MURDERED in Central America

Donna Whitson Brett
Edward T. Brett

The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll) recruits and trains people for overseas missionary service. Through Orbis Books Maryknoll aims to foster the international dialogue that is essential to mission. The books published, however, reflect the opinions of their authors and are not meant to represent the official position of the society.

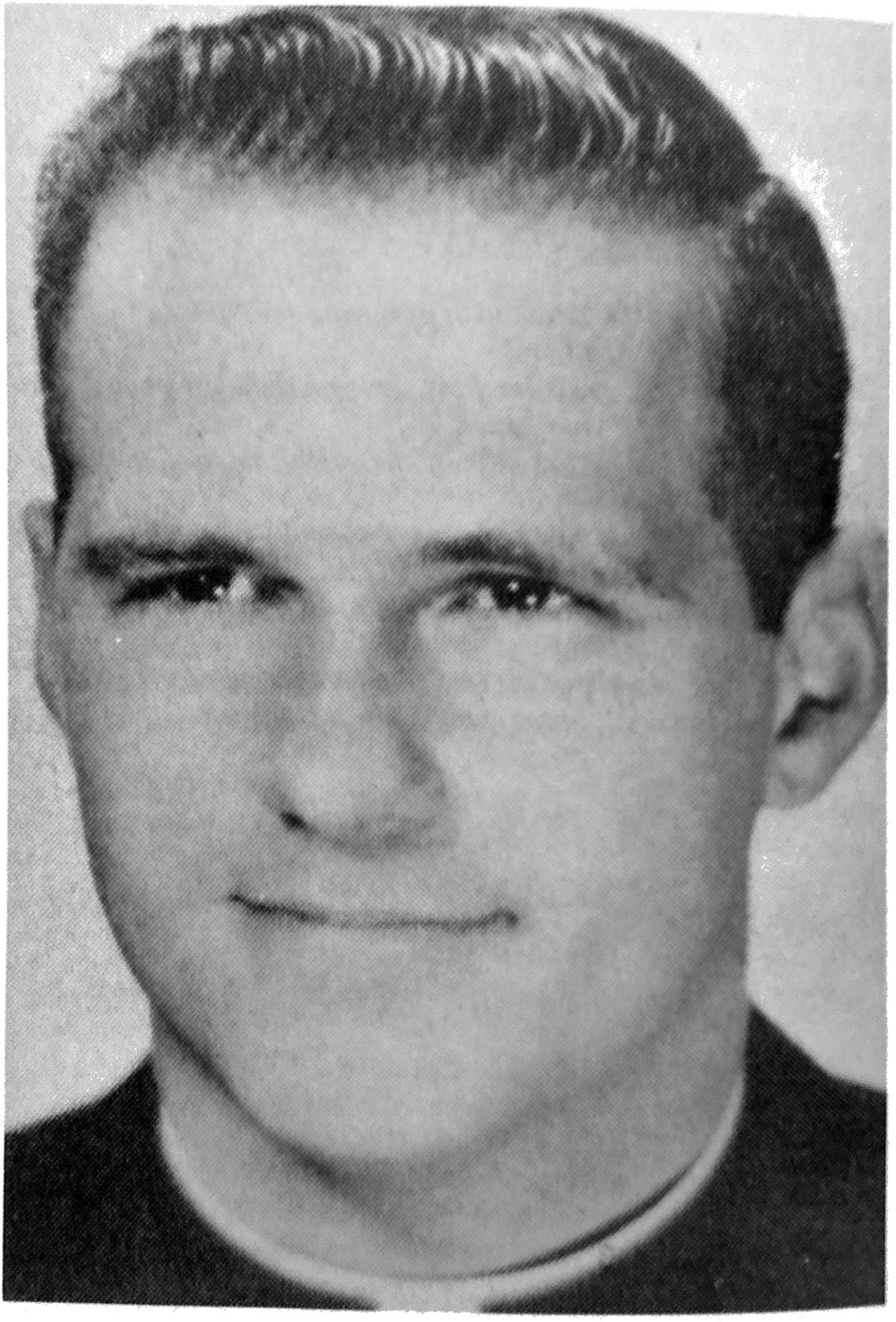
Permissions

Anthony Lewis, "Showing His Colors," copyright © 1981 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission; Frank Hammer, "Not Really Big Deal Killing in Salvador," copyright © 1984 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission; James Carney, *To Be a Revolutionary: An Autobiography* (Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.), © 1985 by Padre J. Guadalupe Carney Fund, Communication Center #1, used by permission; Ana Carrigan, *Salvador Witness: The Life and Calling of Jean Donovan* (Simon & Schuster), © 1984 by Ana Carrigan, used by permission; Judith M. Noone, *The Same Fate as the Poor* (Maryknoll Sisters Publication), © 1984 by the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc., used by permission; Robert L. Koenig, "Faith Led 'Padre Guadalupe' to Honduras," © 1983 by *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* used by permission; Bob Adams, " 'Father Guadalupe'—Reluctant Rebel," © 1983 by *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* used by permission; Rev. David Monahan, ed., *The Shepherd Cannot Run: Letters of Stanley Rother* (Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, 1984), used by permission; Juanita Klapheke, "For Casimir on the Anniversary of His Death," unpublished poem (1976), used by permission; Betty Campbell and Peter Hinde, *Following the Star: The Liberation Process of the People,* ed. Gary MacEoin (Religious Task Force, Washington, D.C.), used by permission; Gary Miller's recollections of events concerning the death of John David Troyer are used by permission; Francis Xavier Holdenried, "Terror in Guatemala" (*America,* July 17, 1982), used by permission.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brett, Donna Whitson.
Murdered in Central America : the stories of eleven U.S. missionaries / Donna Whitson Brett and Edward T. Brett.
p. cm.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-88344-624-3 (pbk.)
1. Missionaries—Central America—Biography. 2. Missionaries—United States—Biography. 3. Christian martyrs—Central America—Biography. 4. Catholic Church—Missions—Central America. 5. Central America—Church history—20th century. I. Brett, Edward Tracy, 1944- . II. Title.
BV2842.B73 1988
266'.023'730728—dc19
[B]
87-37216
CIP

Contents



Michael "Casimir" Cypher

1

Michael "Casimir" Cypher

Conventual Franciscan Missionary

Michael Jerome Cypher, born on January 12, 1941, was raised on a small cattle farm near Medford, Wisconsin, growing up with his eight brothers and three sisters in an old farmhouse that had once belonged to his grandparents. Michael's parents, Elizabeth and Lawrence, reared their large family in a religious environment that was uncomplicated by the confusion and sophisticated materialism of urban existence. The Cyphers were not self-conscious about their Catholicism; the walls of the home were covered with religious pictures. Simplicity, love of the land, respect for nature, and the desire and ability to grow things were bred into Michael, and friends unanimously remember him as "down-to-earth" and "unsophisticated."

Two of the nine Cypher boys, Leonard and Michael, left the old farmhouse in Medford at the age of fourteen to attend Saint Mary's Minor Seminary in Crystal Lake, Illinois. Leonard was a senior there when Michael entered as a freshman. (Leonard, too, was to become a priest, but later left the priesthood.) Mike was "a very quiet and simple boy, very much down to earth" and "not all that fond of studies,"[1] recalls Father Ronald Olson, his religion and music teacher; nevertheless, he did well enough in school. He preferred math and science and more practical subjects; as for his writing ability, it was "an English teacher's nightmare," Father Anselm Romb claims.[2] But Michael was always anxious to help, and Olson gratefully remembers him as a senior staying up late for several nights drawing sketches and scenes for a choral program Olson was preparing. He also sang in the choir for that program and contributed his bass voice to a couple of barbershop quartet numbers.[3]

Because Michael had a rather indifferent attitude to intellectual activities and a preference for "getting his hands dirty" working on manual projects, he was often kidded by his prefect, Father John Chrysostom, who was himself fastidious and a lover of the classics, art, and literature. In spite of their diametrically opposed interests, Father John developed a deep respect for

Mike. The vice-prefect, Father Philip Wozniak, remembers him as "certainly no model student," and somewhat mischievous, but praises his utterly wholesome character.[4] This was a scenario that was to be replayed often in Cypher's life. Teachers, rectors, missionaries, a novelist he knew in California would be initially exasperated or even repelled by his straightforward, "earthy" ways, but would eventually be won over by his simplicity, his sensitivity to nature, his inability to hold a grudge.

