ellacuría developed a proposal outlining an important new direction for the university’s social outreach. This document, which appears as

177. Ignacio Martín-Baró, “La violencia política y la guerra como causas del trauma psicosocial in El Salvador,” *Revista de psicología de El Salvador* 28 (April–June 1988): 123.

178. Ignacio Ellacuría, “La proyección social de la UCA hoy.” Appendix to Minutes of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America, José Simeón Cañas, April 27, 1981). Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 174. All citations from Board meetings in this section are taken from Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 169–206.

the first order of new business in the Board minutes for April 27, 1981, argues that “the social outreach of the UCA should now ground itself in the perspective of a political solution and . . . a process of mediation”¹⁷⁹ for the civil war. It insists this strategic commitment must be carried out in a thoroughly “university manner”¹⁸⁰ through the activities of the president; the editorial, production, and distribution work of the university’s overall communications center; its press (UCA Editores) and journals (administration, engineering, economics, etc.); the Center for Information, Documentation, and Research Support (CIDAI) and ECA; and the Social Service Center, which placed students for their community service hours. It also envisions a vigorous agenda of public events such as “round tables, conferences, congresses, etc.,” ongoing contacts with leading “politicians, economists, religious, military figures, etc.,” and the addition of a university radio station and weekly newspaper, all designed to stimulate the “national collective consciousness” of Salvadoran civil society through reflection on current events.¹⁸¹

The document manifests a new sensitivity to the need to be in dialogue with a broad range of non-elite social groups, including professional organizations, owners of small- and middle-sized businesses, other universities, labor unions, political and military personnel, the FMLN-FDR, and student organizations. To this end it proposes the creation of a new social outreach council. On May 15, 1981, the Board approved the document and appointed Jon Sobrino the interim coordinator for the new council. Later, on September 6, 1982, the Board established a vice-president for social outreach, and Ellacuría himself was named to the position (in addition to his role as president).

In June 1981, Ellacuría wrote to the acting president, Axel Solderberg, stating his views on the current situation and advocating an activist role for the UCA in promoting a negotiated solution to the conflict.

I see the UCA as . . . doing useful things . . . to advance the process that leads to a solution to end the hell in which the majority of the people in this country lives, a situation aggravated by war, repression, insecurity and the most profound economic crisis. . . .

It seems to me that in the short run of the next months there will be no solution. The Left is not going to defeat the Government, nor will the Government achieve a victory over the Left. As a result, social and economic disaster is going to continue and worsen. [But] will this worsening bring about a new situation that will require a negotiated political solution? . . . [No,] because the United States and the military believe, or want to believe, that they can accomplish a definitive military victory relatively soon. . . . All the other groups, including the

179. Ellacuría, “La proyección social de la UCA hoy,” 3.

180. *Ibid.*, 5.

181. *Ibid.*, 1-3.

Christian Democrats, both inside and outside the country, are pushing for a negotiated agreement despite the difficulty in achieving it.¹⁸²

But what sort of negotiated solution does Ellacuría envision?

Two weeks after his letter to the UCA Board, on May 11, 1981, Ellacuría outlined a framework for a “political-military solution” that would define the university’s position for the next several years.¹⁸³ After explaining his approach, Ellacuría summarizes his view of the current state of affairs in El Salvador. He states that after the failure of Colonel Molina’s 1976 agrarian reform, the country moved steadily toward an intolerable “limit situation” involving military repression of civil society.¹⁸⁴ He notes that every electoral victory by the opposition has been “stubbornly annulled” since 1972,¹⁸⁵ and that both parties to the current conflict have committed themselves to a “military” solution,¹⁸⁶ despite the fact that neither side was capable of achieving victory.¹⁸⁷ Thus, with virtually every other international government except the United States pressuring for a political settlement,¹⁸⁸ and both sides at least talking about a political settlement, he affirms a building consensus that the Salvadoran situation cannot tolerate the prolongation of a civil war.¹⁸⁹

Ellacuría then proposes three principles for a negotiated solution: (1) a purely military solution cannot resolve the current situation; (2) a purely political solution is not a realistic possibility; and (3) a combined political-military solution is the most likely path to resolution. He argues that the latter, in order to be effective, must “give birth to and guarantee a political project and a structure that responds to the objective needs of the national reality, to the just demands of the organized community, and to the present correlation between [political and military] forces inside and outside the country.”¹⁹⁰ With these principles in hand both Ellacuría and the UCA would dedicate much of its social outreach for the rest of decade to promoting a negotiated solution to the war.

Structural and Ecclesial Implications of the UCA’s New Way of Being a University

A closer examination of the aforementioned Board meeting of March 11-12, 1981, serves to illustrate the role of social analysis in shaping the UCA’s inter-

182. Letter from Ignacio Ellacuría to Axel Soderberg, June 1981. Cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 178.

183. Ignacio Ellacuría, “Solución política o solución militar para El Salvador?” *ECA* nos. 390-391 (May 1981): 295-324; reprinted in *Veinte años de historia*, 951-95. The article is dated May 11, 1981.

184. Ellacuría, *Veinte años de historia*, 957.

185. *Ibid.*, 960.

186. *Ibid.*, 962.

187. *Ibid.*, 964.

188. *Ibid.*, 966.

189. *Ibid.*, 966-72.

190. *Ibid.*, 980-95.

pretation of its new way of being a university. As suggested earlier, the work of the Board that day was dedicated to “planning for university activities for the first semester of 1981 (March to July)” following the outline suggested by Martín-Baró.¹⁹¹

Fr. Beirne’s study of the UCA uses this document to “help us see the major issues to which the Board and the UCA would dedicate time during this crucial year.”¹⁹² The document emphasizes that, despite the worsening situation in the country, “the University . . . cannot renounce” the UCA’s “explicit option . . . for the total liberation of the Salvadoran . . . people,” its “Christian inspiration,” or its plans “to conserve and . . . increase the academic quality of its services . . . , especially in teaching.”¹⁹³ It then outlines a series of strategies designed “to collaborate in a university fashion with the current national process” through the university’s teaching, research, and social outreach.¹⁹⁴

Examples include linking the university’s proposal for a negotiated settlement to the war to the work of CIDAI, *ECA*, *Proceso*, UCA Editores (the university press), and communications with political and church groups. The minutes emphasize the practical importance of teaching for maintaining the student population and the “prestige linked to the university’s “scientific and Christian seriousness.”¹⁹⁵ There was a call for practical measures to support the faculty and staff and to promote the work of teaching,” including “revitalizing the University High Council.”¹⁹⁶ The Board asserted that research analyzing the current national reality comprised a critical “contribution by the UCA to the current situation.”¹⁹⁷ Overall, the document demonstrates a preoccupation with maintaining and finding practical avenues to advance the university’s mission in the circumstances of brutal repression and war.

The October 11, 1982, meeting was largely taken up with responding to explosive “accusations against the UCA”¹⁹⁸ by a Salvadoran bishop closely aligned with the military. On October 7, 1982, the right-wing newspaper, *El Diario de Hoy*, had quoted charges by Bishop Pedro Aparicio of San Vicente, E.S., that whole sections of the UCA faculty exhibited “Marxist tendencies” and that “all of its teaching programs include Marxist points.”¹⁹⁹ Additionally,

191. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, March 11-12, 1981 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America), 1; cited in Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 171-74. All citations from Board meetings in this section are taken from Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 169-206.

