

EPILOGUE

The return to the States after our immersion in El Salvador was best described by Bertsch:

It has been six weeks since our return from El Salvador. Despite several attempts to describe our journey, in anything but its most superficial aspects I have been strangely inarticulate. An unusual longing for silence has overtaken me. Tears come easily. The *New York Times* is unopened, the television silent. Time spent puttering, tending to flowers, observing the never-ending fluttering of birds at their feeders, listening to the gentle lap of waves in the Sound, have replaced my usual daily routine. . . . Slowly, recognition that I am in mourning began to move its way through the encasing silence.¹⁵

That mourning, that sense of physical pain and mental anguish, would last for days, months, and beyond.

“Nobody returns from a trip to El Salvador without experiencing life changes,” Fr. Blanchard had prophesied in his talk to us on campus. “The spirit of the people will affect you in ways you would never expect.”

It was true.

NOTES

1. James LeMoyné, "Out of the Jungle in El Salvador: Rebels with a New Cause," *New York Times Magazine* (February 9, 1992), 24 ff.
2. Dean Brackley, S.J., "The University and the 'Broken Heart' Experience," *Sacred Heart University Review* 13, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1992/Spring 1993), 2.
3. "Death Squad Issues Written Threat," *Centroamérica: The Monthly Review* 7, no. 11 (November 1992), 2.
4. "Five Killed, Mirna Anaya Attacked," *Centroamérica: The Monthly Review* 8, no. 2 (February 1993), 3.
5. Carolyn Forché, "The Colonel," in *The Country Between Us* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 16.
6. J.M. Ventura, "El Salvador – Present and Future," *Sacred Heart University Review* 12, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1991/Spring 1992), 26.
7. Anne M. Barker, "Health Care in El Salvador," *Sacred Heart University Review* 12, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1991/Spring 1992), 24.
8. Gerald Reid, "The Cross of Calle Real," *Sacred Heart University Review* 12, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1991/Spring 1992), 14.
9. Reid, "The Cross of Calle Real," 16.
10. Ventura, "El Salvador – Present and Future," 28.
11. Robin McAllister, "Searching for Truth in a World of Lies," *Sacred Heart University Review* 12, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1991/Spring 1992), 36.
12. Eilene Bertsch, "Beyond Death and Destruction – Faith and Hope," *Sacred Heart University Review* 12, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1991/Spring 1992), 7.
13. Bertsch, "Beyond Death and Destruction," 7.
14. Bertsch, "Beyond Death and Destruction," 5.
15. Bertsch, "Beyond Death and Destruction," 4.

G L O S S A R Y

Atlatl Battalion. Deriving its name from an historical Salvadoran indigenous warrior, the Atlatl Battalion was one of five rapid-reaction units backed by American aid at the start of the civil war. Created in 1980 and trained in anti-guerrilla operations by American advisors at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas, the battalion was deployed back to El Salvador in 1981 to turn around a losing ground war. The Atlatl took part in the 1981 massacre of at least 794 peasants and children in the El Mozote, and later, members of the battalion were implicated in the 1989 murder of six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter, at the University of Central America (UCA). The battalion was headed by the charismatic field commander, Domingo Monterrosa.

Roberto d' Aubuisson. A rightist leader, former National Guard officer, and one of the founders of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), d'Aubuisson ran for the presidency of El Salvador in 1984, and was defeated by José Napoleón Duarte. He founded the Union of White Warriors, a death squad implicated in many murders, and according to the Truth Commission, planned and ordered the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero in 1980. Associated with hard-line radical rightists, he led his party's efforts to stall land reform. Robert E. White, the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador from 1977 to 1980 called d'Aubisson a "pathological killer."

CARITAS (Charity). Founded in Germany in 1897, CARITAS shares the mission of the Catholic Church to serve the poor and promote charity and justice throughout the world. The international organization made up of more than 160 national

charitable groups currently serves seven regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, North America, and Oceania).

Christian Urgent Action Network on Emergency Support (CUANES). The network reported on Salvadoran Army human rights abuses of religious workers in Christian communities perceived to be supportive of Salvadoran guerrillas. Abuses included deportation, harassment, and the disappearing of individuals.

Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated of El Salvador (COMADRES). Founded in 1977 with the help of the Archdiocese of San Salvador and Archbishop Oscar Romero, the women of COMADRES organized to free political prisoners and discover what happened to the disappeared. The organization, praised by the international community, was subject to government raids, and members were tortured and assassinated by death squads.

