

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

War by Open Secret:

Making and Unmaking the News in Honduras, 1979-93

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in History.

by

Daniel Alexander Beckman

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Covert War, Open Secret:

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Robin Derby, Chair

The scandal termed “Iran-Contra” has already been analyzed—as a Presidential crisis, as a media event, as a new stage in planning and operating covert wars independent from even President Ronald Reagan. But this literature draws heavily on documents from the U.S. government: this dissertation examines years’ worth of collected news articles from Honduras, and shows the ways in which the planners of the covert war against Nicaragua faced a constant series of potential exposures. The Reagan Administration had made sure that the Honduran military and state had the media power to help deny the Contra War for a decade—letting Tegucigalpa outright blackmail Washington. The planners of the counterrevolution had limited success using Red-baiting against witnesses or journalists. However, they were able to deploy doctors against doctors, or to outright substitute Catholic clergy with Evangelical fundamentalists: only Honduran doctors or theologians were able to manipulate the standards of evidence and undermine the professionals who “warranted” stories about the war. CIA Director Bill Casey had arranged for the

Nicaraguan counter guerrillas to be operated and funded separately from any formal CIA structure, trading Iranian missiles and South American cocaine to fund explicit counterrevolutionary terrorism. The Reagan Administration acquired new levels of media power and secret warfare—but the citizens of Honduras or the United States were not helpless in the face of a lawless conspiracy at the peak of state power. Like many “partner states” in previous covert wars, Honduras was crucial to the covert *narco*-paramilitary operation against its neighbors El Salvador and Nicaragua, but not itself in any state of combat. I argue that using Honduran sources exposes the numerous different times that the war was vulnerable to civilians—from illiterate Honduran campesinos to Iowan church volunteers or investigative journalists. Tracing each story from its origins in Honduras reveals where U.S. state power was most vulnerable to exposure and disruption.

The dissertation of Daniel Alexander Beckman is approved.

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## Introduction

This dissertation began with a suggestion in 2006-07 by professor Stephen Topik at UC Irvine, who remarked that Cold-War Honduras is highly understudied: it no revolutionary wars like Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, no direct U.S. invasion like Panama, no unique abolition of the military like Costa Rica had had. By contrast to the rich literature on the Nicaraguan or Salvadoran Revolutions, the topic of 1980s Honduras appears in a handful of books in English, none dating after 1994.<sup>1</sup> Works in Spanish are much more numerous, often using frames such as “the U.S.S. *Honduras*,” a *país de nada*, the *república alquilada*—a blank, notable mostly for its neighbors.

But since 1980 the Honduran military had taken a keystone role in the counterrevolutions of all its neighbors, a process would culminate in the 1986 scandal of “Iran-Contra” that almost ousted Ronald Reagan himself. The Honduras of 1980 was where both Archbishop Óscar Romero’s secretary and his assassins resided (and where the secretary and her family were then murdered). Honduras was the first place where news of the murder of hundreds of Salvadoran *campesinos* originated—and where it had to be quashed—a year before the more-studied 1981 El

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988). Tom Barry and Kent Norsworthy, *Honduras: A Country Guide* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1990). Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador’s Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000). Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos, *Honduras: The Facts Speak for Themselves: The Preliminary Report of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights in Honduras*, trans. James L. Cavallaro, Jr. (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994). Pamela F. Howard-Reguindin, ed., *Honduras* (Oxford, Santa Barbara, Calif., and Denver, Colo.: Clio Press, 1992). Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985). Anne Manuel, *Honduras: Without the Will* (New York: Americas Watch, 1989). Kent Norsworthy and Tom Barry, *Inside Honduras* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1994). Nancy Peckenham and Annie Street, eds., *Honduras: Portrait of a Captive Nation* (New York: Praeger, 1985). David Ronfeldt, *U.S. Involvement in Central America: Three Views from Honduras* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1989). Mark B. Rosenberg and Philip L. Shepherd, eds., *Honduras Confronts its Future: Contending Perspectives on Critical Issues* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1986). James D. Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984). Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994). Philip E. Wheaton, *The Iron Triangle: The Honduran Connection* (Washington: EPICA, 1981), and Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base: A Special Report from EPICA* (Washington: Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action Task Force, 1982).