192. Beirne, *Jesuit Education and Social Change*, 171.

193. *Ibid.*

194. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, March 11-12, 1981, 1-4.

195. *Ibid.*, 3.

196. *Ibid.*

197. *Ibid.*, 2.

198. Letter from Ignacio Ellacuría to the Board of Directors, October 8, 1982. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, October 11, 1982 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America).

199. Letter from the Board of Directors to the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador,

the bishop insinuated that Román Mayorga and Guillermo Ungo, leaders of the reformist 1979 coup who “had come out of the UCA,” were Marxists, and made the politically explosive charge that “FECCAS and other campesino organizations were born at . . . [the] university.” Axel Soderberg and Fr. Miguel Estrada, S.J., were sent to meet with Bishop Aparicio and reported at the October 25, 1982, meeting that the bishop claimed he was misquoted and promised a public statement “discounting the accusations.”²⁰⁰ These kinds of events formed a significant part of the background to the technical discussion about the legal status of the university.

A few months later the Board meeting of February 21, 1983, was preoccupied with concerns in Rome over tensions with elements of the Salvadoran hierarchy. On February 13, 1983, Fr. Paolo Dezza, S.J. (then one of two special papal delegates governing the Society of Jesus), wrote to Ellacuría urging greater cooperation with the Salvadoran bishops. The background for this letter was complaints from the most politically conservative Salvadoran bishops about the work of the UCA. It seems that the papal nuncio for El Salvador had sent an eighteen-page document to the Vatican alleging that “the UCA had deviated from its foundational purpose in the positions it was taking, but especially in its independence from the hierarchy.”²⁰¹ On April 28, 1982, the nuncio asked the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education and the Jesuit curia “to remove from the UCA some rather radical Jesuits.” Then in August 1982 the Congregation delivered to Fr. Dezza letters from the papal nuncio and the episcopal conference announcing “the intention of the bishops to establish [their own] Catholic university ‘in light of the impossibility of arriving at an understanding with the Fathers of the University.’”²⁰²

Ellacuría was sent to Rome to meet with Fr. Dezza and his advisors on December 19, 1982. He reported to the Board on February 21, 1983, that,

Fr. Dezza’s position is that the UCA should be oriented as a Catholic university as much in what it teaches and does, as in its indirect dependence on the Jesuit hierarchy. Consequently he maintains that even though we do not depend directly on the bishops of El Salvador, but rather directly on the pope through the Jesuit chain of command, we should seek to achieve dialogue and good relations with them, but should avoid inopportune intrusions [on their part].²⁰³

October 12, 1982. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, October 11, 1982 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America).

200. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, October 25, 1982 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America), 1.

201. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, February 21, 1983 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America), 1.

202. *Ibid.*

203. *Ibid.*

Dezza's solution was to stop "publicly emphasizing" the UCA's legal autonomy, and to begin "a dialogue" with the bishops. He strongly encouraged this approach, while refusing the path of granting either juridical or practical control over the university to the bishops.

Significant differences in approach and tensions also existed among the Jesuit universities of the larger region. On February 27, 1984, the Board heard a report from Ignacio Martín-Baró on his role as proxy for Ellacuría at a meeting held in Mexico city of the Jesuit university presidents from Mexico and Central America. When he mentions the centrality of the option for the poor in orienting the research, social outreach, and teaching of the UCA, he says the approach "either was [genuinely] not understood or they didn't want to understand it." He notes with disappointment that "the publication program of the [Salvadoran] UCA hardly brought any surprise or admiration," adding "the same thing occurred regarding the social outreach programs . . . [of] the UCA in Nicaragua." Overall, the UCA's academic vice-president felt "the discussion was generally made up of positions that were overly spiritualistic . . . and a boiling down to the general affirmation of the importance of the 'university apostolate' of the Society of Jesus."²⁰⁴

Fr. Charles Beirne has studied the correspondence between Jesuit superiors in Rome and El Salvador from the founding of the university through the death of the martyrs in 1989. While these documents and many of the particulars of this correspondence cannot be made public (due to its confidential nature and the fact that many of the principals are still alive),²⁰⁵ some of Fr. Beirne's observations and conclusions may be introduced into our discussion.²⁰⁶ He tells us that during 1984 Jesuit superiors in Rome continued to express concern about the need to overcome polarizing attitudes attributed to certain Jesuits in the unintellectual apostolates.²⁰⁷ Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., elected head of the Society of Jesus on September 13, 1983, was quite concerned about Jesuit tensions with the bishops of Nicaragua over the close relationship between the Jesuit university in Managua and the Sandinista government. Regarding the San Salvador UCA, however, recently named provincial of Central America, Fr. Valentin Menendez, S.J., continued to emphasize in his correspondence with Rome the crucial role being played in the country by the university through its educational work, especially with its publications and their influence on policy debates raging in the country. Likewise, Fr. Menendez continued to interpret

204. Memorandum from Ignacio Martín-Baró to Ignacio Ellacuría, February 20, 1984. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Central America, February 27, 1984 (San Salvador: Archives of the University of Central America).

205. The Jesuit curial staff of the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus has asked that this material remain confidential until such time they give permission for its use.

206. Charles J. Beirne, S.J., "Murder in the University: Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador" (unpublished manuscript, May 2, 1994), 183-92. Used with permission of author.

207. *Ibid.*, 183.

and defend the UCA's crucial contribution to promoting dialogue to end the civil war.²⁰⁸

Fr. Beirne shows that these same themes surfaced repeatedly in this correspondence throughout the 1980s. A series of Jesuit provincials were called upon to explain and interpret the work of the UCA to superiors in Rome who had received notably mixed reports from critics on the scene, or from Jesuit observers from outside. UCA Jesuits themselves were asked to make a series of institutional adjustments and to deal with shortcomings in carrying out the work of the university. These were undertaken, but, in general, the work continued with strong support from the Society of Jesus in Rome.

Fr. Beirne's unpublished review of these documents shows that, right up until weeks before the assassinations, provincial correspondence between El Salvador and Rome reflects concerns with issues of overwork, the need to attend to a union of hearts and minds within the Jesuit order, and what is seen as a certain overemphasis on the university's autonomy from ecclesiastical superiors. The overall tone, however, amounts to a solid endorsement for the UCA's real, influential, and positive presence in almost every serious effort to develop solutions for the most serious problems of the country.²⁰⁹ With its emphasis on the role of the gospel in the UCA's efforts, this correspondence reflects the province's affirmation that the UCA was finding its own way to "historicize" in the 1980s what it learned from Archbishop Romero the decade before.

Role of the UCA in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Salvadoran Civil Society

It is important to understand that the UCA's commitment to negotiations between the FMLN and the government was an extremely dangerous position when Ellacuría and the UCA assumed it in 1981. In 1983 the ARENA party, through what the CIA describes as its clandestine "paramilitary organization,"²¹⁰ made a direct threat on the lives of all who would dare to advocate dialogue: "Dialogue is treason to the fatherland, and so we warn all the parties, political and military forces interested in negotiating the future of the country, that the eyes and the guns of the true patriots of El Salvador are on them."²¹¹ Within days a bomb exploded at the UCA II residence, and fliers were found claiming responsibility for the group who had issued the warning: the Secret Anti-Communist Army (ESA). This was the situation until 1984 when U.S. counterinsurgency helped promote the election of José Napoleon Duarte.