COPAZ (National Commission to Consolidate Peace). This United Nations Commission was tasked with monitoring the compliance of the full demobilization of Salvadoran warring factions stipulated by the peace accords. The commission's central aims were to assure the agreed upon stages of disarmament, support a generous program of land redistribution, and push for social and economic transformation.

CRISPAZ (Christians for Peace in El Salvador). Begun in 1984 in response to the havoc of the Salvadoran civil war, this organization continues working with churches in El Salvador. Its mission statement reads: "CRISPAZ is a faith-based organization dedicated to building bridges of solidarity between the Church of the poor and marginalized communities in El Salvador and communities in the U.S. and other countries through mutual accompaniment, striving together for peace, justice, sustainability, and human liberation."

Death Squads. Current and former members of the military and police forces, opposed to the tactics of the FMLN and convinced that El Salvador was in danger of falling into the hands of leftist terrorists, formed paramilitary squads that “disappeared” and murdered adversaries, leaving mutilated corpses along roads and often prominently displayed in public places. Using unmarked cars with darkened windows, they abducted, tortured, and killed opposition leaders and suspected guerilla sympathizers, terrorizing the populace.

Doctors Without Borders. This international organization was founded by doctors in France in 1971 and provides high-quality medical care to populations threatened by violence, armed conflict, epidemics, and natural disasters.

Ecumenical Program in Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA). An organization combating socio-economic injustice, the marginalization of the poor, and military repression in Latin America, EPICA advocates solidarity with the poor and disenfranchised. It conducts study tours to oppressed communities, publishes books on issues affecting people subjugated by military and government structures, and emphasizes spiritual reflection and social action. Sacred Heart University faculty tours to El Salvador were organized and led by members of EPICA.

El Mozote. A village in northern Morazán, El Mozote, was the site in December 1981 of a brutal massacre that left an entire village decimated, with over seven hundred men, women, and children slaughtered by the Atlacatl battalion of the Salvadoran military. In the December 6, 1993 edition of the *New Yorker*, Mark Danner provides a blow-by-blow account based on extensive investigative reporting of the buildup to the massacre, what took place during the slaughter, and the following cover-up by Salvadoran and U.S. governments. El Mozote became a rallying cry, swelling the ranks of the insurgents, and fueling the early opposition of the international community to the war.

El Rescate. This human rights group was founded in California in 1981 to respond to the plight of refugees fleeing to the U.S. from the Salvadoran war. Over a thirty-year period, the group has served more than half a million people, and conducted a study of military abuses used by the Truth Commission to purge Salvadoran officer ranks.

El Salvador's Civil War. Christine J. Wade offers a succinct overview of the roots of El Salvador's civil war in her article "El Salvador: A Contradiction of Neoliberalism and Building Sustainable Peace." She writes:

There are four key developments in Salvadoran history that contributed to the onset of civil war. First, the seizure of communal lands to promote coffee exports resulted in an extreme concentration of wealth and high rates of landlessness. Second, the economic and political crisis of the 1930s resulted in the installation of a military regime, which promoted the interests of the coffee elite. This alliance between the military and the oligarchy would dominate Salvadoran society for the next 60 years. Third, the period from 1948 to 1979 is characterized by cycles of repression and reform by successive military governments in an attempt to either control or placate the population. Finally, when the electoral opposition posed a serious threat to the interests of the status quo in 1972 and 1977, the electoral option was withdrawn and violence was used to control or stop dissent. The systematic use of repression reduced, and eventually eliminated, political space for the opposition. This realization led to a dramatic increase in the number of radical popular organizations in El Salvador, an increase that was met by unprecedented levels of violence. Increasing repression combined with a deteriorating economy proved to be a volatile combination. In El Salvador, the combination of the collapse of political space and socio-economic inequalities were key factors contributing to the war. (*International Journal of Peace Studies* 13, no. 2 [Autumn/Winter 2008], 19)

FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional). In 1980 five left-wing groups sympathetic to the causes of Salvadoran peasants united to liberate the country from the power-elites and the repressive tactics of right-wing government forces. Their organization was named after the leader of an anti-military government uprising in El Salvador in 1932. Filling its ranks with Marxists, radicalized priests, organized *campesinos*, trade unionists, and angry students, the FMLN waged a guerrilla war with growing success during the twelve-year campaign, controlling much of the provinces of Morazán and Chalatenango. With UN and strong international backing the guerrillas forced the government to the bargaining table to sign the peace accords in January 1992. After the war, despite escalating differences among its leaders, the FMLN succeeded in becoming part of the emerging political landscape, electing officials throughout the country and winning the presidency in 2009 and again in 2014.