Mike graduated from Saint Mary's Seminary in 1959 and went on to the Conventual Franciscan's novitiate in Lake Forest, Illinois. There he took as his religious name "Casimir," after the ascetic son of a fifteenth-century Polish king. He then attended Loyola University in Chicago and graduated on June 9, 1964.

After graduation, he went on for theological studies at Assumption Seminary in Chaska, Minnesota, a tiny town southwest of Minneapolis-Saint Paul. There the rural atmosphere, familiar to him from childhood, appealed to him. "He was content with the simple things in life," notes Olson. "There was nothing sophisticated about him. He was a very plain person, not known as a great speaker . . . and not seen as a great or strong leader."[5]

The years he spent in Chaska studying theology coincided with the years of post-Vatican II changes occurring throughout the Catholic church. If the laity were perhaps confused and hesitant about the demise of some of their traditions, seminarians were usually in the vanguard demanding speedier and more radical changes. They were particularly anxious to revamp seminary life. A fellow seminarian at that time, Kent Biergans, clearly remembers Cas's total lack of concern for the "burning" issues of the day:

> In many ways we were idealists, in many ways radicals, in many ways immature. Cas was not a part of the seminary turmoil. I don't remember him ever being a part of the discussion to push for change or to complain about the seminary administration. He was more apt to be in a friendly card game and drinking a beer than he was to be in a hot debate. He seemed to slide through such concerns on a different level. He seemed untouched by the turbulence around him. He lived his simple life in peace and shared it with those around him.[6]

Throughout his life, Casimir would remain remarkably oblivious to political issues, both within the church and without.

Cypher was ordained on March 9, 1968, in the cathedral of Saint Paul in Saint Paul, Minnesota. His first assignment as a priest was to Saint Anthony's parish in Rockford, Illinois, where he did not distinguish himself as a well-organized shepherd of the flock, but was nonetheless well liked by the parishioners there. At Saint Anthony's Casimir began to acquire his lasting reputation as carefree and absent-minded. His superiors would have to remind him to buy a new suit or shoes or have his habit cleaned, but he would then forget or simply not bother, thinking his appearance unimportant. He was also

unbothered by the petty details dictated to the rest of humanity by conventional society. Philip Wozniak, rector of the Franciscan House of Studies in Chicago, recalls the wake of exasperated confusion that followed Casimir around on the occasions when he would visit:

> He lost everything of importance, e.g., key to the house, keys to the car. He frequently violated community order by innocently forgetting to inform his superiors when and where he was going. He never had his own cigarettes. It would do no good to give him a whole package. He would have left them somewhere and ask for more. He made too many appointments for the same hour and the same day, and he frequently would not be at home when all these people arrived.[7]

Sometime during these four years or so of pastoral duties, Cypher became drawn to missionary work. But there were obstacles in his path. First of all, his province, Saint Bonaventure, did not have a mission. This problem was eventually solved when he asked to go to Honduras, where a mission had been established by another province of his order. But a second obstacle remained: Casimir could not speak Spanish.

In an effort to prepare him somewhat for life in Central America, the Franciscans sent Cypher to a Spanish-speaking parish—Our Lady of Guadalupe—in Hermosa Beach, California. He was not there long before the people dubbed him "Father Colombo," perceiving some remarkable similarities between their disheveled, forgetful associate pastor and the popular television detective. Olson, who was also in California at this time, recalls:

> The people in Hermosa Beach loved him, even though he was seen as forgetful, somewhat disorganized and carefree. He always had time for anyone, regardless of what he was doing. He may have exasperated a few. Some thought he had no priestly class. Yet his homilies and liturgies were very sincere, down to earth and to the point. I doubt if he knew any Spanish at the time . . . but he was able to touch everyone with his genuineness.[8]

Nevertheless, he did manage to antagonize at least one influential member of the parish, Leonard Wibberley, author of *The Mouse That Roared*. Wibberley reveals that his outright antipathy for Casimir eventually developed into friendly respect:

> I thought him stupid; that is, dull in his wits and incapable of adequate self-expression. . . . His face lacked expression, or, if it had a natural expression at all, it seemed to me one of truculence.
>
> Later, I came to realize I had misjudged Father Casimir. The change occurred one Christmas after a school play. He seemed genuinely to enjoy the performance and the children who participated. Afterwards I

found him standing in the semidark of the playground almost as if he didn't want to leave. When I held out my hand and wished him a Merry Christmas, he was charitable enough to take it—though I deserved to have him ignore me, for I had been a pompous ass in the way I treated him.

Thereafter I came to have more regard for him. He was short and looked as though he should have been a blacksmith rather than a clergyman. He had a direct and uncomplicated mind, and so was not bedeviled by the frustrations and indecisions of lesser mentalities. He thought deeply, I am told, but didn't say much, and this habit of deep thought got him into constant trouble.

He could be guaranteed, for instance, to lose any car in a parking lot because he was involved with some question of ethical worth rather than where he left an automobile—all this I learned from his fellow priests.

Father Casimir, I suppose, could have stayed in Hermosa Beach or some equally comfortable parish for a long time. He was a good priest, and well liked on the whole. But he got it into his head that that wasn't what he had become a priest for; his purpose, he apparently decided, was not to be comfortable but to help the poor. He knew that there were a lot of poor to be helped, and somehow or other he got himself transferred from comfortable Hermosa Beach to not-so-comfortable Honduras.[9]

In October 1973, still unskilled in speaking Spanish, Casimir left California, destined for the rugged and primitive department of Olancho in Honduras.

Although it is bordered by three countries in various stages of revolution—Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala—Honduras itself is not yet embroiled in revolt. Nevertheless, it does share with its neighbors a similar heritage of dictatorship, landowning and military elites, and a large, poverty-stricken peasantry whose unanswered demands for true land reform bring them time and again to the point of desperation.

Honduras is the second largest nation in Central America—only Nicaragua is larger; but with around four million people, it has one of the sparsest populations. Nearly all of Honduras's industry is controlled by foreign corporations (80 percent),[10] while most of the best agricultural land is owned by two U.S. fruit companies, United Fruit and Standard Fruit, and by a few plantation owners and cattlemen, whose farms and ranches produce crops and meat for export rather than for home consumption. Complicating the uneven distribution of land is the fact that only about 25 percent of the land is arable because of the country's mountainous terrain. Thus, 90 percent of the *campesino* population is forced to live on a per capita income of about $100 a year.[11] This unfortunate nation is one of the poorest in the Western Hemisphere:

Life expectancy and malnutrition are the worst in the region—in some areas as many as nine out of ten children are malnourished. Nowhere else in Central America is the lack of proper nourishment so noticeable as in

the rural areas of Honduras. Children stand outside dirt homes with bloated stomachs, and the *campesinos* stare lifelessly as travelers pass through their towns.[12]

Following the long dictatorship of Tiburcio Carías Andino (1933–1949) and a contested election in 1954, a forward-looking president, Dr. Ramón Villeda Morales, was elected in 1957. Villeda Morales, after sponsoring a labor code and a social security program, turned his attention to the touchy problem of agrarian reform, and in 1962 he signed into law legislation that would tax unproductive land based on a percentage of its declared value. Villeda Morales was cautious, however, and did not limit the amount of cultivated land that could be held by an individual. Moreover, the Honduran Congress had made it very difficult to expropriate any private holdings. Nevertheless, even this moderate reform antagonized the large landholders and the United Fruit Company and helped lay the groundwork for a coup one year later, in which the military under Colonel Oswaldo López Arellano seized control of the government ten days before the scheduled presidential election.[13]