208. Ibid.

209. Ibid., 191.

210. CIA/State Department, "Briefing Paper on Right-Wing Terrorism in El Salvador," October 27, 1993. U.S. document declassified on November 1993, Washington, DC. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 292.

211. "Comunicado del ESA, atribuyéndose las acciones terroristas del 6 de septiembre de 1983," *ECA* no. 419 (October 1983): 903. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 292.

The reader will recall that Duarte's election was strongly endorsed by the Reagan administration, with the CIA providing covert financial and logistic support. Duarte had won the presidential elections of 1972, which the military had stolen (as documented by the UCA), and had graduated from the iconic U.S. Catholic university, Notre Dame. The 1984 election campaign, which featured nasty exchanges between Duarte and Roberto D'Aubuisson, cemented Duarte's standing in the United States as the candidate of reform. However, Duarte had run on a platform promoting peace negotiations that created a problem for his patrons in the Reagan administration who were committed to continuing the war and achieving a military victory over the FMLN. Accordingly, Duarte was asked to sign a joint communiqué in Washington the week before he assumed the presidency. The agreement stated that increased U.S. aid was needed both to achieve peace and to pursue the successful prosecution of the war.²¹² The United States would oppose serious negotiations for the remainder of the decade, but the new president of El Salvador had another idea.

1984: La Palma and Ayagualo

Duarte surprised all sides by announcing in his October 8, 1984, speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations that he was inviting the FDR-FMLN to peace talks in La Palma, Chalatenango. The FDR-FMLN had made a peace proposal five months before in May 1984, but few expected Duarte to reciprocate. The meeting was arranged for October 15, 1984, and came off because of remarkable cooperation between the two sides with assistance from the Catholic Church, the International Red Cross, and several Latin American governments. A nationwide cease-fire was arranged, and Salvadorans came out to line much of the one-hundred-kilometer road from San Salvador to La Palma. They waved white paper doves at the passing cars carrying the government and FMLN leadership to the meeting chanting, "We want peace!"²¹³ Ellacuría was later told that his *ECA* editorial, "The Military and Social Peace,"²¹⁴ was read aloud to Defense Minister Vides Casanova during the ride to La Palma, and actually played a constructive role in the talks.²¹⁵ Archbishop Rivera Damas presided at the meeting, and both sides agreed to meet again in a month.

The next meeting took place on November 30, 1984, at Ayagualo, a town outside of San Salvador. Between the two meetings both sides had come under intense pressure not to yield on key points from important constituencies who did not favor a peace process. The FMLN presented a "Comprehensive Pro-

212. "Comunicado conjunto del Presidente de los Estados Unidos y el Presidente Electo de El Salvador," May 21, 1984, *ECA* no. 428 (June 1984): 466.

213. These details provided by Montgomery, who was present. See *Revolution in El Salvador*, 188.

214. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Los militares y la paz social" (unsigned editorial) *ECA* nos. 429-430 (July-August 1984): 475-90.

215. This incident is mentioned in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 293. Author cites Ignacio Ellacuría, *Notebooks*, no. 9, October 12, 1984.

posál for a Negotiated Political Solution and Peace,” which many observers interpreted as “hard line,” and was rejected on national television that night by Duarte as a threat to the peace process.²¹⁶ The country waited to see what the outcome would be. On December 28, 1984, Ellacuría wrote a long article summarizing, critiquing, and pointing out the possibilities inherent in the two positions. He was quite critical of the pressure on both sides to rigidly maintain their positions and continue the war.

For the extreme right and for large sectors of the Armed Forces, the total ruin of the dialogue would be seen as a total success; for the United States, a relative failure of the dialogue would be seen as a mild success; while, on the other hand, the success of the dialogue would be a partial success for Duarte, and the total success of the dialogue would be an important success for the FMLN-FDR. Not to look at it in this way is an error for the left, which could return to a position in favor of making the situation harder because it does not understand the present moment, just as it did not in 1976 with the agrarian transformation, in 1979 with the October coup, and in 1980 with the moderate positions of Colonel Majano.²¹⁷

The article concludes by declaring prophetically, “If the opportunity for dialogue is lost, then once again the fervent hope of most Salvadorans will be squandered and destroyed. And the responsibility will belong to those who have frustrated it, or simply not given it the support they should have done.”²¹⁸ It was the last meeting the two sides would have for three years.

1987: Paths to a Solution: Ellacuría’s Proposal

The next real breakthrough did not come until August 7, 1987, in Esquipulas, Guatemala, when Costa Rican President Oscar Arias led the Central American presidents to agree on a regional framework for a comprehensive Central American peace. The *Arias Plan* envisioned processes of national reconciliation in each country, amnesty, dialogue between belligerents, cease-fires, and the opening of democratic processes leading to broad representation through free elections. Unfortunately, the regional peace process collapsed in El Salvador under the weight of political assassination, government intransigence, and resistance from Washington (still intent on a counterinsurgency victory). But a historic paradigm shift had begun. The UCA’s national opinion poll showed over

216. The UCA provided a summary of the events at La Palma and Ayagualo in *Proceso* nos. 161 and 162 (October 15, October 22, 1984). The comments on the FMLN proposal are from Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 188-89.

217. Tomas R. Campos (pseudonym for Ignacio Ellacuría), “Las primeras vicisitudes del diálogo entre el gobierno y el FMLN-FDR,” in *Veinte años*, 1326; reprinted from *ECA* no. 434 (1984): 885-903. The text notes that the article was written on December 28, 1984.

218. *Ibid.*

80 percent of Salvadorans favored dialogue and an immediate resolution of the war.²¹⁹ Equally important, a host of non-governmental groups that were revitalizing the country's civil society after its brutal repression during the early 1980s (e.g., unions, teachers, human rights groups, political parties, church leaders, the press, village and neighborhood organizations, professional associations, etc.), were becoming articulate spokespersons for this unrepresented national majority and its demand for peace.

In 1987, Ignacio Ellacuría was one of the first to perceive the changes underway and to appreciate their significance. That year he published "Paths to a Solution for the Present Crisis of the Country,"²²⁰ in the UCA's flagship journal, *ECA*. His thesis was that the collective existence of such groups constituted a new *third force* capable of being a key actor in moving the country from its stalemate toward a solution. For Ellacuría and for El Salvador this new development represented the practical means to move from a habitual emphasis on the agency of the government and the FMLN elites to a focus on the type of institutions through which the much talked about *popular majorities* themselves could initiate significant action at the national level.