Mozote Massacre. Honduras was the site of Salvadoran refugee camps frequented by journalists, humanitarian visitors, even celebrities such as Bianca Jagger. U.S. humanitarian visitors to the areas of Nicaragua attacked from Honduras bore witness to the deaths of villagers they had lived with—and found a manual written for the Contras that directly led the Senate to forbid the Administration from supplying any and all Contra aid in 1984 (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”).

Honduras had the region’s first “demonstration elections” 1980-81 to deliberately produce a state where the military had all the real power but with a civilian façade to remove any restraint on outside funding and assert that the public wanted Washington to fund the nation’s military to protect them.<sup>2</sup> Honduras was the site where the White House alleged a massive Nicaraguan arms pipeline to El Salvador’s FMLN (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*), and where the Contras received funding to interdict the flow. Honduras was where journalists were taken on rides by the Contras and told they were now in Nicaragua. It was also the country that the Contras could never escape in a decade, and the country that had to constantly work to conceal that fact from the U.S. press. The Honduran border was the site of two “Sandinista invasions” in 1986 and 1988—staged for the U.S. Congress to save the Contras’ funding. Potentially-explosive stories such as direct involvement by the Central Intelligence Agency and Department of State with torturers and drug traffickers had to be quashed on Honduran territory.

Even Honduras’s uniquely-high level of HIV traces directly back to the regional counterrevolution and the need to keep *secrets*: Honduran doctors who reported new venereal diseases new were regularly denied by the state in order to ensure that U.S. troops remained in-country to buttress the Contras. Honduran journalists, peasants, priests, refugees, doctors, politicians, and

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<sup>2</sup> Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984): 104, 119. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 1-3, 194.

officers constantly generated local stories that threatened to become bigger ones, crossing national boundaries until they risked scandal for the Administration.

### Iran-Contra Literature Review

U.S. support for the Honduras-based Contras fighting the revolutionary government of Nicaragua led directly to a major scandal, Iran-Contra, producing a much richer literature than Honduras's specific role in the counterrevolution did. The first wave consisted of investigations into the affair itself,<sup>3</sup> and then another a decade later—more focused on putting the affair into the greater Latin American,<sup>4</sup> Mideastern, and global contexts. The literature has interpreted Iran-Contra as 1. a Presidential scandal; 2. as a media event; 3. another instance of U.S. covert warfare; and 4. part of a global network of state-protected criminality, of shadow-state paramilitarism and *narco*-politics. Each approach has its limitations, but none of them mutually-exclusive and all play important analytical roles in this dissertation. When reviewing each of these categories of works on Iran-Contra, none of them show any final *agreement* over the outcome of the scandal.

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<sup>3</sup> In chronological order: Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984). Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984). Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985). Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987). Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan's Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987). Steven Emerson, *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (New York: Putnam, 1988). Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991). Glenn Garvin, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo: The CIA & the Contras* (Washington and Riverside, N.J.: Brassey's, 1992). Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994. Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> The most recent works on the left wing each country in 1980s Central America have been: Andrea Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992*, Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2016). Edgardo Antonio Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña en la década de los ochenta* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Elena, 2005). Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

1. Ronald Reagan was nearly impeached over the exposure of diverting profits from secret sales of missiles to Iran to fund the Contras in deliberate violation of 1984 legislation, to the outrage of even his mentor, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona). Richard Nixon had been impeached twelve years earlier, but even his Executive officials had not countenanced running drugs into the United States itself. But in terms of Presidential scandals, Reagan left office with high poll ratings and was succeeded by his Vice-President. The focus on the Nixon-style question of “what did the President know and when did he know it?” actually allowed the diffusion of the scandal. The lack of Reagan’s authorization of the diversion of Iranian funds, his exact role in private fundraising to end-run the 1984 Boland Amendment, his responsibility for the actions of CIA Chief William Casey acting as a member of the National Security Council—all were eventually quibbled away. Congress itself had restarted Contra aid—humanitarian in 1985 and then lethal spring 1986, scheduled to restart just a month after Eugene Hasenfus was shot down October 5, 1986.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the illegality of the Executive Branch’s continuing the Nicaraguan counterrevolution collided with the Legislative Branch’s own endorsement of the war. Despite the potential for impeachment, widespread attention did not outlast the 1987 Tower and 1989 Kerry Committees.<sup>6</sup> The revelations about Contra drug-running (verifiably known and approved by figures as high as Lt. Col. Oliver North) would have been explosive in 1986-87, but were delayed until Reagan was out of office; the few perpetrators (well-isolated and compartmentalized in the NSC) who did face any prison terms were given full pardons in 1992.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hasenfus was shot down north of San Carlos on Lake Nicaragua, supplying the “southern front” of the war. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 3. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 150.

