

## CONTENTS.

Volume 260, Number 15

## EXCHANGE

510

*George Kountouris*  
*Michelangelo Signorile, Greg Scott*  
*Gabriel Rotello, Lawrence D. Mass, M.D.*  
*Jay Blotcher, David L. Kirp*

## EDITORIALS

509 Rallying to Education

511 C.I.A. Death Squad

513 Silent Racism

514 Clinton &amp; Co.: Calls of the Wild

*Allan Nairn**Valerie Burgher**David Corn*

## COLUMNS

514 The Bigs

515 Beat the Devil

*Calvin Trillin**Alexander Cockburn*

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## ARTICLES

517 Politics for Profit:

The Rich Rise of Lamar Alexander *Doug Ireland*

522 Mrs. Contemplation's Sisters:

The Philippines' Shameful Export *Ninotchka Rosca*

527 The World Turns Away:

Who Cares Who's Killing Chechnya? *Anna Cataldi*

## BOOKS &amp; THE ARTS

531 The Sound and the Furet

*Daniel Singer*

534 Black Dance: Revelations

*Lynn Garafola*

539 Music Note

*Gene Santoro*

540 First Formal (poem)

*Sharon Olds*

Illustrations by Paul Marcus

Publisher and Editorial Director, Victor Navasky

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*The Nation* (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 1995 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. (212) 242-8400. *Washington Bureau:* Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763, or call 1-800-333-8536. *Subscription Price:* 1 year, \$48; 2 years, \$80. Add \$18 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Missed issues must be claimed within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions. Back issues \$4 prepaid (\$5 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. This issue went to press on March 30. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

## EDITORIALS.

## C.I.A. Death Squad

The U.S. government has systematic links to Guatemalan Army death squad operations that go far beyond the disclosures that have recently shaken official Washington. The news that the C.I.A. employed a Guatemalan colonel who reportedly ordered two murders has been greeted with professions of shock and outrage. But in fact the story goes much deeper, as U.S. officials well know.

North American C.I.A. operatives work inside a Guatemalan Army unit that maintains a network of torture centers and has killed thousands of Guatemalan civilians. The G-2, headquartered on the fourth floor of the Guatemalan National Palace, has, since at least the 1960s, been advised, trained,

armed and equipped by U.S. undercover agents. Working out of the U.S. Embassy and living in safehouses and hotels, these agents work through an elite group of Guatemalan officers who are secretly paid by the C.I.A. and who have been implicated personally in numerous political crimes and assassinations.

This secret G-2/C.I.A. collaboration has been described by Guatemalan and U.S. operatives and confirmed, in various aspects, by three former Guatemalan heads of state. These accounts also mesh with that given in a March 28 interview by Col. Julio Roberto Alpírez, the C.I.A.-paid Guatemalan G-2 officer who has been implicated in the murders of Guatemalan guerrilla leader Efraín Bámaca Velásquez and a U.S. citizen, Michael DeVine.

One of the American agents who works with the G-2, a thin blond man in his 40s who goes by the name of Randy Capister, has been involved in similar operations with the army of

neighboring El Salvador. Another, a weapons expert known as Joe Jacarino, has operated throughout the Caribbean, and has accompanied G-2 units on missions into rural zones.

Jacarino's presence in the embassy was confirmed by David Wright, a former embassy intelligence employee who called Jacarino a "military liaison." Col. George Hooker, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency chief in Guatemala from 1985 to 1989, says he also knew Jacarino, though he says Jacarino was not with the D.I.A. When asked whether Jacarino was with the C.I.A. he replied, "I'm not at liberty to say."

Celerino Castillo, a former agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration who dealt with the G-2 and the C.I.A. in Guatemala, says he worked with Capister as well as with Jacarino. He showed photographs of himself and Capister at embassy events and in the field. Guatemalan sources say Capister meets regularly with Guatemalan Army chiefs. He has been seen in meetings in Guatemala City as recently as the spring of 1994.

When I reached Colonel Alpírez at the La Aurora base in Guatemala, he denied all involvement in the deaths of Bámaca and DeVine and said he was never paid by the C.I.A. But he discussed at length how the agency advises and helps run the G-2. He praised the C.I.A. for "professionalism" and close rapport with Guatemalan officers. He said that agency operatives often come to Guatemala on temporary duty, during which they train G-2 men and provide "advice and tech-

nical assistance." He described attending C.I.A. s G-2 bases on "contra-subversion" tactics and "hodgepodge the factors of power" to "fortify democracy." If C.I.A. men were on call to respond to G-2 questions the G-2 often consulted the agency on how to deal with political problems." Alpírez said he was not authorized specifics on the technical assistance, nor would he say North Americans the G-2 worked with, though he said they were "very good friends."