In the article's first section Ellacuría proposes the creation of a process of national reflection, which Archbishop Rivera Damas and the UCA would soon turn into a series of events called the *National Debate*. Some consider the creation of this national conversation on the future of the country to be the most important political development of 1988 and the beginning of the process that would lead from the start of serious negotiations through the FMLN offensive and the UCA assassinations to peace. In section four Ellacuría asserts that the emergence of a *third force* in Salvadoran politics has the potential to "become an important element both for defending the just interests of the lower-class majority, and for creating a political solution for the conflict and its causes."²²¹ Ellacuría stresses that this third force is not a political organization but a social one, and he links it to an emerging theme in Catholic Social Teaching, namely, social organization and civil society as an important means through which individuals' interests can be defended against oppressive state power.²²²

Ellacuría's notion of the third force also fits into a larger discussion among Latin American theorists regarding civil society and its role in the continent's transition to democratic forms of government and social organization after decades of military rule. In an excellent summary of the international conversation on *Civil Society and Political Theory*²²³ from around the time of Ellacuría's death, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato suggest the following:

219. Ignacio Martín-Baró, *La opinión pública salvadoreña (1987-1988)* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1989), 90. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 315.

220. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Camino de solución para la actual crisis del país," in Ellacuría, *Veinte años*, II, 1151-69; reprinted from *ECA* no. 462 (April 1987): 301-12.

221. *Ibid.*, 1162.

222. *Ibid.*

223. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

The main concern of Latin American theorists and their collaborators has been the transition from a new type of military-bureaucratic authoritarian rule: First, involving a period of *liberalization* (defined as the restoration and/or extension of individual and group rights); and second, a stage of *democratization* (understood in terms of the establishment of a citizenship principle based on at least a procedural minimum of participation). But these transitions are seen as strongly dependent on the *resurrection of civil society*. Here, civil society stands for a network of groups and associations between (in some versions, including) families and face-to-face groups on one side and outright state organizations on the other, mediating between individual and state, private and public.²²⁴

This approach is reflected in Ellacuría's argument. He explicitly mentions labor (including two of El Salvador's most important union movements, the National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), and the National Union of Workers and Campesinos (UNOC); large identifiable segments of El Salvador's unrepresented majorities (the unemployed, refugees, marginated communities living in shanty towns); and those organizations doing social development work: churches, educators, private business (such as the National Association for Private enterprise [ANEP]), and professionals.²²⁵

Ellacuría is also clearly trying to develop institutional alternatives to the military-bureaucratic organizations of the state and those vying for control of the government such as the FMLN as means to enhance the agency of the country's dispossessed majorities. Avoiding the dispute over control of the state, the goals of such organizations will focus on structural justice, a negotiated solution to the war, and the mobilization of independent social groups. Ellacuría then proposes a program for the political mobilization and coordination of Salvadoran civil society, arguing, "To flee from this [needed] effort, claiming that it might be subject to political manipulation, is to ignore the fundamental distinction between the social and the political, and it is to abdicate a fundamental obligation for each and every social power: putting their specific weight and capacity for pressure at the service of the lower-class majorities and toward the solution of the national conflict."²²⁶ He adds that Salvadoran civil society should use means that are non-violent and focused on conscientization, mobilization, organization, pressure, and negotiation.

In November 1987 Ellacuría piqued the interest of the man who would play the key role in operationalizing this proposal: San Salvador's Catholic Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas.

224. Ibid., 48. My emphasis.

225. Ellacuría, "Camino de solución," 1163.

226. Ibid., 1167.

1988: El Salvador's National Debate²²⁷

Many saw 1988 as a critical year for El Salvador. The Reagan presidency was coming to an end with elections in the United States. Legislative elections were scheduled for March in El Salvador in which the right-wing ARENA party would soundly defeat the incumbent Christian Democrats. Despite numerous election irregularities and marginal participation from the left, the results were widely read as a stinging rejection by the Salvadoran people of the fruits of eight years of Christian Democratic rule and U.S. counterinsurgency. The following year ARENA would also wrest the presidency from the Christian Democrats, whose political program had become synonymous with their patrons in Washington, DC. At the same time important changes underway in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev had brought *perestroika* to the fore in relations with the West. Thus, as the international rationale for U.S. counterinsurgency evaporated, and El Salvador's electorate chose the only viable national party offering an alternative to eight years of U.S.-sponsored Christian Democratic rule, the FMLN nurtured hopes for a *year of decision*.

Ellacuría, however, understood from the UCA's national opinion poll that the population was in no mood to continue the war and had tired of the negative prospects for peace. He therefore found little more than a promise for business as usual in the aforementioned events. In an article published early in the year he wrote:

1988 does not offer important new events from which one can hope for substantive change; rather, it presents a series of characteristics which make it a year of indefiniton, a year of transition to who knows what, a year lost for great solutions. This presents us with the question of what to do during a year whose potential and possibilities are from the beginning so negative, the question of how to extract from the negative some positive dynamics in favor of a truly liberating process.²²⁸

By now the archdiocese and the UCA had begun their own planning for a different kind of initiative (based on Ellacuría's April proposal in *ECA*) designed to coordinate and multiply the impact of El Salvador's emerging *third forces*. In late November 1987 Archbishop Rivera Damas and Ellacuría agreed that the UCA and the archdiocese should both work to establish a national forum for a political discussion on the future of the country.²²⁹ At an early December meeting of many of the country's leaders at the UCA the archbishop presented his official public proposal for "a public debate of all the viable forces of the

227. This section basically follows the narrative of Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 317-20.

228. Ignacio Ellacuría, "1988, un año de transición para El Salvador," in Ellacuría, *Veinte años*, I, 453-66; reprinted from *ECA* nos. 471-482 (1988): 5-20.

229. Ignacio Ellacuría, *Notebooks*, no. 189, November 20, 1987; cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 317-18.

country,”²³⁰ recommending the UCA as a partner for the planning process. Due to ecclesiastical politics, however the archbishop felt it necessary to exclude Ellacuría from the planning team, and the latter’s influence on the process was not publicly acknowledged. But the initiative did come to fruition with the help of the UCA where Ellacuría was president.

On July 20, 1988, invitations went out to 102 organizations. The process was designed to elicit a number of points on which broad consensus existed in the country. The cover letter expressed the hope that these points of consensus would “help the government, the armed forces and the political parties, on the one hand, and the FDR-FMLN, on the other, to bring the conflict to an end through dialogue and negotiation.”²³¹

In the following months the conference and ensuing events seriously altered the country’s political landscape. El Salvador’s third forces were able to make themselves heard on the national scene as never before. In his editorial for the August-September 1988 issue of *ECA* dedicated to the National Debate, Ellacuría wrote:

The national debate has been one of the important events of 1988 in El Salvador. During more than two months—July and August—it became the newest and most dynamic factor in the socio-political process. It drew attention and obligated practically all the significant forces of the country to take a position before its conclusions. The government, the Armed Forces, the political parties, private business, the church, the FMLN, and of course, the active participants in the national debate spoke about it. The communication media gave it a lot of space, to the point of making it into one of the principal themes of discussion.²³²

On the other hand, Ellacuría was well aware of the limitations of what had been achieved. Many groups, for example, had refused the invitation to participate. Nevertheless, there was a majority consensus on no less than 147 statements, and unanimity on several key points such as absolute priority of the need to direct economic resources away from the war toward the basic needs of the population, and the criterion that “the solution must be Central American and not a U.S. *intervention*.”²³³

Most importantly, however, the process mobilized the opinion of the people themselves and articulated the outline of a broad national consensus. Even Alfredo Cristiani, the presidential candidate of the right-wing ARENA party, which had long supported the brutal suppression of Salvadoran civil society,

230. “Cátedra Universitaria de Realidad Nacional: Propuestas de solución después de Esquipulas II,” *ECA* 42, nos. 469-70 (November-December 1987): 863.