<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the Democrats feared creating “another Nixon” by pursuing a Presidential scandal. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1988): 57-58. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 170. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 206.

<sup>7</sup> Arnsion, *Crossroads* 1993. Robert Busby, *Reagan and the Iran-Contra Affair: The Politics of Presidential Recovery* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998). Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan’s Scandal and the Unchecked*

2. Historians and media analysts have treated the scandal as a U.S. media event: Reagan and North's rhetoric and self-presentation in front of the television cameras, or the lengthy process by which the White House dealt with stories of Central America (below, "A War on News"). These analyses have examined either how the news prevented the story from "breaking" in the first place, or the way the story either "snowballed" or was defused in the greater media landscape; they use concepts such as *narratives*, *credibility*, or *smear campaigns* to interpret the White House's handling of the war. The overall literature on Iran-Contra and the press has an interesting division: I. those who note that parts of the whole operation were repeatedly brought up in even major newspapers, evading the executive actions aimed at controlling the news, and II. those most pertinent and dangerous aspects (cocaine trafficking, far-right death squads) were successfully kept away from U.S. public knowledge—delayed for a decade or two, until it had only an academic impact. As a *scandal* it provided dramatic moments for the camera: downed planes, (alleged) captured guerrillas, overflight photographs, damning documents, Congressional testimony in uniform, a telegenic President suddenly caught up in his own promises. Despite the baldest lies, flouting of U.S. Constitution and international law, and end-running Congress and the CIA itself, few journalists would reframe Reagan as a second Nixon: instead new frames of individual incompetence, bad apples and overzealous patriots.<sup>8</sup> The Reagan White House's sophisticated (or last-ditch) efforts at media manipulation were qualitatively different from previ-

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*Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2014). Joy Hackel and Daniel Siegel, eds., *In Contempt of Congress: The Reagan Record on Central America: A Citizen's Guide* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987). Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War's Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> That is, as long as the *intentions* were protected from any scrutiny: however bad the crime, it was still being committed by state agents who were only framed as patriotic Cold Warriors (see Chapter 8, "Conclusion," n201). Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 113.

ous administrations, and the discipline of media studies itself received a tremendous boom from the Iran-Contra scandal.<sup>9</sup>

3. As an instance of “covert” warfare conducted by the CIA, Pentagon, and other executive agencies since 1953, Iran-Contra shared covert wars’ typical tension between secret planning and public exposure. Under one interpretation, I. the process of planning and conducting the wars was secret enough to continue with the risky and counterproductive course of action in Central America that alienated longtime allies in Latin America and Western Europe and damaged the United States’s world image as badly as the Vietnam War had. Under another, II. Reagan gave the hawks the power to plan an unprecedented expansion of counterrevolution to three continents, eventually endangering his own foreign policy and risking his Presidency. Was

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<sup>9</sup> Existing literature on Iran-Contra as a “media event” focus on how Lt. Col. Oliver North transitioned from his self-presented image as an “altar boy” or “Boy Scout” Marine concerned only with keeping Reagan free of scandal, to a new frame of someone who paid off Lebanese terrorists, billed the Federal government for his own residence, compulsively fabricated personal stories such as his dog being poisoned, destroyed evidence to the point where his shredder caught fire, and openly deceived Congress and risked Reagan’s impeachment. Ultimately the much more serious issues of cocaine, terrorism, and the “secret government” dominated, but now George H.W. Bush was President and North lost his own Senate campaign. Bill Moyers, “The Secret Government: The Constitution in Crisis,” the Public Broadcasting Service, Nov. 4, 1987, <https://billmoyers.com/content/secret-government-constitution-crisis>. David M. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005). Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988, and *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001). Gray Cavender, Nancy C. Jurik, and Albert K. Cohen, “The Baffling Case of the Smoking Gun: The Social Ecology of Political Accounts in the Iran-Contra Affair,” *Social Problems* 40:2 (May 1993): 152-66. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985); *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987); *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988; *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989); *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002). Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Amy Fried, *Muffled Echoes: Oliver North and the Politics of Public Opinion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988). Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989). Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990. Michael Lynch and David Bogen, *The Spectacle of History: Speech, Text, and Memory at the Iran-Contra Hearings* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996). Michael Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012). Richard Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy Over Contra Aid* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993). Walter C. Soderlund et al., *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality: The Caribbean Basin, 1953-1992* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2001). David P. Thelen, *Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television: How Americans Challenged the Media and Seized Political Initiative During the Iran-Contra Debate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987). Ann Wroe, *Lives, Lies and the Iran-Contra Affair* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1991).