Other officials, though, say that at least during the 1980s G-2 officers were paid by Jack McCavitt, the station chief, and that the "technical assistance" communications gear, computers and special firearms as collaborative use of C.I.A.-owned helicopter flown out of the Piper hangar at the La Aurora airport and from a separate U.S. air facility.

Through what Amnesty International has called an "enormous government program of political murder," the Guatemalan has, since 1978, killed more than 110,000 civilians and a smaller, affiliated unit called the Archivo have openly known in Guatemala as the brain of the terror. With a contingent of more than 2,000 agents and units in the local army bases, the G-2—under army high command—coordinates the torture, assassination and disappearance of dissidents.

"If the G-2 wants to kill you, they kill you," former Chief of Staff Gen. Benedicto Lucas García once said. He sent one of their trucks with a hit squad and that's what they do. Former G-2 agents describe a program of surveillance backed by a web of torture centers and clandestine dumps. In 1986, then-army Chief of Staff Gen. Humberto Morales, a U.S. protégé, said that the G-2 monitors and watches "anyone who is an opponent of the Guatemalan state in any realm." A former G-2 agent said the base he worked at in Huehuetenango maintained a "detention" matorium and "processed" abductees by chopping and singeing flesh and administering electric shocks.

At least three of the recent G-2 chiefs have been in the C.I.A., according to U.S. and Guatemalan intelligence. One of them, Gen. Edgar Godoy Gaitán, a former Chief of Staff, has been accused in court by the victim's family of being one of the prime "intellectual authors" of the murder of the noted Guatemalan anthropologist Melba Chang [see Victor Perera, "Where Is Justice in Guatemala," May 24, 1993]. Another, Col. Otto Pérez Molina runs the Presidential General Staff and oversees the staff was in charge in 1994, when, according to the American human rights office, there was evidence of Guatemalan involvement in the assassination of Judge Edgar Ríos Montt. The third, Gen. Francisco Ortega Merino now works in Washington as general staff director of the Reagan-backed Inter-American Defense Board, was in the late 1980s during a series of assassinations of peasants and human rights activists. Reached at his home in Florida, Jack McCavitt said he does not talk to journalists. When asked whether Ortega Menaldo was on the CIA roll, he shouted "Enough!" and slammed down the phone.

### STRONGMAN ON CAMPUS

Credit Democratic Representative Robert Torricelli for disclosing the latest C.I.A. horror story: An American hotelier and a Guatemalan rebel leader married to an American were executed on the orders of a paid asset of the agency. Yet in his letter to the White House decrying the C.I.A., Torricelli overlooked a key aspect of the episode—the murderous colonel, Julio Roberto Alpírez, was twice a student at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas. There is good reason for the Congressman to be forgetful on this point. In September 1993, when Representative Joseph Kennedy 2d proposed an amendment to defund the S.O.A., Torricelli, then chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee, was a prime opponent of the measure. Kennedy argued that the school too often had trained thugs, including the head of an Argentine junta, an organizer of Salvadoran death squads and Manuel Noriega. But Torricelli hailed the institution and actually proffered a Guatemalan officer as a good example: This prominent alumnus of the school had declined to join a coup in Guatemala earlier in the year. Torricelli did not mention that the three officers most identified with that coup had also prepped at the School of the Americas. Consider this, Congressman: Six months after Alpírez finished his second stint at the school—which included several hours of training in human rights—this C.I.A. and S.O.A. man in Guatemala reportedly had an American killed.

DAVID CORN

These crimes are merely examples of a vast, systematic pattern; likewise, these men are only cogs in a large U.S. government apparatus. Colonel Hooker, the former D.I.A. chief for Guatemala, says, "It would be an embarrassing situation if you ever had a roll call of everybody in the Guatemalan Army who ever collected a C.I.A. paycheck." Hooker says the agency payroll is so large that it encompasses most of the army's top decision-makers. When I told him that his friend, Gen. Mario Enriquez Morales, the current Defense Minister, had reacted to the Alpirez scandal by saying publicly that it was "disloyal" and "shameful" for officers to take C.I.A. money, Hooker burst out laughing and exclaimed: "Good! Good answer, Mario! I'd hate to think how many guys were on that payroll. It's a perfectly normal thing."