231. “Carta de invitación del Señor Arzobispo de San Salvador,” in *Debate Nacional 1988*, San Salvador, 1988, as cited by Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 318.

232. Editorial: “El significado del debate nacional,” *ECA* 43, nos. 478-479 (August-September 1988): 713.

233. *Ibid.*, 741.

stated he agreed with 85 percent of the conclusions. He also committed his government, if elected, to a “permanent dialogue” with the FMLN.²³⁴ The initiative had swung from the government and the FMLN to El Salvador’s civil society, or what Ellacuría called its third force. The National Debate, by giving expression to the overwhelming desire for peace, had focused and increased the momentum for negotiations to a point that demanded a response from both the FMLN and the government.

1989: Collapse of Negotiations, War, Assassination, and Resurrection

Cynthia Arnson’s excellent study of U.S. policy on Central America describes the situation as 1989 began.

The far-right ARENA party won control of El Salvador’s National Assembly in March 1988, putting former Major Roberto D’Aubuisson, suspected mastermind of the assassination of Archbishop Romero, in a key position of power. President Duarte, himself suffering from incurable liver cancer, seemed to personify the multiple ills of his administration. Economic austerity measures had taken a devastating toll on the party’s urban base, eroding popular support for the regime. Violent abuses by the army and death squads were resuming an upward spiral, prompting Duarte to decry the “extremist death squads that seem to be coming back to life.” The Christian Democrats themselves were badly divided over who should succeed Duarte as candidate in the 1989 presidential elections.²³⁵

Then on January 23, 1989, just as the election season swung into full gear, the FMLN surprised everyone with a proposal to postpone the upcoming presidential elections for six to eight months (September 15, 1989) to implement a series of guarantees for a free and fair election, and to abide by the results.²³⁶ The Duarte government rejected the proposal, but the administration of George H. W. Bush (1978-1982) encouraged a reconsideration. Three weeks later, on February 20-21, 1989, the FMLN met in Mexico with thirteen political parties and proposed to renounce the armed struggle and incorporate into the political process. After a brief period of hope, however, negotiations collapsed. The military party, ARENA, was confident of victory in the upcoming elections, which it eventually won with 54 percent of the vote on March 19, 1988. And in the months between the elections of March 1989 and Cristiani’s inauguration in June the far right escalated its campaign of violence and murder against reform-

234. “Los candidatos y la paz,” *Carta a las iglesias*, October 1-15, 1988. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 320.

235. *Ibid.*

236. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 213-14.

ist officials while the FMLN, which had been planning an offensive since 1987, began a series of assassinations against government officials.

Ellacuría and the UCA, however, remained powerful voices in favor of negotiations both in El Salvador and the North, which made them threats to the economic and political interests on the far right and to the military leadership. Why? As noted earlier, the Pentagon Report states that right-wing landowners remained virulently opposed to land reform.²³⁷ Military leaders were largely corrupt, enjoyed impunity for violations of human rights, and did “not wish to win the war because in so doing it would lose the American aid that has enriched it for the past decade”²³⁸ The government depended on U.S. aid for survival and shared a commitment to defeat the FMLN, but there was little confidence and often outright opposition among the civilian-military elites to aspects of U.S. counterinsurgency promoting reforms directed at disenfranchised peasants.

In this atmosphere the extreme right saw an opportunity to carry out its long-held desire to assassinate Ignacio Ellacuría as part of its most recent campaign of terror intended to paralyze civil society and halt the increasing momentum toward peace. Accordingly, on March 3, 1989, the Crusade for Peace and Work denounced the “tiny group of satanic brains led by Ellacuría and a pack of communist hounds” ruining the country.²³⁹ On March 14, a grenade exploded at the university’s emergency electric power plant. On March 18, a paid advertisement denounced the “deceptive Jesuits Ignacio Ellacuría, Segundo Montes, and others, who with their doctrines, are poisoning many young minds.” On April 16 the Armed Forces High Command published an ad charging Segundo Montes with defending the FMLN’s use of land mines, and placing him with “groups and individuals who insist on defending the terrorism of the FMLN-FDR and its front groups.” On April 19, the rebels bombed the residence of the new vice-president, Francisco Merino, and Attorney General Roberto Garcia Alvarado was murdered by a bomb on the roof of his jeep. The following day Colonel Juan Orlando Zepeda said the UCA is a “refuge for terrorist leaders, from where they plan the strategy of attack against Salvadorans.” And on April 28, three bombs exploded at the UCA printing press.

The threat of negotiations and peace nevertheless continued to build. When the new president, the businessman Alfredo Cristiani, took office on June 1, 1989, he revealed a surprising five-point plan for talks with the FMLN that did not make surrender a precondition. Talks began September 13-15, 1989, in Mexico, and continued October 15-17 in San Jose, Costa Rica. Both sides agreed to a third meeting November 20 and 21, 1989, in Caracas, Venezuela. The September talks in Mexico produced a rebel proposal for a cease-fire to begin by November 15, 1989, with peace by January 31, 1990. At the October

237. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 46-50.

238. *Ibid.*, 21.

239. Unless otherwise cited, the attacks mentioned in this paragraph are from the Jesuit Lawyers Committee chronology, “Attacks on El Salvador’s Jesuits.” See Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 308.

talks in San Jose, Costa Rica, the government demanded an immediate cease-fire, and Cristiani said he could not guarantee safety for the combatants. Both sides nonetheless agreed to create a special commission for carrying out accords related to life, liberty, and freedom of assembly and organization as well as electoral and judicial reform. There was also a general agreement to address the economy and reduce the size of the armed forces.

During the next few weeks, however, military events and pressure for war from the right and the left closed the space for political negotiation, while congressional support for continued U.S. military aid solidified. On October 17 (the last day of the talks) the daughter of Colonel Edgardo Casanova Vejar was brutally assassinated outside her home. Two days later bombs exploded in the homes of political opposition leader Ruben Zamora and his sister-in-law. Cristiani called FMLN demands to restructure the Supreme Court and the armed forces “absurd,”²⁴⁰ and the rhetoric on both sides rapidly escalated. Then on October 31, 1989, bombs exploded in the offices of both the Committee of Mothers of the Detained, Disappeared, and Assassinated (COMADRES) and the National Trade Union Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENASTRAS). Ten union leaders were killed and thirty-five people wounded. Whitfield observes, “Watching in horror as Febe Elizabeth Velazquez, one of the most important of all the leaders of the popular movement, ran out of the wreckage, the back of her head quite visibly blown right off, a sickening fear descended on the country.”²⁴¹

Ten days earlier Ellacuría had departed on a three-week trip to Europe to raise money, receive a prize given to the UCA by the Comin Foundation in Barcelona, witness the inauguration of the Xavier Zubiri Foundation in Madrid (Ellacuría’s intellectual mentor), and participate in a meeting of university presidents. Shortly after the bombing, Colonel Juan Antonio Martínez Varela called Ellacuría in Spain with a message worriedly imploring him to serve on a commission to investigate the FENASTRAS bombing. On November 9, 1989 (his fifty-ninth birthday), Ellacuría sent the following response from Salamanca to the letter awaiting him there from Cristiani’s minister of the presidency, Colonel Juan Antonio Martínez Varela: “I am stunned by this act of terrorism. I am ready to work for the promotion of human rights, I am convinced that President Cristiani rejects these types of actions and that he has proposed this commission with good will. I would like to support any reasonable effort that may help negotiation advance in the most effective way possible.”²⁴² Little did he know that his immediate return would rob him of that opportunity.