After several years of thwarting the reforms initiated by his predecessor, López Arellano assumed a more positive attitude toward land reform in the late 1960s; and when he again took over the government in 1972, he was ready to get serious. At that time, twenty thousand peasants joined in a "hunger march" and converged on the capital of Tegucigalpa demanding meaningful land reform. Hoping to stem the growing discontent of the hungry *campesinos*, in December 1972 López Arellano made them the long-awaited promise of land. The *campesinos* were able to exert pressure on López's regime because, despite their illiteracy and poverty, they have remarkably well-developed peasant unions. In northern Honduras, one reason for this was the famous sixty-nine-day strike of 1954, during which laborers for United Fruit, later joined by those of Standard Fruit, demanded an end to deplorable wages and working conditions. Although the workers did obtain union recognition, they gained only a fraction of their other demands. After the strike United Fruit mechanized its operations, dismissing almost 50 percent of its workers. This proved a boon to peasant organization, for the former banana laborers became subsistence farmers and provided the peasantry in the area with a core of experienced union activists.[14]

In southern Honduras, however, an important impetus to peasant organization was the Catholic church. In the 1960s, the church, perhaps realizing the opportunity it had lost during the strike to identify with and support the laborers, began to turn its attention to the peasants living in ignorance and hunger. Recruiting lay leaders from traditional church groups like the Caballeros de Cristo Rey and the Legion of Mary, it developed *cursos de capacitación* (courses in human promotion), consumer and farming cooperatives, and rural radio schools. With the backing of the bishops and clergy, lay leaders thus began to educate *campesinos*, help them organize, and dispel their fatalistic acceptance of existence without basic human rights. An eventual result of these

efforts was the progressive National Peasants Union (UNC), which grew rapidly and was supported by the small but vigorous Christian Democratic Party.[15]

The UNC soon began to organize in Olancho. Like church leaders in southern Honduras, the bishop of Olancho, Nicholas D'Antonio, encouraged peasants to educate themselves and to unite in the struggle for land reform. He turned a vacant diocesan school building in Juticalpa, the seat of government in Olancho, into a "human promotion center" called El Centro Santa Clara. D'Antonio, a Franciscan from Rochester, New York, recalls the courses offered there:

> Our conscientization program . . . brought the *campesino* to a true sense of his human dignity as a child of God and an equal with his richer brothers. The earth, he learned, was created by God and intended for the benefit of all mankind and not only for a select few believed to be favored by destiny, heredity or politics. A poor farmer remarked, after a series of courses, "I feel like I've been reborn. It's like I've come out of the dark into the light."[16]

Many of the *campesino* leaders turned out by the Centro Santa Clara were trained by a dynamic young Colombian churchworker, Iván Betancur. A close friend, Luis Emilio Henao, describes Iván's work:

> Iván had a great capacity for turning an illiterate *campesino* into a leader. . . . His discussions on the analysis of reality were so concrete and so disturbing, as he would begin asking simply: "What do you see in your villages?" And their answers were simple: "We see trees, animals, houses, etc." And afterwards, with questions as simple as this: "And who do the trees belong to?", he would begin to penetrate the terrible reality of exploitation of fine lumber in Olancho.[17]

The local landowning elite were antagonized by the *campesinos'* growing assertiveness and by the church's efforts to educate them. D'Antonio continues:

> . . . Some would visit our Center only to look for slogans or other material and quote them out of context. Soon we were labelled Communists and foreign agitators. Threats were made against our lives, . . . and I earned two nice titles, "The Mad Communist Bishop" and "The Hangman of Olancho."[18]

Thus by the early 1970s tensions were building in Olancho. While landowners prepared to defend their privileges against growing demands for change, *campesinos*, on the other hand, were desperate and hungry. Lacking enough land of their own, they worked on the large plantations and ranches in the area, earning salaries as low as fifty cents per day, receiving no benefits, and

subjected to being fired at will by their employers. Watching in frustration, they often saw huge tracts of unused land being taken over by the already wealthy landowners, often with dubious legal title.[19]

But the peasants of Olancho, newly organized into the UNC, began to place their hopes in a strategy being used elsewhere in Honduras—land recuperations. By occupying en masse unused national or *ejido* (communal) lands, the *campesinos'* goal was to force authorities to recognize their plight and to implement the 1962 Agrarian Reform Law. Because of the church's efforts on the *campesinos'* behalf, it was not long before the large landholders were accusing the bishop and churchworkers of promoting these "land invasions," as the wealthy preferred to call them. Nearly all the priests and religious in Olancho were foreigners, due to the severe shortage of clergy in Honduras, and this served to complicate the issue immensely, since churchworkers were seen as malevolent "foreign agitators" by local ranchers. In 1971, Iván Betancur, by now a parish priest in the town of Catacamas, Olancho, became the target of repeated harassment. "Get out, priest" was painted on the town walls, and his residence was even dynamited.[20]

As the land recuperations continued, perhaps a fatal clash was inevitable in this wild and isolated province. At any rate one occurred on February 18, 1972, over a piece of land called "La Talanquera." Bishop D'Antonio was an eyewitness to much of what transpired:

> Honduras has a fairly good agrarian reform program, but due to the created interests of power groups, it travels at a snail's pace. The peasants observed that there is plenty of uncultivated land around serving no social purpose and, in many cases, not even legally owned or registered; so, because of dire necessity, they began to pressure the Agrarian Reform Institute and the government to accelerate the reform. If ignored, they threatened to "recuperate property" which, in justice, already belonged to them as Honduran citizens. They complained that more importance was given to a cow than to a human being.
>
> The Director of the local office of the INA (National Agrarian Institute) in Olancho was an opportunist who attempted to please both the rich and the poor. On the 15th of February 1972, he gave the go-ahead signal to a group of organized farmers to take over a piece of property called LA TALANQUERA. Euphoric with the good news, about 40 adult men, with their wives and children, settled themselves in the area and immediately began to prepare the soil for planting in time for the rainy season. The Honduran flag and placards were set up which read "We need land to work on," "We want justice and peace," "We are Catholics," "We don't want violence," and "We want to dialogue." The "owner" of La Talanquera complained to the police. Several arrived with the hope of convincing them to leave. They agreed on condition that the owner himself come and dialogue with them. He failed to show up; instead, he prevailed upon the Director of the INA to petition soldiers

from the capital to get the "invaders" off the property. The troops arrived, 95 men strong, armed with automatic weapons. On February 18, at 2:00 P.M., shots were heard; six *campesinos* were brutally murdered while their companions, wives and children scattered in panic to save their lives and lost themselves in the wooded mountains. Four others were seriously injured and two taken prisoner after a cruel beating. A sergeant received a bullet wound in the back when the order to fire and charge was given by the Captain. I confessed the dying soldier and saw the wound for myself, a gaping, bleeding hole, the size of the palm of my hand. The Doctor's diagnosis: caused by a high-powered rifle bullet. Naturally, to defend themselves, the soldiers and the enemies of the *campesinos* said that the sergeant died of a machete wound when attacked by the "invaders."

My efforts to get help were fruitless. The telegraph and telephone lines were cut off for four days. The bodies were left unattended until late at night that same day. My deacon [Luis Henao] offered to remove the corpses and take them to their families in the parish vehicle assisted by the brother of one of the dead. My deacon, now a priest, wrote a six-page description of this horror story which the nation's principal newspaper published in full. I authenticated the article with my signature.

The news of the massacre scandalized and angered every strata of society and leaked out to the world press. The communication media blared out its protest and demanded that justice be meted out. In my homily that next Sunday, I exhorted my infuriated people not to resort to vengeance. I encouraged a cooling off period and a time for reflection. I called that awful day "Good Friday Anticipated" (it was the Lenten season) and honored the brave men who died as martyrs. I encouraged dialogue on all sides and blamed what happened not on the rich, the soldiers or the *campesinos*; I blamed the massacre on the injustice rampant throughout Latin America and the world.