The Four Churchwomen. On December 2, 1980, four American missionary women were abducted, raped, and murdered by a National Guard death squad at Santiago Nonualco, El Salvador. Maryknoll sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline nun Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan, a laywoman, were on a Catholic relief mission when attacked. Four National Guard soldiers, who years later said they were acting on orders of superiors, were convicted in 1984 of the murders and received prison terms of 30 years. Robert White, American ambassador to El Salvador when the killings occurred, later said, "It is totally outrageous" to let "the intellectual authors of this terrible incident off scot free" (*New York Times*, April 3, 1998, A-12).

The Fourteen Families of El Salvador. From its early history, dozens of wealthy elites controlled much the coffee-producing lands in the fourteen departments (regions) of El Salvador. Supported by repressive legislatures and the military, the families appropriated the most productive lands, leaving the remainder to poor subsistence farmers. The resulting tensions between the wealthy and the *campesinos* gave rise to the MATANZA (see below), and in the late 1970s to the start of the brutal civil war.

La Matanza (The Slaughter). This 1932 massacre took place in the western departments of El Salvador, and left 10,000 to 40,000 Salvadoran peasants dead, including among others the leftist leader Agustín Farabundo Martí. After staging a successful coup in December of 1931, General Maximiliano Heránandez Martínez, led a better trained and equipped Salvadoran Army against the leftist uprising, specifically targeting the indigenous population.

Liberation Theology. This school of thought interprets the gospel teachings of Jesus Christ as a call to action to liberate the poor and oppressed from unjust social, political, and economic structures. Its founder, Gustavo Gutiérrez, outlined the basic tenets of the movement in *A Theology of Liberation*, espousing the “preferential option for the poor,” one of the basic principles of Catholic social teaching in the twentieth century.

Maquiladoras. Operating in Free Trade Zones, these factories hire low-paid young women to work long hours sewing and assembling products for the Gap, J.C. Penney, Levi Strauss, and others that are then sold on the American market. Bob Herbert, in an Op-Ed article for the *New York Times* wrote, “The Free Trade Zones in which the sweatshops flourish in Central America and the Caribbean were promoted by the U.S. Government and largely financed by U.S. taxpayers. They are a scandal.” He cited “a glossy full-color ad” aimed at clothing executives in a major trade magazine featuring “a young woman seated at a sewing machine in a shirt factory. . . . You can hire her for 33 cents an hour” (“Sweatshop Beneficiaries,” July 24, 1995, A 13).

National Civil Police (PNC). Created in 1992, the National Civil Police are responsible for maintaining order and public security in El Salvador. Under the UN-sponsored accords, the National Police, the Treasury Police, and the National Guard (formerly part of the Salvadoran armed forces), were disbanded because of involvement in human rights violations, and replaced by the PNC under civilian control. “All together, these units have been responsible for the

torture, disappearance or death of tens of thousands of civilians,” wrote Dean Brackley in “Peace for El Salvador” (*America*, February 22, 1992, 131). Members of the newly formed PNC were to be recruited in equal numbers from the government police forces and FMLN guerrillas.

Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). Roberto d’Aubuisson formed the right-wing ARENA party in 1981 in response to the growing insurgency movement in the country. Characterized by a strong anti-communist agenda, the party won the support of U.S. officials, and paved the way for a U.S.-backed financing of the war and the training of Salvadoran government military forces. The party controlled the National Assembly until 1985, and its presidential candidate Alfredo Cristiani won election in 1989. During the postwar years, despite gains by FMLN candidates, the party continued to win elections until 2012 when Anthony Saca, then president, was expelled from the party for suspected widespread corruption.

Neoliberalism. This political philosophy champions open markets, free trade, and the reduced role of government control over the economy. After the civil war the right-wing ARENA governing party in El Salvador espoused neoliberal economic policies that critics believe exacerbated inequality and poverty and threatened the future success of the peace accords.

Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES). An early human rights information project that between 1977 and 1990 collected over 9,000 testimonies on abuses during the twelve year civil war. Its findings were instrumental in removing human rights abusers from the ranks of the military.

