

El Salvador and the Assassination of Monsignor Romero: Past and Present

By Arnold August, October 2011

El Salvador was the last country visited in Obama's March 2011 tour. Coffee was the main monocrop in the country for which the U.S. had great interests. From the 1930s onward, for a period of many decades, the U.S. under Democratic and Republican presidents (including the Good Neighbor policy of the 1930s), directly oversaw some of the worst forms of repression, military coups and mass murders of ordinary people, communists and revolutionaries in Latin-American countries. No one was spared. The U.S. was directly involved, through the U.S.-trained death squad leader Roberto d'Aubuisson, for the killing of the popular priest Monsignor Oscar Romero on March 24, 1980.^{1: 2}

In the March 22, 2011, Joint Press Conference with El Salvador President Funes, Obama did not mention the assassination of Romero nor, of course, the long-lasting role of U.S. interference and military intervention in that small country. In the afternoon, Obama visited Romero's crypt in the company of President Funes.³

In the presidential toast remarks following this visit, Obama said, in the context of his "honor to visit" the crypt, "El Salvador has struggled for justice and human rights" and that Romero "remains an inspiration to people all around the world."⁴

The figment of imagination still festers in the minds of too many people all over the world that change from one political party to another in the U.S.-type of democracy can bring about a modification in a positive manner of its foreign policy. Thus by profiting from this ability to co-opt positive sentiment, the spokesperson (Obama) of the country responsible for the assassination also becomes the spokesperson of the assassinated (Romero).

¹ Cockroft, James D. 1996. *Latin America: History, Politics, and U.S. Policy*. (2nd ed.). Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, p. 146–75.

² Galeano, Eduardo. 1997. *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. NY: Monthly Review Press, p. 97–98.

³ Obama, Barack. 2011. “Remarks by President Obama and President Funes of El Salvador in Joint Press Conference.” White House (March 22). At <<http://whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/22/remarks-president-obama-and-president-funes-el-salvador-joint-press-conf>>.

⁴ Washington Post. 2011. “Obama Delivers Toast at Official Dinner in San Salvador, El Salvador.” (March 22). At <<http://projects.washingtonpost.com/obama-speeches/speech/601/>>.