240. “Crónica del mes-octubre,” *ECA* no. 492 (October 1989): 865. Cited in Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 342.

241. Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 343.

242. Quotation by Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 345, of a letter from Ignacio Ellacuría to Colonel Juan Antonio Martínez Varela, November 9, 1989 (photocopy). Whitfield notes that Ellacuría asked to postpone his decision until November 13, 1989, when he was returning to the country.

Major Erik Warren Buckland, senior U.S. military advisor to Salvadoran Psychological Operations, later testified to the FBI that a week or two earlier (late October or early November 1989²⁴³) his Salvadoran counterpart, Colonel Carlos Armando Avilés Buitrago (chief of psychological operations for the Salvadoran Joint Command), had revealed that a group of high-ranking Salvadoran military officers was planning to assassinate Fr. Ellacuría and other UCA Jesuits. According to the major, Avilés recruited Buckland to accompany him on a mission from Colonel René Ponce, chief of staff and second ranking officer of the Salvadoran Military High Command, in order “to solve a problem with Colonel Benavides.”²⁴⁴ When they arrived, Buckland was told to wait outside, but Avilés later reported that Benavides said Ellacuría “was a problem,” and that “they wanted to handle it in the old way by killing some of the priests.”²⁴⁵ Major Buckland did nothing to prevent the planned murders, however. He later testified that he thought if “Chief of Staff Ponce had assigned a senior Colonel (Avilés) to address the problem,” then it meant the assassinations “would not happen.”²⁴⁶ The major would soon realize he had been manipulated.

On November 11, 1989, two days after Ellacuría’s response to Cristiani’s invitation, the streets of the capital were lit with gun battles and military flares as the FMLN launched its nationwide offensive. Guerrillas assumed entrenched positions in poor neighborhoods around the city. Clashes occurred at the National University, at the Cuscatlan Stadium, and at military housing across from the UCA. Later the Air Force bombed and strafed working-class neighborhoods and shanty towns where the guerrillas were ensconced. The Military High Command found itself considering “the possibility that they could lose power, or that San Salvador could become a divided capital, much like Beirut.”²⁴⁷

As we saw earlier, the U.N. Truth Commission reports that on the fifth day of the offensive, November 15, 1989, Colonel René Emilio Ponce, chief of staff of the armed forces, called “a meeting of General Staff with military heads and commanders” at the military academy at 6:30 p.m.²⁴⁸ At that meeting Colonel Ponce “authorized the elimination” of civilian opposition leaders, and the bombing of civilian neighborhoods. One of the attendees reports that the session broke up around 10:00 p.m.²⁴⁹ The United Nations asserts, “the officers

243. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 225.

244. Sworn statement by Eric Warren Buckland, January 11, 1990, handwritten addendum, Washington, DC, p. 10 (on file at Lawyers Committee for Human Rights). Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 225.

245. Sworn statement by Eric Warren Buckland, January 11, 1990, handwritten addendum. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 225.

246. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 226.

247. *Ibid.*, 38.

248. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 50.

249. Written statement of General Humberto Larios, Fourth Criminal Court, August 29, 1990; INTERJUST, Sistema Informativo de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, September 4, 1990. Cited in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 57.

stayed in the room talking in groups,”²⁵⁰ and that “Colonel Ponce called over Colonel Guillermo Alfredo Benavides [director of the Military Academy] and, in front of the four other officers, ordered him to eliminate Father Ellacuría and to leave no witnesses . . . [and] to use the unit from the [U.S.-trained] Atlacatl Battalion.”

Confirming this scenario, one month after the murders, on December 20, 1989, Major Buckland said that he learned from Avilés that Colonel Benavides had indeed ordered an Atlacatl commando unit to assassinate Ellacuría and his companions, and that an active cover up was underway. The major would come under intense pressure from the U.S. Embassy, the FBI, and his own military superiors, to back away from his story.²⁵¹ And in fact, a week after his January 12, 1990, testimony, Buckland would recant the portion admitting prior knowledge of the plot to assassinate Ellacuría and the other Jesuits. *Newsweek* later reported, “‘The [George H. W. Bush] administration didn’t want that story to come out,’ sources said, because it ‘wasn’t productive to the conduct of the war.’”²⁵² Buckland continued to insist, however, that Avilés said Benavides had ordered the assassinations, information the major had already shared with his sister, Carol Buckland, a CNN reporter, first by telephone and later in a letter dated December 25, 1989. This testimony would play an important role in breaking through the wall of lies supporting the cover-up and protecting those who had ordered and committed the murders.

Accordingly, at approximately 1 a.m. on November 16, 1989, three hundred Salvadoran soldiers operating under the cover of darkness, including at least one hundred members of the elite U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion, surrounded the campus of the Jesuit-run UCA in San Salvador.²⁵³ Having reconnoitered the virtually empty campus around 6:30 p.m., a force of fifty soldiers entered the university through the pedestrians’ gate and gathered in the nearby university parking lot. After about thirty minutes they began shooting up nearby cars and set off at least one grenade, simulating a guerrilla attack. Leaving some of the group in the parking lot, others quietly formed a deadly inner ring, several scampering to the rooftops of neighboring houses and buildings, as they tightened the noose around the newly inhabited Jesuit community residence attached to the Archbishop Oscar Romero Center for Theological Reflection. Sleeping unawares inside was their quarry, Fr. Ellacuría, with five other Jesuit priests, and (unbeknownst to the soldiers) the housekeeper, her daughter, and a woman inhabiting a small dwelling at the rear entrance to the Jesuit community. Once in position, the smaller “select” group entrusted with the killings began banging on doors seeking entry to the building at multiple points.

250. United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, 50.

251. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 143-45, 166-68, 221-36.

252. *Ibid.*, 228.

253. Unless otherwise noted, this account is based on extrajudicial testimonies by some of the participants; see United Nations, *Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, and other primary sources summarized in Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 64-71, 281-83.

