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SUBS [Interview with Democratic Convergence leader Ruben Zamora by Alessandro Oppes; date, palce not given

SUBJ R. Zamora Interviewed on Killing of Jesuit Priests

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- 1 ]
- 2 [Excerpt] Rome -- [introductory passage omitted] [Oppes] The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front [FMLN] has described the arrest of five soldiers accused of committing the massacre [of six Jesuit priests -- FBIS] as "a manipulated cover operation." Basically Cristiani is alleged to have decided to punish a number of low-ranking officers in order to close the case as quickly as possible and to end international pressures. What is your opinion in this regard?
- 3 [Zamora] The fact that President Cristiani acknowledges that members of the Army were responsible for the massacre is a first step and definitely a good thing, but it is entirely insufficient unless the subsequent steps are also taken. First, to identify who the responsible parties were: This is the first important point, because nobody can feel satisfied if only low-ranking officers are identified. Such an act can only have been ordered by high-ranking officers. We must not forget the murder of Monsignor Romero, for which there were no sentences and no trials.
- 4 [Oppes] However, the Armed Forces High Command immediately denied involvement in the operation, stating that it was an isolated action "divorced from any institutional policy."
- 5 [Zamora] I believe this is entirely wrong: The murder of the Jesuit fathers cannot be considered an isolated action. Over 7,000 people have died in El Salvador during 10 years of civil war, and 90 percent of them were civilians. Political assassination by the government forces is a constant practice. Furthermore torture is regularly practised in El Salvador. The Army High Command cannot fail to know this. They cannot claim to be innocent, because they have the greatest responsibilities for human rights violations.
- 6 [Oppes] Yet last month the summit of Central American heads of state in San Jose ended with a success for President Cristiani, who secured an explicit condemnation of the offensive launched by the guerrillas in November, whereas no specific charges were leveled at the government for human rights violations.
- 7 [Zamora] There is a positive factor that should be borne in mind, namely, the call from the five presidents for a resumption of the dialogue in El Salvador and the appeal to the UN secretary general to carry out mediation to this end. But in the summit's final document it is the FMLN and the Nicaraguan contras who pay the price for the agreement among the presidents: These are diplomatic games that do not facilitate the restoration of peace in Central America.
- 8 [Oppes] What paths can be taken now to advance the negotiations?
- 9 [Zamora] Negotiations are becoming increasingly necessary. The guerrilla offensive shows that the FMLN is a strong military force, but also that a revolutionary attitude does not exist among the masses. It also shows that the government army, after 10 years of U.S. training, is an army whose military stance is defensive, not offensive (which is the key to U.S. military strategy.) While this all shows that there can only be a

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negotiated solution to the crisis, it is also true that precisely following the guerrilla offensive (and this is the paradox) the Army stiffened its stance against negotiations. I believe that sooner or later common sense will prevail and it will sit down at the negotiating table. At the end of November the U.S. secretary of state's assistant for Latin America spoke officially for the first time about the need for negotiations to resolve the crisis in El Salvador: This is an important sign of a changing situation. (endall) 11 jan [REDACTED] 16/1207z jan BT #3952 NNNN

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