Calling the "invaders" martyrs angered and embarrassed the government and the military. The nationally organized Landowners and Cattlemen Association lashed out an attack in the press and radio against me personally as the "Promoter of Land Invasions" and the cause of the present strife. When things began to settle down, the government sent an investigating committee to Olancho in order to dialogue with the Campesino League [UNC], the Organized Landowners and Cattlemen and myself. I opened the session with a quote from Luke 4:16–19, but the meeting in the Town Hall was a farce. The *campesinos* were not justly represented. The majority of those present were the landowners and cattlemen and their friends. Although the meeting settled nothing, it did cool off tempers. I explained that at no time had I organized or even encouraged the *campesinos* to "invade" private property or to utilize violence of any kind. But I was sneered at and not believed. In a sense, I couldn't altogether blame the "rich," because at no time had I openly

> condemned the invasions. Why I didn't do so was because I was informed by the leaders of the *campesinos* and the office of the INA, that the land "recuperations" were done legally. The law was plain. If property wasn't serving a social function and the owner could not prove his legal right to it, then the peasants could take it.[21]

After the violence at La Talanquera, the harassment of churchworkers did not diminish. In March 1972 Padre Iván and Deacon Henao were denounced in front of government offices for inciting the *campesinos* and indoctrinating them in guerrilla tactics.[22] In April the bishop was arrested briefly by a drunken police chief and a month later was interrogated (and exonerated) by national authorities for possible links to communists.[23] In order to counteract the allegations that the church in Olancho had close ties with the left-of-center Christian Democrats through the *campesino* union, D'Antonio sold El Centro Santa Clara to the UNC for an insignificant sum and exhorted his pastoral workers not to use parish centers for partisan purposes. The *campesinos* renamed the building "Instituto 18 de Febrero" in memory of those who died at La Talanquera. The symbolic sale of the Center to peasants, however, further antagonized D'Antonio's enemies, who then began to look for a way to obtain the building for a school.[24]

No doubt the conflict at La Talanquera influenced a decisive political shift on the national level; for after it and the huge hunger march on Tegucigalpa mentioned earlier, López Arellano made his momentous promise to speed up land reform.

In late 1973, Father Casimir Cypher arrived in Olancho to work in the village of Gualaco. Michael Gable, a lay missioner, went out to meet him; knowing something of the recent history of animosity and bloodshed in the region, he thought the man who stood smiling in front of him was not cut out for this mentally and physically grueling mission work. But, like others before him, Mike soon realized his first impression was deceptive:

> When first you met him you thought what a simple man he was. Then you came to understand his intelligence, his deep spirituality, the way he loved all things, the way he wanted most of all to serve God and to help the people and you understood that this was a most unusual man.[25]

Casimir began work in San Gerónimo parish in Gualaco as an assistant of Father Emil Cook, another Conventual Franciscan. They split up the territory, which included about sixty villages and five hundred square miles of hilly and mountainous terrain, riding horseback or on burros over rocky, unpaved paths to reach the *campesinos* who needed their ministry or help. The first few months were extremely difficult, Casimir told his family; the visits to remote villages often took days by horseback. Once he even tried walking, but found that much worse.[26]

Casimir's reputation as absent-minded and disorganized continued unchal-

lenged in this remote parish in Olancho, just as it had in the United States. In Gualaco, where the television detective Colombo was unheard of, amused comments were passed around about the aptness of his name "Casimiro," which translates into Spanish "I almost see." Sister Mary García, a Franciscan missionary from Colorado who had worked many years in Olancho, recalls, "When we had Prelature meetings, he would always be as much as a day late and we would say 'Here comes Casi-miro.' "[27] But Father "I-almost-see" was a more than welcome addition to mission life in Gualaco. The simplicity of his life and his unpatronizing identification with the *campesinos*—farmers like himself—rapidly endeared him to them and to other missionaries.

He shared a room with Mike Gable at the mission, and the two became close friends, often staying up late at night talking, laughing, and telling stories. Casimir spent his spare time painting, whittling, or filling a notebook with poetic meditations and artistic doodles. Another diversion for him was a small garden patch that he tended in the center of the mission compound; Mike would often look up from his work and see Casimir, sloppily dressed, standing on the edge of his garden, leaning on a hoe and smoking a cigar. In a poem, "For Casimir on the Anniversary of His Death," Juanita Klapheke, another co-worker, describes this disheveled newcomer on the mission scene:

> He's not much to look at
> this slightly balding man
> with a bit of a paunch and baggy pants
> dirty, dull-green t-shirt
> three-days growth of beard on his face
> and the stub of a cigar hanging from his mouth.
> He stands there in rapt attention to some inner voice.
> His hands work with wood and knife
> whittling a piece of tree
> into some image of life.[28]

Life at the mission was not always slow-paced and serene, however. One day in particular stands out vividly from the rest. A fifteen-year-old boy had been critically wounded by a machete while chopping sugar cane in the fields; his father, after tying a dirty bandana on the arm as a tourniquet, brought the boy to Mike, who often dispensed first aid for those isolated *campesinos*. Mike stared at the mean gash that slit the boy's arm from fingers to elbow. As the blood pulsed out of the wound, Gable tried not to panic; he quickly flipped through a first aid guide he kept on hand, only to find the advice: "Call doctor immediately." But even the nearest telephone was hours away; the boy would easily bleed to death before long. The villagers were beginning to gather quietly in the doorway when Mike called for Casimir, who suggested that they kneel and pray the Our Father. Since they could offer no more physical aid, the missioner obeyed. When they finished the prayer, the bleeding had stopped. Surprised, Mike sprinkled sulfa on the wound and bound it up with gauze and

tape. A little later, Mike found Casimir working in his garden; the priest looked over at him, leaned on his hoe, and said, "See, Michael, miracles still happen."

Three or four weeks after this incident, Gable saw the boy and his father down by a nearby stream. The dressing on the wound had not been changed; it was black and ugly, and Mike feared the arm was or would soon be infected. He begged the *campesino* to bring his son back to the mission to have the arm checked and cleaned, but they never did show up.[29]

Although Padre Casimiro struggled diligently with his Spanish from the moment he arrived in Honduras, he never was able to master the tongue. Sometimes his sermons seemed to evoke more amusement than inspiration. One memorable one was his homily on "Noah and the Ark." Trying to get his point across with a minimum of words, he mimicked the antics of the animals clambering up the plank to the deck of the ark. The children were soon in hysterics. And as he preached in his own incomprehensible brand of mixed Spanish and English, the *campesinos* and English-speaking missioners began to shake with laughter.[30] Casimir's "Noah and the Ark" sermon would gain enough notoriety for Klapheke also to include a reference to it in her commemorative poem:

> Casimir,
> tell us again the story of the "Grand Barque"
> tell us again in your broken Spanish
> the story of a man who had to crowd all
> those animals on his hastily built ship
> preach to us once again the homilies only you and I
> could share because your Spanish was as bad as mine.
> Come on, they will understand now![31]

In the spring of 1974 Casimir returned to Hermosa Beach for a visit. At that time, his friend Leonard Wibberley saw him and commented on his change in appearance:

> When he came back the first time, it was hard to recognize him. He wasn't a stocky, strong blacksmith kind of man any longer. He had lost so much weight that he looked like a rather skinny boy.
>
> "Riding a burro," he said, "it takes weight off you. I ride a burro everywhere."[32]

Ronald Olson, Cas's former instructor, who was now teaching in California, also remembers this visit:

> In 1974 he returned to California for a short rest . . . and a chance to talk up the missions. I vividly recall his visiting Bishop Montgomery High School, talking with many of the students, offering the Liturgy and sharing his simple sermons. It was powerful. He touched the students so

> profoundly that a number of them wanted to join him. Some in fact did journey to Honduras that summer with Fr. Allen Ramirez and helped around the mission for about six weeks.[33]

A few months after his return to Gualaco, Casimir made a long journey by horseback to remote villages in the mountains, during which time an insect bite became seriously infected. He came back to Gualaco burning up with fever. He lost so much weight on his once stocky frame that he looked almost emaciated; he visited a clinic in Honduras, but in late 1974 it was decided that he should go back to the United States for tests and medical treatment. During the several months he spent recuperating in the United States, he visited and spent Christmas with his mother, brothers, and sisters in Medford (his father was dead), traveled to the parish he had served in Rockford, Illinois, and managed to see many of his old friends. Wozniak remembers:

> Fr. Casimir and I had long talks about his work in Honduras. He wanted to bring the love of God to these people he found so bereft of most ordinary consolations. While he saw his work as simply traveling from one small town to another, speaking and ministering to people who didn't see a priest often enough, he had a much [broader] vision of what that precise work would accomplish over several generations. . . . He was totally absorbed in making God known and loved by those to whom he went. When he had to return to the U.S. for medical tests, he was as cheerful as ever, but he worried that he might not be able to return to his people. He was very happy to find that his physical problems were not serious, and he looked forward to his return. Six months later he was dead.[34]

For Mike Gable, who by this time was living back in the United States, it was an unexpected pleasure that Casimir was now available to concelebrate his wedding in January 1975. He was also surprised, and touched, that his friend had scraped together enough money for a rather generous wedding gift. On the evening before his departure for Olancho, Cypher revealed to another friar a modest plan he hoped to put into effect upon his return to Honduras. His dream, he told Anselm, was to establish a small village made up of *campesinos* of strong faith and good will whose example of a wholesome family life would be an encouragement for other families, perhaps eventually other villages, to follow.[35]

When he arrived back in Honduras in early 1975, Casimir did not return to assist at the parish in Gualaco, but instead went alone to the tiny village of San Esteban about forty miles north. He was there only a few months when a long-awaited pickup truck was sent for his use by Catholic Relief Services. Although some mountain paths were too narrow and rocky even for the pickup, the missionaries had hoped that its arrival would make at least some of their travel easier.[36] It was indirectly because of this truck that Casimir would unwittingly

play a role in the next bloody explosion over land in Olancho.

By this time, the hopes Honduran *campesinos* had once placed in López Arellano's promises of land reform were beginning to wane. An emergency measure, called Decree Number 8, had been announced on December 26, 1972, which granted peasants the use of *ejido* and national lands and forced landowners to rent out their uncultivated holdings; this was intended as a temporary measure while the government prepared a new agrarian reform law. Although the greatest percentage by far of the property affected by Decree Number 8 was national land, it had earned for López Arellano the vigorous opposition of the powerful landholders, who feared that he was indeed serious about carrying out his plan for permanent land reform.[37] Thus, in February 1973 the president of FENAGH (National Federation of Farmers and Ranchers) protested the decree in a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources; and in March 1974 ranchers' associations in Olancho and elsewhere joined together to issue a pronouncement against agrarian reform couched "in such angry terms that it seemed to be a declaration of war," according to Honduran historian Longino Becerra.[38] Nevertheless, López Arellano went ahead with his plan. The new Agrarian Reform Law, which was finally proclaimed in late 1974, had as its goal the distribution of 600,000 hectares of land to 120,000 *campesino* families in five years. This law was more radical than the one of 1962 since a limit of five hundred hectares was placed on most properties. However, it was fundamentally designed to encourage modern capitalistic agriculture and to put an end to the string of land occupations by peasants, and thus could hardly be called revolutionary.[39] But FENAGH did not waste any time in denouncing the law, claiming that it "attacked private property, the democratic system, liberty and individuality."[40]

It is hardly surprising that López Arellano's tenure in office would soon come to an ignominious end. In early April 1975 it was revealed in the *Wall Street Journal* that a $1.25 million bribe had been paid by United Brands (United Fruit) to a high-ranking Honduran official, who had promised in return to lower the banana tax. Although the guilty official was eventually discovered to be the Minister of Economy, López Arellano himself was forced to resign in the midst of the scandal when he refused to allow a Honduran investigating commission to examine his bank accounts. Nonetheless, some believe that the bribery scandal was merely an excuse used by the traditional power structure in Honduras and the banana monopolies to rid themselves of a regime that was bent on political, social, and economic change.[41]

With the ascension of Colonel Juan Alberto Melgar Castro to power in April 1975, there was a shift toward the right in Honduran politics. But Melgar Castro was not an ultraconservative, and the UNC felt an attempt should be made to convince the new regime of the necessity to execute López Arellano's land reform law. Poor crops and the devastating after-effects of Hurricane Fifi, which had killed 8,000 Hondurans and left 300,000 homeless in September 1974, were contributing to the urgency of the situation. Thus, on May 18, 1975, there were again mass land occupations by hungry peasants in Olancho

and elsewhere. They disbanded, however, two days later, when the military intervened and many of their leaders were arrested.[42] The UNC soon followed this up with a seizure of bridges around the country on June 13.[43] Neither of these actions produced the desired effect on Melgar Castro's regime, however. Consequently, the UNC decided to resort to a strategy that had yielded results in the past; haunted by the prospect of starvations, the union began to organize another peaceful hunger march. The plan was for thousands of peasants to converge on Tegucigalpa, as they had in 1972, in order to demand implementation of the land reform law, legal recognition for their union, and the release of *campesinos* imprisoned in the land recuperations.[44] In Juticalpa, Olancho, about eighty-five miles away from the capital, the march was scheduled to begin in the early morning hours of June 25.

While the spring of 1975 had been rather uneventful for Padre Casimiro in the remote village of San Esteban, the church in Juticalpa and Catacamas was enduring new threats and accusations. Although his ministry by this time was in marriage counseling and not in educating *campesinos*, Iván Betancur had remained outspoken when confronted by injustice. When local merchants arranged an excessive hike in the cost of basic food items, his parish in Catacamas denounced the action. The local radio station refused to transmit Iván's Sunday masses, but much more ominous were the rumors afloat that all foreign clergy would soon be expelled permanently and that the lives of the bishop and some priests were in danger.[45] Iván wrote a friend in May 1975: "The farmers and ranchers cannot bear us, especially me. . . . These days, naturally, things are more agitated and many rumors abound. There are rumors that really are impudent, rumors that are a little frightening, but we have faith that they will not be realized."[46]

Meanwhile, the day of the big march drew nearer. Bishop D'Antonio was away from Olancho; he had gone to Rome in mid-May to attend a conference on charismatic renewal in the Catholic church, and on his return had stopped off in the United States to visit his mother. Back in Olancho, Betancur was looking forward to the arrival in late June of his mother and future sister-in-law, María Elena Bolívar, from Colombia. Behind the scenes, however, sinister plans were also being formulated in Olancho, as local ranchers and military officers plotted to disrupt the *campesinos'* upcoming hunger march.[47]

By unhappy coincidence, Padre Casimiro happened to be in Juticalpa on that crucial day. He had left his parish in San Esteban the day before to bring a *campesino* in need of medical attention to San Francisco de la Paz. While driving on a rocky, unpaved road in the newly arrived pickup, he had struck a tree and damaged the truck. In order to have it repaired, he had gone on to Juticalpa and stayed over there while he waited for the pickup to be ready.

Thus, on the evening of June 24, while the *campesinos* around Olancho were busily preparing for their march the next day, Casimiro took this opportunity to pay a visit to Sister Mary García. They had coffee together and spoke briefly about the march, but, as was typical of Cypher, the complicated politics of the event did not particularly interest him, and the conversation switched to other

matters. Sister Mary brought up the subject of clothes; perhaps she, like Cas's superiors in the States, was gently hinting that an improvement in his wardrobe would not make him an unworthy disciple of the original great lover of poverty, Francis of Assisi himself. Casimir laughed and said he had enough clothes to last him the rest of his life, but Sister Mary made him take some she had been saving for him anyway. The conversation, ironically enough, turned briefly to the subject of death, and then they said good-night.[48]

Around 3 o'clock the next morning, about one thousand *campesinos* left Juticalpa and began the long march to Tegucigalpa. Several who were not participating in the march stayed behind in the Centro Santa Clara. Suspecting nothing out of the ordinary, Casimir walked into town around 9:30 that morning to check on his truck and do a little shopping. But unknown to Casimir, trouble was brewing at the Center. Led by some of their teachers, schoolchildren from Juticalpa, who had been enticed by promises of candy, were holding a demonstration outside to demand that part of the *campesinos'* building be used for classroom space. A small plane was circling above; there were many soldiers present, both on foot and in vehicles. Local landowners and the school supervisor looked on from their cars. One of the teachers in the demonstration unsheathed a pistol and tried to kick down the doors and enter the building by force. While the peasants' attention was thus occupied, a group of plainclothesmen from the National Department of Investigation (DIN) swarmed in via another entrance and proceeded to surround and shoot at the *campesinos* trapped within the Center.[49]

Around this time, in all of the confusion, Casimir was detained as he passed through the Central Park. Exactly why the soldiers picked him out of the crowd and then arrested him is not known. He was wearing old work clothes, not his Franciscan habit. But he was obviously a foreigner and therefore possibly a priest; and the landholders had already made it clear that they were suspicious of foreign clergy. Some believe the troops were already on the lookout for another foreigner, a French priest named Michel Pitón, who was thought to have the keys to the Center, which at that moment was under attack. It is believed that the soldiers who detained Cypher saw his given name, "Michael," on his driver's license, and this may have convinced them that Casimir was the Padre Michel they were seeking.