Twenty-six-year-old Private Oscar Amaya Grimaldi (“Pilijay”), designated the “key man” and entrusted with the battalion’s only AK-47 for the murders, recalls that Fr. Ellacuría came to the balcony in his bathrobe and said, “Wait. I am coming to open the door. But don’t keep making so much noise.”²⁵⁴ At that moment another group entered the lower floor of the attached Romero Center, destroying computers, books, and whatever else they found. After about ten minutes of banging Fr. Segundo Montes finally opened the first set of doors and was taken to the front lawn where Fr. Amando López, Fr. Ignacio Martín-Baró, Fr. Juan Moreno, and Ellacuría were being held. Martín-Baró left with one of the soldiers to open the side gate of the residence near the Chapel of Christ the Liberator. On the way they passed by the guest bedroom, where the angry voice of Fr. Martín-Baró heard by witnesses suggests that Sub-sergeant Tomás Zarpate Castillo was already holding the cook, Elba Ramos, and her daughter Celina at rifle point. Once inside the compound, Amaya and Sub-sergeant Antonio Ramiro Avalos (nicknamed “Satan”) ordered the priests to lie down on the back lawn, where a neighbor testified they began a kind of “rhythmic whispering, like a psalmody of a group in prayer.”²⁵⁵ At that moment, as we saw earlier, Lieutenant José Ricardo Espinoza, a graduate of the Jesuit high school across town when Fr. Segundo Montes was there, gave Avalos the order to “proceed.” This was relayed to Private Amaya, someone yelled “Now!” and the shooting began. Espinoza testified in his extrajudicial confession, as noted earlier, that he retreated from the Jesuit residence with tears in his eyes.²⁵⁶

“Pilijay” murdered Ellacuría, Montes, and Martín-Baró with the AK-47. “Satan” opened fire on Juan Ramón Moreno and Amando López. Tomás Zarpate repeatedly shot Elba and Celina until they ceased moaning, the mother’s arms wrapped protectively around her daughter. At that moment Fr. López y López emerged from the door of the residence. Seeing the corpses he fled back into the house where he was executed by Colonel Pérez Vásquez. A blood-soaked copy of Jürgen Moltmann’s book *The Crucified God* was found by his body. The entire operation took about one hour.

Thus, while negotiations for peace had offered a hopeful counterpoint to the drums of war, the voice of Salvadoran civil society had once again been brutally silenced by repression and murder. And Ellacuría’s hope that the “profound and wide-ranging” national conversation generated by the National Debate might lead to a negotiated solution lay in ruins.

Indeed, the early morning executions at the new Jesuit residence on November 16, 1989, seemed to symbolize the eclipse of dialogue and negotiation by the purveyors of state-sponsored violence against civil society and the voices of reform. Most of the top Jesuit leadership of the UCA was dead, with their friend, Elba, and her daughter Celina, who had sought refuge with the Jesuit

254. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 67.

255. These are the words of Martha Doggett describing the account of a neighbor; Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 68.

256. Doggett, *Death Foretold*, 115 and 332.

community that night. Some of the bodies of El Salvador's leading intellectuals had their brains dislodged by a soldier's boot. One assailant took the time to symbolically reenact the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero by carefully shooting through the heart the dead prelate's picture hanging in the office. The ruin emblemized the utter defeat of the UCA's hopes to historicize the gospel by supporting the efforts of the country's marginated third forces to construct a politics of negotiation and reconciliation for El Salvador.

Conclusion

The story of the UCA martyrs does not conclude with their deaths, however. For international outrage occasioned by the murders, combined with military realities exposed by the surprising offensive, sowed seeds of doubt that would blossom in the months and years ahead. Three weeks after the assassinations, on December 8, 1989, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that "the rebel offensive, now entering its fourth week, has shaken the political and military realities of El Salvador so profoundly that . . . [it] may be slowly convincing some of the country's elite that concessions have to be made."²⁵⁷ Military actors in El Salvador and the United States finally admitted that neither party was strong enough to defeat the other. A secret CIA National Intelligence Estimate written in February 1989 had asserted, "We believe that the government is likely to grind down the insurgency as a military force over the next three to five years."²⁵⁸ Yet on February 8, 1990, shortly after the offensive, General Maxwell R. Thurman, head of the U.S. Southern Command, told the Senate Armed Service Committee when asked if the Salvadoran government could defeat the rebels, "I think they will not be able to do that."²⁵⁹ For their part the rebels believed, according to one leader, "The offensive laid down the parameters of what we could achieve by military means and what we couldn't. We believed we had made an impressive show of force but it was not something we could do every six months."²⁶⁰ Meanwhile, a January 29, 1990, article in the *San Francisco Examiner* suggested, "Intense reaction to the Jesuit murders and the FMLN offensive has raised profound doubts about the success of U.S. policy there in general, assuring, at the very least, the first major debate in five years over Washington's future role in El Salvador."²⁶¹

257. Chris Norton, "After Salvador's Rebel Offensive," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 8, 1989, 4.

258. U.S. Declassified Documents I, CIA, "El Salvador: Government and Insurgent Prospects," February 1989, iii-iv. Cited in Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 170.

259. Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. General Says Salvador Cannot Defeat the Guerrillas," *New York Times*, February 9, 1990, 9. Cited in Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 172.

260. Facundo Guardado interview by Hugh Byrne, February 19, 1993, in Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 173.

261. Phil Bronstein, "No Cuts Likely in U.S. Aid to Salvador," *San Francisco Examiner*, January 28, 1990, A14. Cited in Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 172.

One by one over the next two years all the major power brokers and political actors (the U.S. government, the Salvadoran Military High Command, the FMLN, the Salvadoran oligarchy, and the government itself) would be forced to admit that their own strategic visions for the country had not fully succeeded, and absent massive ongoing U.S. aid, had no future without the approval of the country's vast majorities. The FMLN had demonstrated that a military victory by the government was impossible. The government had demonstrated it could survive but not win, even with U.S. support. And the country's poor majorities were now mobilized and insisting on peace and the creation of the minimal institutional structures necessary to guarantee an end to the brutal repression of civil society. El Salvador's third forces had created a formidable non-aligned political force undermining the claims of the various power brokers. And El Salvador's increasingly independent and influential civil society was now an important player in promoting a viable politics of national reconciliation. Ironically, the strategic vision diligently promoted by Ellacuría, the UCA, and so many others was given new life through the impact on the peace process of the deaths of the martyrs.

Thus, by the end of 1990 it was clear that the Jesuit murders in combination with the successful offensive had done serious damage to the case of the Salvadoran government for continued Washington aid (especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989). Cristiani journeyed to Washington in February 1990 to contain the damage, but he encountered a distinct change in congressional attitudes. Days after the president's visit Senator Christopher Dodd introduced a bill to cut U.S. aid to El Salvador by 50 percent unless the FMLN blocked progress in the negotiations and threatened the viability of the government. This proposal would become a framework for congressional attempts to limit aid in the months ahead.

In late April 1990 the House Foreign Affairs Committee took up Dodd's proposal. On April 30, 1990, the Moakley task force said the investigation of the Jesuit case was at a "virtual standstill" and revealed aspects of Major Buckland's allegations (which the administration had suppressed). On May 22, 1990, the House adopted the Moakley-Murtha amendment, which contained a version of the Dodd formula to cut military aid by half. In the debate Congressman Moakley protested, "Enough is enough. They killed six priests in cold blood. I stood on the ground where my friends were blown away by men to whom the sanctity of human life bears no meaning—and men who will probably never be brought to justice."²⁶² A Republican substitute to cut military aid by 25 percent failed 175 to 243, and the Moakley-Murtha version passed 250 to 163 with thirty-one Republicans in favor and only twenty-eight Democrats opposed.²⁶³

Though the effect was largely symbolic, it was clear that the Jesuit murders had seriously wounded the now-fragile remains of the bipartisan compromise first articulated by the Kissinger Commission in favor of the Salvadoran coun-

262. Congressional Record, May 22, 1990, H 2712. Cited in Arnson, *Crossroads*, 255.

263. Arnson, *Crossroads*, 254-55.

terinsurgency effort. Without the artificially constructed pipeline of U.S. dollars supporting the war, the Salvadoran government, like the FMLN, soon realized it would have to start paying attention to the results of the IUDOP polls and the demand of the country's third forces that their voices (particularly their insistence that the war must end) play a role in shaping the future of El Salvador.