Other top commanders paid by the C.I.A. include Gen. Roberto Matta Galvez, former army Chief of Staff, head of the Presidential General Staff and commander of massacres in the El Quiché department; and General Gramajo, Defense Minister during the armed forces' abduction, rape and torture of Dianna Ortiz, an American nun. (Sister Ortiz has testified that a man she believes to be North American seemed to be the supervisor of the agents who abducted her. Gramajo said she had sustained her 111 burn wounds during a "lesbian love tryst.") Gramajo also managed the early 1980s highland massacres. Colonel Hooker says he once brought Gramajo on a ten-day tour of the United States to speak at U.S. military bases and confer with the U.S. Army Chief of Staff.

Three recent Guatemalan heads of state confirm that the C.I.A. works closely with the G-2. Last year, when I asked Gen. Oscar Humberto Mejía Víctores (military dictator from 1983 to 1986) how the country's death squads had originated, he said they had been started "in the 1960s by the C.I.A." Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt (dictator from 1982 to 1983 and the current Congress President), who ordered the main highland massacres (662 villages destroyed, by the army's own count), said the C.I.A. did have agents inside the G-2. When I asked Ríos Montt—a firm believer in the death penalty—if he thought he should be executed for his role in the slaughter, he leapt to his feet and shouted "Yes! Try me! Put me against the wall!" but he said he should be tried only if Americans were tried too. Specifically, he cited President Reagan, who, in the midst of the massacres, embraced Ríos Montt and said he was getting "a bum rap" on human rights. Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, civilian President from 1986 to 1991 (under whom the rate of killing actually increased), said "the C.I.A. often contracts with our military and G-2 people," and that from what he knew they "very probably" had people inside "who have participated with our G-2 in technical assistance and advice."

These C.I.A. operations are, of course, part of the larger U.S. policy. The Bush and Clinton State Departments, for example, in the midst of a much-touted "cutoff" of military aid to Guatemala after 1990, authorized—according to classified State Department records—more than 114 separate sales of U.S. pistols and rifles.

The killing of defenseless people has been state policy in Guatemala for thirty years. The question is not whether the U.S. government has known—it is obviously aware of its own

actions. It is why, with overt and covert aid, it has helped commit the army's murders.

ALLAN NAIRN

*Allan Nairn has written extensively on Guatemala and its military since 1980. Last fall in The Nation he broke the story of U.S. intelligence collaboration with Haiti's FRAPH.*

## Silent Racism

In February student activists at Rutgers University gave America their own version of a comparative history lesson: Racism Then and Now. In protesting a racist statement by university president Francis Lawrence, the United Students Coalition at Rutgers brought the difficulties of civil rights activism in the 1990s to the national stage. Rutgers students were seriously lacking in iconography: They had no visual representation of their oppression—no fire hoses, police dogs or billy clubs—for the front pages and nightly news. The Rutgers coalition had only Lawrence's inflammatory words—he called African-Americans a disadvantaged population because of their genetic and hereditary background. Since institutional racism is not easily photographed, the difficulty for activists whose causes are race-based becomes how to combat the "misspoken" word.

Otis Rolley, one of the heads of the student coalition's public relations committee, used the images of protests past to guide the coalition, although he was fully aware that times have changed. Before embarking on the campaign against Lawrence, Rolley and other students referred to Richard McCormick's *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*, an account of campus activism a generation ago. The students' knowledge of this history and their understanding of past tactics helped them turn what could have been a passing murmur into a full-scale movement. But the comparison revealed the differences between the activism of yesterday and today. "Back then there was such blatant racism: 'You're black and I don't want you at school,'" Rolley reflects. "Now everything is so much more covert that when you cry out, people say, 'What are you talking about? It's a great school, kid.'"

But at universities like Rutgers, young people of color continue to face shrouded but significant racism—the suspicious glance, the continual requests for identification not made of white students, the assumptions of favoritism due to quotas. Only rarely do words surface as a blunt reminder that the playing field is still slanted. Around the Rutgers campus, Rolley says, "some people yell 'nigga' from a car but they don't stick around. The attacks are always cowardly."

As cowardly, perhaps, as Lawrence's attempts to hide behind his "good" record on race relations. In the 1980s Rutgers failed to meet the most basic affirmative action goals for the enrollment of minority students. In response, the Rutgers Board of Governors created a Minority Community Leaders Advisory Board. Lawrence disbanded the board as soon as minimum minority enrollment levels were met. And despite the media's focus on Lawrence, the students' demands go far beyond removing him as president—to nothing less than a demand for full equal opportunity, including minority tenure