Padre Casimiro, in his stumbling, heavily accented Spanish, was not able to communicate adequately. When the soldiers demanded the keys to the Center, he was confused; having lived in Gualaco and San Esteban, he was not at all familiar with *campesino* activities in Juticalpa. But no delicate distinctions were to be drawn that day anyway; "Michael" or "Casimir," activist or apolitical, it was all the same to his captors.

Inside the Center several *campesinos* and one government agent had been shot and were already either dead or dying. Several peasants were being beaten and interrogated. Others lay bleeding on the floor. Some, including a few women who were later freed, had hidden in various rooms of the building and waited in terror, expecting at any moment to be discovered and killed.[50] The captured priest was led into this nightmare.

He was questioned, and then kicked and beaten with rifles because his faltering answers were unsatisfactory. He was stripped of his clothes and insulted. According to one eyewitness, the officer in charge, Major José Enrique Chinchilla, pointed to the dead *campesinos* and told Casimir, "This is the religion that you practice and preach, a religion of hate."[51] He struck the priest in the face and cursed him. After this ordeal, he was taken, along with the *campesino* prisoners, from the Center to the jail.

In the meantime, Sister Mary García and a Honduran priest had been told of Casimir's arrest and the beatings and were trying to locate Major Chinchilla to convince him of Casimir's lack of involvement in the hunger march and to bring food to him, wherever he was being held. As they searched for the major, they saw ranchers and soldiers rushing back and forth in the streets of Juticalpa. Unable to find Chinchilla, they were eventually able to speak to another high-ranking officer, Major Díaz, when he drove by in his car. The major told them that Casimir was a prisoner because the problems in Olancho were due to the instigation of foreign religious and that all foreigners had to be arrested. He looked at Sister Mary and said, "You too, Sister." The Honduran priest pleaded for Cypher, "But Father Casimiro lives in San Esteban and it was just by accident that he was in town. He doesn't even know what it's all about." Díaz said he would see what could be done for him and drove off. Sister Mary was immediately arrested by a soldier nearby and taken off to jail.[52] Without a doubt, those in authority realized by this time that the priest they had in custody was not the Father Michel they were looking for. But Casimir could serve their purpose just as well, which was, through intimidation and fear, to suppress the church's work on behalf of the *campesinos*.

Unaware of the turbulence in Olancho, Iván Betancur was driving from Tegucigalpa to Juticalpa, chatting happily with his prospective sister-in-law, María Elena, and with Ruth García, a Honduran university student. His mother and María Elena had recently flown in from Colombia for their visit. That morning, Iván had left Mrs. Betancur in the capital to fly the next day to Juticalpa, thinking the car trip too arduous for an elderly woman. Betancur, María Elena, and Ruth had then set out by car on the long trip to Juticalpa.

Along the way, Padre Iván stopped in Campamento and was warned by nuns that Juticalpa was under military control. Nevertheless, he decided to continue in that direction. Some distance later, Iván stopped at a sawmill for gasoline, and there realized the gravity of the situation when he saw mobilized troops and some men he knew to be hostile. At this point he tried to turn back; racing along the road in his car, he was chased by two vehicles and was soon overtaken. He and the two young women were forced to return to the sawmill. There they were held till nightfall when they were conducted to an hacienda called "Los Horcones" ("The Pitchforks") owned by Manuel "Mel" Zelaya.[53]

Late that night in Juticalpa, Casimir and five *campesino* leaders were selected from the thirty-two arrested during that day's confrontation. The six men were tied up and then brought in their underwear by pickup truck to Los

Horcones. A full account of what then occurred is not known. Some say Iván's tongue was cut off and his teeth pulled out; others believe the women were raped and the two priests castrated. A few facts have come to light, however: Padre Iván was tortured in some way to obtain his confession on tape that he had engaged in "subversive activities"; later, an autopsy performed in Colombia at the request of his family revealed that he had in fact been castrated.[54] According to court records, the *campesinos* and the two women and priests were brought one at a time into a room in the hacienda to be interrogated, and in the early morning hours of June 26 all nine were executed.[55] They had probably endured torture. Their bodies were thrown into a deep well at the hacienda, which was then dynamited to hide any clues. Evidence still existed, however, for the well was only partially concealed, and Iván's car was a silent testimonial to the deeds. Therefore, a tractor was used to move earth over the well, and Betancur's car was doused with gasoline and set on fire.

On June 26, confusion and fear reigned in Olancho. Those who had set out the day before on the march had been stopped in their tracks by soldiers, fortunately without any bloodshed, and were returning to Juticalpa. But five of the *campesino* leaders arrested at the Centro Santa Clara had mysteriously disappeared from the jail the night before; their anguished families feared the worst. And where were Iván and Casimir? María Elena and Ruth? Mrs. Betancur had arrived in Juticalpa as scheduled the morning of the 26th, but her son had not met her at the airfield; she had made her way to the cathedral to wait for him, and there she sat, bewildered and frightened by the turmoil around her. Sister Mary García and other church personnel, under armed guard, were flown to San Pedro Sula, where they were questioned and placed under house arrest. Their house in Juticalpa had been raided, and money, a tape recorder, and camera had been stolen. On the afternoon of the 26th, four priests who had been held overnight in jail were driven in an open truck to the Juticalpa airport. While the priests waited to be transported to the capital for interrogation, local ranchers gathered to taunt them and call for their expulsion from the country. Meanwhile, in the United States, Bishop D'Antonio was stunned and nearly fainted when he received word of the attack on the Center and the disappearance of Iván and Casimir. He later learned that his own residence in Juticalpa had been ransacked and that wealthy landowners, finding the bishop unavailable for execution, had placed a $5,000 (10,000 *lempira*) price upon his head.[56]

And Olancho was not the only province affected. On June 25 marchers from all over the country had been stopped by soldiers and turned back. In the departments of Yoro and Choluteca, where the Catholic church had also worked closely with the peasants, foreign nuns, priests, and seminarians were rounded up, arrested, and sent to San Pedro Sula or Tegucigalpa for interrogation; several were expelled from the country. Human promotion centers and church-affiliated radio stations were also closed down.[57]

In Olancho, word was put out by the military that those who were missing had escaped from jail, that the law-abiding soldiers had been ordered not to

shoot them as they fled, and that Padre Casimiro himself had been seen in various places engaged in subversive activities. In an attempt to distract public attention, alarmist reports appeared in local newspapers: "600 men flee to the mountains; an outbreak of guerrilla activity is feared. Army prepared to safeguard order."[58]

No one was convinced by these lies. Word that something terrible had occurred in Olancho circulated throughout the nation; demands for an investigation were made by students and friends of Ruth García at the University of Honduras and by the Catholic hierarchy and religious workers; and the Colombian and U.S. embassies wanted an explanation for the mysterious disappearance of their citizens. The government under Colonel Juan Melgar Castro reluctantly complied.

After five days of intense excavation at Los Horcones, the tortured and mutilated bodies—and the grim truth—finally came to light on July 18, three weeks after the murders took place. Casimir had not fled to the hills and joined a guerrilla group; what was left of him was discovered at the bottom of a 120-foot well.