People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP). One of five groups comprising the FMLN, the Peoples’ Revolutionary Army, led by the guerrilla tactician Joaquín Villalobos, fought the Salvadoran army to a standstill in the latter part of the 1980s. During the demobilization

period following the civil war, Villalobos and his supporters harbored concerns about the reorganization of the Salvadoran Army, the purge of its officers cited for human rights violations, and the distribution of land to the guerillas, but supported the end of hostilities and the integration of the FMLN into the national political landscape. “We are aware that we made errors,” said Villalobos in a February 1992 speech, “that we were not infallible and that this is the moment to say to the nation, with humility, that we recognize this. We do not care if the errors of others were greater or lesser than ours, or if they will recognize them some day. We are convinced that without truth and justice, we have neither reconciliation nor peace” (quoted in “Peace for El Salvador,” *America*, February 1992, 133).

Recalendarization. Compliance with the stipulations of the peace accords calling for a purge of senior Salvadoran military officers and the demobilization of rebel forces by October 31, 1992, met with failure. Amid escalating tensions threatening the breakdown of the cease-fire (including reports of an army-planned coup d'état), and under intense UN pressure, President Alfredo Cristiani agreed to implement the “purification” of the army, and Joaquín Villalobos, military leader of the insurgents, accepted the mandate for full demobilization of rebel ranks by December 15. The new date was hailed as signaling the “end of the war.”

Rerum Novarum. This encyclical issued by Leo XIII on May 15, 1891, on the “condition of Labor,” spelled out a modern-day version of the rights to property, the relations between employers and workers, the rights of workers to organize for their mutual benefit, and the employee’s right to remuneration “sufficient to maintain the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort.” *Rerum Novarum* has been lauded for espousing the principles of industrial justice.

School of the Americas (SOA). Established in 1946 in Panama by the U.S. Department of Defense, the SOA, called the “School of the Americas’ Assassins” by its detractors, provided anti-communist counterinsurgency training for Central American army personnel.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the school trained the Salvadoran Atlacatl Battalion, the unit responsible for the El Mozote massacre and the assassination of the UCA Jesuits. Transferred to Fort Benning, Georgia in 1984, the SOA became increasingly criticized for the human rights violations of its graduates that included enhanced interrogation techniques, extortion, kidnapping, and executions. Public protests and demonstrations calling for the school to shut its doors prompted its renaming in 2007 as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Solidarity. This term is used in El Salvador and elsewhere in the world to describe a “joining together” of “the haves” with marginalized people to seek social, economic, and political change. Solidarity, a key ingredient of liberation theology and its message of the “preferential option for the poor,” calls for listening to the stories of the oppressed, and coming to an understanding what it means to be non-participants in life: to be hungry, illiterate, and exploited by others. Solidarity demands dialog so that the non-poor begin questioning the structures in place that serve to oppress the less fortunate. Finally being “in solidarity” calls for “the haves” and the marginalized working together to become agents of change.

Truth Commission. The 1992 UN-brokered peace accords established a Truth Commission for El Salvador to investigate human rights violations during the twelve-year civil war. The full report, *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador. Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador* (United Nations Security Council, April 1, 1993, S/25500), offers a detailed history of the war, uncovers the truth about specific incidents in the war, and names those who ordered and/or carried out atrocities. After extensive research and examination of thousands of testimonies, the commission report, seeking to assign responsibility for thousands of deaths, blamed the government and right-wing death squads for the bulk of human rights atrocities, and called for the dismissal of senior Salvadoran military officers, changes in the country’s judicial system, further investigations into the activities of

the death squads, and asserted that American officials arguing for continued U.S. support of the war were misinformed or cynical about what had occurred in the country.

United Nations Observers Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). This mission played a key role in the Salvadoran peace process by mediating negotiations that led to the peace accords. The mission oversaw the implementation of the accords, including monitoring human rights violations, the demobilization of the FMLN rebel army, and the reorganization of the Salvadoran armed forces.

U.S. Involvement in Salvadoran Civil War. In an effort to contain the spread of Communism and its ideology throughout Central America, the U.S. supported the Salvadoran military in its fight against the Marxist guerrillas of the FMLN by supplying intelligence gathering, strategic planning, and training officers and foot soldiers. Clifford Krauss wrote, "Between 1979 and 1992, the Carter, Reagan and Bush Administrations poured more than \$6 billion into El Salvador to modernize the Army and defeat the guerrillas. Critics of the policy have long accused Washington of being implicated in the slaughter of thousands by looking the other way when its allies committed crimes" (*New York Times*, Washington, March 15, 1993, A 12). In an Op-Ed column, Anthony Lewis wrote that the U.S. supported "a Salvadoran Government that was dominated by killers. We armed them, trained their soldiers and covered up their crimes" (*New York Times*, March 22, 1993, A 17).