Responding to these forces, in 1991 the United Nations and its secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar of Peru, assumed a crucial if somewhat frantic role in tortuous peace negotiations that concluded at the United Nations in New York twenty-eight minutes after the end of 1991 and the expiration of his term. Peace accords ending the decade-long war were signed in Mexico City on January 16, 1992, and the final documents contained significant provisions for military, political, economic, and social reform. In the end, the very existence of the treaty demonstrated the inadequacies of the strategic visions for El Salvador that the country's elites had attempted to impose on the Salvadoran people and civil society during the 1980s.

The hope of U.S. policy makers for a military victory over the FMLN had proved unachievable due to its cost and lack of support from the common people, though the United States did succeed in preventing a rebel victory. The far right's ideology of national salvation through state-sponsored violence against civil society, embraced by the military and the Salvadoran government, had wrought a terrifying decade of murder and economic ruin. The edifying visions of the reformist 1979 coup had been defeated by the military arm of the state. The rebels' dream that vast numbers of Salvadorans would rise up in a general insurrection had proved to be unrealistic (despite several important military offensives). And the murders of Archbishop Romero, the Jesuits, and so many others had demonstrated the impotency of the gospel against the power of the state. Ironically, however, the triumph of state-sponsored violence against Salvadoran civil society simultaneously revealed and refined the courageous resiliency, independence, and importance of the country's third forces, including their defender and prophet, Archbishop Romero, simultaneously providing legitimacy to the cause of the rebels and reinforcing the cause of peace.

In the end, it seems that Ellacuría was correct in 1987 when he argued that El Salvador's emergent civil society embodied the mobilization of the country's poor majorities, giving expression to their demands for peace and a credible promise of reform (so often expressed in IUDOP's polls). And he was prescient in his assertion that the UCA could best historicize the church's option for the poor in the Salvadoran context through solidarity with the country's third forces and their demands for reform. Indeed, the demands of civil society for peace and reform provided the outline for the final agreement articulated in the peace accords for the future of El Salvador.²⁶⁴

264. Though peace and some significant reforms would come to El Salvador as a result of the accords, the country's fundamental social and economic problems (e.g., landlessness, economic development, various forms of poverty as indicated by extremely low social indicators, political extremism, and human rights violations, etc.) remain to be addressed.

So what, then, is to be learned from the U.S. involvement in this disturbing story? The Pentagon report concludes that during the 1980s the Salvadoran government, the right-wing landowners and their allies, and the Salvadoran military knew that they “had America trapped,”²⁶⁵ and had concluded the United States was prepared to make a kind of “pact with the devil” in order to insure that “El Salvador not fall to the FMLN.” Sadly, in light of the insistence on torture as a legitimate weapon in the war against terror by former vice-president Chaney and other former U.S. officials,²⁶⁶ the Pentagon report seems prescient in pointing to the potential threat to basic and enduring American values posed by the practical aspects of U.S. counterinsurgency and anti-terrorist policy. The Pentagon report asserts that, by making victory for an inept and corrupt ally the cornerstone of its counterinsurgency objectives in El Salvador, the United States helped to defeat its own efforts to promote development and human rights. The report concludes, “In attempting to reconcile these objectives, . . . we pursued a policy by means unsettling to ourselves, for ends humiliating to the Salvadorans, and at a cost disproportionate to any conventional conception of the national interest.”²⁶⁷

For those interested in the future of the Catholic university, it must be said that the commitment of Ignacio Ellacuría and the UCA to the option for the poor led them to confront violent, powerful, and dehumanizing forces with a reasoned and compassionate plea for negotiations and peace. In the end, the sanity and humanity of this approach proved a serious threat to ongoing U.S. support for an immoral ally in a brutal and unnecessary civil war. Twenty-five years after their deaths, the UCA martyrs remind us of the risks to individuals and institutions whose lives and work embody a commitment to the dignity of every person, especially the marginalized, through effective opposition to the sometime follies of U.S.-financed wars on foreign soil.

What cannot be denied, however, is that the emphasis that the UCA Jesuits placed on supporting the mobilization and the hopes of Salvadoran civil society, with the country’s poor majorities as important actors, played a significant role in helping to establish a historically effective tradition for the agency of the dispossessed in a viable national politics of reconciliation for El Salvador. The

Likewise, the UCA faces serious problems in the years ahead (see Beirne, “Murder in the University,” pp. 220-42. However, the author believes that the birth of a growing Salvadoran civil society representative of the interests of the country’s poor majorities (whose role Ellacuría prophetically enunciated in 1987) is one of the nation’s most important assets for facing the daunting challenges ahead. One can only hope that its autonomy and significance will be respected by the government, the opposition, the extreme right, and foreign governments such as the United States who have interests in the region. No doubt the voice of the UCA will continue to be heard on this subject.

265. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 82.

266. Former Vice-President Dick Cheney, “Keeping America Safe” (remarks made at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research), May 21, 2009; <http://www.aei.org/speech/100050>, accessed March 2, 2014.

267. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 84.

question remains, however, what does this history offer to the current generation of Salvadorans that grows increasingly disenchanted with glaring inequities of El Salvador's politics of peace? And what does it say to those of us whose hearts sink at the prospect of sustaining a spirituality of Christian solidarity in the context of the *realpolitik* of U.S. foreign policy and national interest in an ambiguous world of deals and compromises?

I believe an answer to this question is to be found in the real life stories of the martyrs and their colleagues and the many ways they historicized their option for the poor. These Jesuits and their colleagues were drawn to appreciate the political significance of the mobilization and institutionalization of El Salvador's third forces through a spirituality disposed to recognize the mediation of grace through the agency of the poor. Ellacuría and his friends spoke evocatively of solidarity with *the crucified people* of our world. More importantly, however, they historicized this spirituality by dedicating themselves to supporting the faint patterns of hope and progress emerging among the confusing details of El Salvador's historical reality during the 1980s.

Twenty-five years after their deaths we can honestly say that the hard work, the political analysis, and the sense of public accountability and responsibility demanded to create a functioning civil society and a viable politics of national reconciliation grounded in the agency and aspirations of the country's poor majorities of El Salvador has only just begun. But while the road to a better future has yet to be constructed, the path is clearly marked for millions of Salvadorans by the examples of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the UCA martyrs. For their journeys serve as living signs of faith that the risen Jesus lives in the country's poor and marginated majorities, hope for a future grounded in the values of the Reign of God, and love for the resilient and courageous people of El Salvador.

In Part II, we will explore the spiritual, philosophical, historical, and theological roots of this conviction and the vision of the Christian university that emerged from it.