Father Michael "Casimir" Cypher was buried on July 20, 1975, inside the church of Gualaco, his first parish in Olancho. On a "next of kin" form Cypher had completed a few months earlier he had written: "I intend to be working in a parish or at least living in a friary and it is my wish that I be buried in the same town in which I die. I want no more for my burial than a pauper. If you have to spend money, then have a party and thank God for my death."[59] His family respected his wishes and the body was never returned to Wisconsin. Among his few effects were found his art supplies and a notebook filled with simple meditations, stories, poems, and drawings.

Soon after his death, Casimir's mother, seventy-four years old, tried to reconcile herself to the tragedy: "I just hope that he didn't die in vain. I guess he wasn't the one they were looking for; but someone had to be the one."[60]

The day Padre Casimiro was buried in Gualaco was also planned as a day of mourning for the massacre victims by the entire Catholic church in Honduras. It so happened that on that day the wealthy ranchers and farmers were meeting in Comayagua for their annual reunion. At the conclusion of this meeting, FENAGH, the landowners' federation, issued a statement in which they tried to exonerate themselves from the recent events in Olancho:

> FENAGH deplores the events that occurred in Olancho, which have saddened Honduran families, deepening the class struggle and creating an atmosphere of anxiety and anarchy.
>
> "Love one another," Christ said. "Hate one another," preaches our clergy. The lack of Honduran priests has necessitated the importing of foreigners for the propagation of the Catholic faith but this circumstance must not justify the interference of foreign clergy in the socio-political affairs of the country, since the action of the church ought to be directed

> toward a search for harmony and concord among Hondurans and not to sponsor class hatred.[61]

Juan Antonio Zambrano, the treasurer of the Olancho Cattle Farmers Association, went even further; interviewed by a reporter for the *New York Times*, he claimed the massacre was the result of "the political agitation by priests and Christian Democrats, and behind them, Communists. . . . If the Bishop [D'Antonio] and his agitators return, we won't be responsible for the consequences."[62] Thus, less than a month after the brutal incident occurred, the ranchers had made their view clear that it was the clergy themselves who were to be blamed for the tragedy.

Nevertheless, on July 23, 1975, a special Military Commission charged with investigating the events stated that FENAGH was indeed implicated. Moreover, the commission revealed that the brutal deeds were not mere impetuous reactions, but were in fact the result of a carefully planned plot involving FENAGH and elements of the business sector "to create a climate of chaos and confrontation in the department of Olancho and other parts of the nation." A cover-up had also been attempted: the commission found that Major Chinchilla, with the backing of Mel Zelaya and AGAO (Olancho Cattle Farmers Association), had attempted to bribe a journalist in order to deflect public opinion from the reality of the deeds that had occurred in Olancho. Four men were specifically named in the report as being responsible for the Olancho murders: Two were military men—Major José Enrique Chinchilla and Lieutenant Benjamín Plata—and two were wealthy landholders—José Manuel Zelaya and Carlos Bahr.[63] Although the commission was careful not to implicate the ruling regime of Colonel Melgar Castro, the fact that there had been a simultaneous nationwide round-up and interrogation of clergy and religious the day of the march and a prohibition of autopsies on the victims found in the well is a dubious claim to innocence.[64]

There was an initial outcry made by the U.S. embassy in Tegucigalpa and promises made by the State Department to the Conventual Franciscan Order and to Casimir's friends Michael and Kathy Gable that the U.S. "Embassy and Department of State will continue to follow this case very closely and to make our views known to the Government of Honduras as strongly as possible."[65] On July 22, 1975, the Colombian government withdrew its ambassador from Honduras;[66] the United States, however, protested the execution of one of its citizens merely with harsh words. Frustrated at the lack of action on the part of the United States, the head of the Franciscan province that sponsored the Olancho mission, Father Lawrence Mattingly, wrote to President Gerald Ford:

> While the details of [Cypher's] death are sketchy, we are deeply disturbed by the fact that little, if any, diplomatic action has been taken by our State Department to determine what precipitated this horror. When the murder of an American citizen on foreign soil, particularly one who literally

gave his life for the people he served, can be treated with such apparent indifference by his government, then the values that fashion that government become very questionable indeed. His life cannot be restored, but a firm application by you of the principles for which he gave his life—such as justice—can greatly help to insure that such a tragedy does not happen again.

We are not men of vengeance, yet our deep concern for the safety of our remaining confrere in Honduras, Father William F. (Emil) Cook, prompts us to urge you to use every peaceful means at the disposal of your Office to bring about a political and economic climate in that troubled land that will minimize the possibilities for a recurrence of such needless bloodletting. Your expressed concern for the well-being of all Americans is valid only if it is a concern for the well-being of each individual American.[67]

The pursuit of justice lapsed with the passage of time. The four men named in the Military Commission's report were imprisoned; but the two civilians, Carlos Bahr and Mel Zelaya, used their considerable economic resources to spend their days in jail enjoying every comfort from home. Moreover, Zelaya was chauffered home to Juticalpa often to spend extended weekends with his family.[68] In February 1978 the two military men, Major Chinchilla and Lieutenant Plata, were found guilty and sentenced, although at his trial Chinchilla had claimed he had only acted on orders from his superiors.[69] Mel Zelaya, at whose ranch the inhuman deeds occurred, who had been explicitly named by the commission as one of those directly responsible for the murders and as the one who had supplied the murder weapon,[70] would be a free man. But the travesty continued, for in September 1980, the perpetrators of the Horcones massacre were freed by a general amnesty promulgated by the National Constituent Assembly. Conveniently, the Supreme Court had earlier condemned them of "homicide," not "assassination," thus making them eligible for a future amnesty. Numerous organizations indignantly protested this action, but to no avail.[71] No real attempt had been made therefore to curtail the power of Honduran landowners or to end the repression of *campesinos* and churchworkers.

The Franciscan Fathers of Hartland, Wisconsin, could perhaps have predicted this outcome. On August 2, 1975, saddened by the inexplicable murder of a fellow friar, they had sent the following telegram to the Honduran ambassador in Washington:

YOUR PROTECTION AND INTEREST IN UNITED STATES CIVILIANS IN HONDURAS LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED ESPECIALLY IN REGARDS TO THE MURDER OF FATHER CASIMIR CYPHER OBVIOUSLY BUSINESS INTERESTS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN HUMAN LIVES

–Franciscan Fathers[72]

The response by the ambassador five days later was an early indication of the indifferent path that justice would take in Honduras to punish Casimir's murderers:

Dear Fathers and Brothers in Christ:

Your message of vehement protest for the terrible murder of the late Padre Casimiro and other innocent and good people that lost their lives fighting spiritually for social justice in Honduras and particularly in Olancho, is also condemned by me, by the Government and by the people of Honduras, who represent 80-90% of Roman Catholics, as you well know. Our Lord Jesus Christ was also fighting and struggling for social justice 2000 years ago and was crucified for it. The Lord did not talk then of vengeance, but of love, when He said: "Forgive them for they do not know what they do."

You would do better following His teachings and steps. Give love and understanding rather than hatred and vengeance.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Dr. Roberto Lazarus
Ambassador[73]

Padre Casimiro is still remembered in Juticalpa, Gualaco, and San Esteban. Years after his death, Franciscan friars visiting Olancho from the United States have found his picture in the homes of many peasants and have watched *campesinos* place flowers at his grave. A large cross was erected to the memory of all the men and women who died on June 25–26, 1975, but this memorial was destroyed by the landowners.[74] There is now a cement monument in Juticalpa bearing the names of the fourteen *Martires del Pueblo* (martyrs of the people); this number includes the nine victims of Los Horcones as well as the five *campesinos* who died when the peasants' Center was attacked. Besides María Elena, Ruth, Iván, and Casimiro, those executed were Alejandro Figueroa, Juan Benito Montoya, Oscar Ovidio Ortiz, Arnulfo Gómez, Fausto Cruz, Francisco Colindres, Lincoln Coleman, Roque R. Andrade, Máximo Aguilera, and Bernardo Rivera.

Casimir Cypher had been all but oblivious to the politcal issues at stake in Honduras; yet ironically, he would be the first of eleven North American missionaries linked by violent death to thousands of Central American victims of repression. Working in Olancho only a few months, still struggling to learn Spanish, and with his dream of founding a village of faith-filled *campesinos* untried, Casimir was murdered before his full potential as a missionary had a chance to unfold.

