

political police and ruthlessly suppressed dissent throughout the country. Targets included labor and peasant organizations, church officials, religious workers, political opponents, the media, and human-rights monitors.⁸ In his homily on March 23, 1980, Oscar Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador, delivered a striking rebuke to the Salvadoran government. The government viewed his increasingly vocal opposition as a threat to its power. The day after he delivered his speech, the archbishop was murdered. In the speech, Archbishop Romero had argued,

No government can be efficient without the support of the people, least of all when it tries to enforce them through blood and pain. . . . I would like to make a special call to the men in the Army. . . . Brothers, you are from our people, killing your own peasant brothers, and before being given an order to kill by a man, the law of God must prevail, which says: Do not kill. . . . No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. . . . An immoral law, nobody has to accomplish it. . . . It is time to recover your consciousness and to obey your consciousness before a sinful order. . . . In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people whose laments rise up to heaven, every day more tumultuous, I entreat and beg you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!⁹

The brutal response by regime elites to increasing political mobilization by peasants, workers, and students had several consequences. First, despite enduring differences in ideology and strategy, El Salvador's armed revolutionary groups unified their political representation in 1980 to form the FMLN.¹⁰ This involved the integration of the Popu-

(International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1991–1992*, London: Brassey's, 1991, p. 198).

⁸ Americas Watch Committee, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror: Human Rights Since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 17–63.

⁹ Jorge Caceres Prendes, "Revolutionary Struggle and Church Commitment: The Case of El Salvador," *Social Compass*, Vol. 30, Nos. 2–3, 1983, pp. 261–298, p. 293.

¹⁰ Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.