

[REDACTED]

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Killing of Dr. Ignacio Ellacuria

1. The assassination of Ellacuria and other priests 0300 hours 16 November 1989 could have been perpetrated by the extremists of the left or the right.

Leftist Extremists

2. There are several occurrences which could indicate Ellacuria's death, on the night of 15-16 November 1989, could have been perpetrated by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN):

a. Early morning 15 November 1989 an estimated 200 insurgents harassed the Police Officer Academy near Ciudad Merlio, between San Salvador and Santa Tecla. Insurgents set up roadblocks on the Santa Tecla highway, at the intersection of the highway and the road to Ciudad Merliot. By mid-morning the 15 November the insurgents withdrew from the area, leaving mines and booby traps in the Ciudad Merliot area. Civilians reported the presence of 100 insurgents eating and resting on the highway behind the Boechst factory. Ciudad Merliot is two kilometers southwest of the University of Central America site where Ellacuria was killed.

b. One report received before the Ellacuria assassination indicated eighty troops of the Forces of Popular Liberation (FPL) from the El Volcan and Colonia Cerro Monte, and staging areas at Finca El Espino, will try to take over Santa Tecla 16 November 1989. They will be reinforced by five to six groups of forces of the Revolutionary Workers Party of Central America Workers (PRTC) from Zaragoza who will be wearing National Police uniforms. They plan to attack the General Staff Headquarters and the National Directorate of Intelligence (DNI), and small groups of FPL members with LAW's and RPG-2's will attack Cherokee and other patrol vehicles of the U.S. Embassy. They also will attack the homes of individuals, including Armando Calderon Sol, the Mayor of San Salvador; Francisco Merino, Vice President of El Salvador; Roberto D'Aubuisson, Honorary President for Life of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA); Colonel Francisco Elena Fuentes, Commander of the First Infantry Brigade; and possibly unidentified U.S. Embassy advisors who work with and support the Salvadoran Armed Forces.

3. Public statements by Ellacuria, in September 1989, differed from his earlier public statements in that they were increasingly favorable to the Government of El Salvador and to the detriment of the FMLN. The following are public statements given recently by Ellacuria which favored the Government of El Salvador and were unfavorable to the FMLN:

a. On 15 September 1989 Ellacuria said that Cristiani has proved to be his own man and not just a puppet of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) party.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

b. On 18 September Ellacuria said the FMLN should drop its demand that the 1991 elections be moved up, because it is unconstitutional, and the government is obliged to abide by the constitution. He suggested the FMLN should not make postponement of the elections a key issue because it is negative and can hinder the peace process. He expressed skepticism that the guerrillas can negotiate with the government, integrate themselves into the political process, demobilize their troops, and prepare for elections in only one year.

c. On 11 October 1989 Ellacuria called FECMAFAM's takeover of the Costa Rican Embassy a tactical error. He admitted that some in the left had criticized his call for support for both President Cristiani and the FMLN in their dialogue efforts.

Rightist Extremists

4. On 15 November 1989 at the National Assembly, there were separate meeting of the Legislative Assembly and the National Executive Committee (COENA) of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) Party. [REDACTED]

5. D'Aubuisson said that by the following day (16 November) everything would be taken care of ("Se Arreglara"). [REDACTED] D'Aubuisson did not elaborate on this statement, but it was intended to calm the fears of those present.)

6. A short time later, D'Aubuisson began to berate the Jesuit priests who teach at the University of Central America-Jose Simeon Canas (UCA). He accused the priests of inventing lies, brainwashing UCA students, and of being responsible for their joining the FMLN.

7. D'Aubuisson then went to a chalkboard and diagrammed groups which he claimed were formed on the UCA campus at the instigation of the priests there, and which he said had joined with the FMLN against the government. The groups he listed included: the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP); the United Popular Action Front (FAPU); the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR); and the Nationalist Democratic Union Party (UDN).

8. D'Aubuisson then named several priests at UCA that he said had only come to El Salvador to take power in the country. He specifically named UCA Rector Ignacio Ellacuria; Segundo Montes; and Vice Rector Ignacio Martin-Baro. [REDACTED] D'Aubuisson frequently launches into polemics of this kind against his political enemies.)

9. The meeting ended with all present agreeing that the Salvadoran Government would have to take a hard line against the FMLN insurgents during the ongoing offensive.

10. [REDACTED] On 15 November six priests, including the three named above, were killed at UCA by unknown parties. D'Aubuisson's diatribe

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

against the UCA priests a few hours before their assassination raises disturbing questions which must be answered. Such behavior is in character with D'Aubuisson, however, and there is no information available at this time to link him or any of those known to be present at the meeting to the killing of the priests.)

11. (Ambassador's Comment: There are increasingly disturbing signs that those who executed Father Ellacuria and his fellow Jesuits were connected with elements of the extreme right. Description I have just had from Jesuits at UCA, and claims they made about eyewitness testimony make it extremely difficult to envision the assassinations as acts of an FMLN hit squad. The above information obviously strengthens that case. D'Aubuisson firing up his most radical followers with tales of the subversive activities of the UCA Jesuits just hours before their execution is difficult to dismiss as mere coincidence. Given the importance of getting at the truth of the Ellacuria matter, I have instructed [REDACTED] to pursue the leads offered by the above with whatever it takes to confirm or deny. I will submit my recommendations for what to do by SEPTTEL.)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]