20. Ibid., p. 34.

21. Ibid.

22. J. Guadalupe Carney, *To Be a Revolutionary* (San Francisco:Harper and Row, 1985), p. 280.

23. Chapman, p. 10.

24. Fernando Espino, *Relación verdadera de la reducción de los indios infieles de la provincia de la Taguisgalpa, llamados Xicaques*, prologue and notes by Jorge Eduardo Arellano (León, Nicaragua: 1968), pp. 28–29.

25. Ibid., p. 32.

26. John Coulson, ed., *The Saints: A Concise Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Guild Press, 1958), p. 614.

27. Quoted in Keen and Wasserman, p. 101.

28. Phillip Berryman, *Inside Central America: The Essential Facts Past and Present on El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p. 22.

29. Edward Cleary, *Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), pp. 59–60.

30. Ibid., p. 61.

31. Ibid., pp. 60–61.

32. Ibid., p. 61.

33. Ibid., p. 42.

34. Ibid., p. 115.

35. Ibid., p. 50.

36. See Gerald M. Costello, *Mission to Latin America: The Successes and Failures of a Twentieth-Century Crusade* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979).

1. MICHAEL "CASIMIR" CYPHER

1. Ronald Olson, OFM, Conv., undated letter to the authors, 1984.

2. Anselm Romb, OFM, Conv., "How Long Is It Important To Live?" *Companion*, January 1983, p. 15.

3. Olson, letter to the authors.

4. Philip M. Wozniak, OFM, Conv., "A Special Supplement in Commemoration of Fr. Casimir's Death Two Years Ago: Reflections," no date.

5. Olson, letter to authors.

6. Kent Biergans, OFM, Conv., "Remembering Father Casimir," *Saint Anthony's Newsletter*, October 1975, p. 2.

7. Wozniak.

8. Olson, letter to the authors.

9. Leonard Wibberley, "He Gave Up Comfortable Hermosa Beach," *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1975, part 2, p. 7.

10. "AID Fiscal 1984 Congressional Presentation: Latin America and the Caribbean, 1983," cited in *Honduras: A Look at the Reality* (Hyattsville, Md.: Quixote Center, 1984), p. 12.

11. Ibid.

12. Tom Barry, Beth Wood, and Deb Preusch, *Dollars and Dictators* (Albuquerque: The Resource Center, 1982), p. 168.

13. Longino Becerra, *Evolución histórica de Honduras*, Colección Próceres, no. 2 (Tegucigalpa: Baktun Editorial, 1983), pp. 174–75; Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolu-*

tions: The United States in Central America (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1984), pp. 178–79.

14. Mario Posas, *El movimiento campesino Hondureño* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1981), pp. 10–11. For a detailed study of the 1954 strike, see Robert MacCameron, *Bananas, Labor, and Politics in Honduras: 1954–1963* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1983).

15. For an excellent study on the Catholic church's work with the *campesinos*, see Robert A. White, "Structural Factors in Rural Development: The Church and the Peasant in Honduras" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1977).

16. Nicholas D'Antonio, OFM, "How Personal Renewal Relates to Church Renewal," unpublished essay, no date, pp. 5–6.

17. Quoted in Bernardo Meza, OFM, *Padre Iván Betancur: Mártir de la Iglesia Latinoamericana* (Tegucigalpa: Editora Cultural, 1982), pp. 34–35.

18. D'Antonio, p. 4.

19. LaFeber, p. 182; D'Antonio, p. 5.

20. D'Antonio, pp. 15–16; Meza, p. 22.

21. D'Antonio, pp. 6–8.

22. Meza, p. 27.

23. D'Antonio, p. 16.

24. Ibid., pp. 8–9.

25. Dale Francis, "The Unlikely Martyr of Juticalpa," *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 31, 1975, p. 3.

26. Roberto Brauning, " 'I got to get it through my head that he is gone,' the mother says," *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 10, 1975.

27. Sister Mary García, notes to the authors, September 3, 1985.

28. Juanita Klapheke, "For Casimir on the Anniversary of His Death," unpublished poem, June 1976.

29. Michael Gable, interview with the authors, December 22, 1984.

30. Ibid.

31. Klapheke.

32. Wibberley.

33. Olson, letter to the authors.

34. Wozniak.

35. Romb, p. 16.

36. Francis.

37. Steven Volk, "Honduras: On the Border of War," *NACLA: Report on the Americas* 15, no. 6 (November–December 1981), p. 19; Becerra, p. 201.

38. Becerra, p. 204.

39. Volk, p. 19; Becerra, pp. 201, 203.

40. Quoted in Volk, pp. 20–21.

41. Becerra, p. 207.

42. D'Antonio, p. 17; Meza, p. 39.

43. Becerra, p. 207.

44. Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People: The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America—The Catholic Church in Conflict with U.S. Policy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 109; Becerra, p. 207.

45. Meza, p. 38; D'Antonio, p. 15.

46. Quoted in Meza, p. 39.

47. Meza, p. 40.

48. Sister Mary García, interview with the authors, March 14, 1984.

49. Becerra, p. 207; Anne Street and Nancy Peckenham, "Translated Unpublished Transcript of an Interview with Bishop Luis Santos," July 30, 1984, p. 5; anonymous eyewitness, quoted in Sister Mary García, unpublished account of events in Olancho, July 1, 1975, pp. 1–2.

50. García, unpublished account of events in Olancho, p. 2; Meza, p. 41.

51. Street and Peckenham, p. 5.

52. García, unpublished account of events in Olancho, p. 3.

53. Meza, p. 41; J. Guadalupe Carney, *To Be a Revolutionary: An Autobiography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 344.

54. Lernoux, pp. 112–114; Meza, p. 42.

55. *Gaceta Judicial, Publicación de la Corte Suprema de Justicia de Honduras*, no. 1265, April–June 1980, p. 88.

56. D'Antonio, pp. 14, 18; García, unpublished account of events in Olancho, pp. 5–6; Lernoux, p. 112; "Bring Me the Head of Bishop D'Antonio," Editorial Comment, *The Christian Century*, September 17, 1975, p. 780.

57. García, notes to the authors; Meza, p. 44; Harry Maurer, "The Priests of Honduras," *The Nation*, March 6, 1976, p. 268.

58. Meza, p. 43.

59. Casimir Cypher, "Next of Kin" form, September 1974.

60. Quoted in Brauning.

61. Quoted in Meza, p. 46.

62. Alan Riding, "In Honduras the Land Issue Is Creating a Dangerous Class Feud," *New York Times*, July 26, 1975, p. 9.

63. "Informe de la Comisión Investigadora, Nombrada por el Consejo Superior de las Fuerzas Armadas de Honduras," July 23, 1975, as reported in Meza, pp. 83–85.

64. Lernoux, pp. 113-114; Maurer, p. 268; García, unpublished account of events in Olancho, pp. 5–7; letter from Father Emil Cook, OFM, Conv., to "Fr. Clement and All the Province," July 21, 1975.

65. Paul H. Wackerbarth (Officer in Charge, Honduran Affairs, U.S. Department of State), letter to Mr. and Mrs. Michael Gable, September 25, 1975.

66. D'Antonio, p. 19.

67. Letter from Father Lawrence Mattingly, OFM, Conv., to President Gerald R. Ford, August 5, 1975.

68. Lernoux, p. 114; García, interview with the authors, March 14, 1984; Janet Melvin, letter to the authors, December 28, 1984.

69. Street and Peckenham, p. 4.

70. "Informe de la Comisión . . .," in Meza, pp. 83–84.

71. Becerra, p. 208; Meza, p. 47.

72. Telegram dated August 2, 1975.

73. Letter dated August 7, 1975.

74. García, notes to the authors.

2. JAMES "GUADALUPE" CARNEY

1. J. Guadalupe Carney, *To Be a Revolutionary: An Autobiography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 441.

2. Carney, "A Challenge to American Consciences (Selected Excerpts from the Writings of Father James Guadalupe Carney)," no date, p. 1.