Reagan or Casey the one taking the lead? Either way, the covert-war historians seem to agree that Iran-Contra would not have really ousted a President, even given the money-laundering, terrorism, and trafficking. The activities in Central America and Iran were under the usual cover of state secrecy, and were motivated by the assumptions of a Cold-War anticommunism that very few Congresspersons of the 1980s directly criticized.<sup>10</sup> But their focus on the military and covert aspects of Iran-Contra does not examine the actual processes of keeping a story out of the U.S. news or the ways that ideologies are reinforced—this literature takes some things for granted.<sup>11</sup>

4. The works that put Iran-Contra into a regional or global scale are more complex, less Superpower-centric. They concentrate on the network of assassins, illegal bankers, terrorists, traffickers, and coup-staging far-right extremists in the secret intelligence agencies of smaller powers—Argentina, Italy, Israel, El Salvador and Guatemala, even now-stateless exiled Cubans and Nicaraguans regrouping in new countries. These multi-continental networks were documented for the first time by scholars and investigative journalists following up on the several actors of

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018). Tom Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts: The New Battlefield in Central America* (Albuquerque: Resource Center, 1986). David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012). Jeremy M. Brown, *Explaining the Reagan Years in Central America* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995). Taryn Butler, “How Low Can Transparency Go? Secrecy in the Iran-Contra Affair as an Effect of Power,” M.A. thesis (Normal, Ill., Illinois State University, 2017). Anne Cahn, *Killing Detente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). Austin Carson, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018). Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation* (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987). Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988. Michael D. Gambone, *Small Wars: Low-Intensity Threats and the American Response Since Vietnam* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013). Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988). Todd Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008). Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984). Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018). Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America's Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014). Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984.

<sup>11</sup> By not analyzing the ways *how* actions were kept “covert” from the U.S. press, covert-action historians tacitly rely on the same theories of framing or narrative that media critics like Herman and Chomsky do, rather than creating new theories.

the Contra War.<sup>12</sup> But emphasizing the international criminal activity and political extremism, part of which became the “Contra War,” still must account for the fact that it was not a “rogue” action with Reagan and Casey at its head (and even Congressional funding 1985-88), returning us back to Iran-Contra as a *Presidential* scandal (above).

More Realist analyses of the conflicts of 1980s Central America emphasize the state as an entity responding to challenges, which William Stanley questions as simply *assuming* the state as enemies that must be countered with force.<sup>13</sup> Realism does allow for competition within the state between institutions, officers and officials building support for a policy from inside or given power from outside.<sup>14</sup> But states are not apolitical, disinterested arenas for competition between civilian constituents or state institutions.<sup>15</sup> In Realist theories of covert action, counterproductive state results come about when factual knowledge about foreign nations is ignored or “politi-

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<sup>12</sup> Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997). Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018). Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration's Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987). Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985. John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: New Press, 2004). Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008). Fernando López, *The Feathers of Condor: Transnational State Terrorism, Exiles and Civilian Anticommunism in South America* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016). Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention* 1987. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). Robert Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 2012). Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991. Wheaton, *Iron Triangle* 1981.

<sup>13</sup> In other words, that the state attacks dissent and opposition, either successfully or generating alienation, “radicalization,” and outright revolt against its police and military apparatus. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 27. Guillermo A. O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-73, in Comparative Perspective*, trans. James McGuire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1996): 3-5.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 12, 34, 136. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) emphasizes the U.S. alliance system (encapsulated by the book's title) and punishment of the two countries that had broken with it—Cuba and Nicaragua. Lynch, *The Cold War's Last Battlefield* 2011 simply underscores Reagan's personal responsibility in the Salvadoran Civil War over anyone else, but inverts its “moral” equation to depict it as successful foreign policy aimed at ending the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, not as a large-scale scandal whose responsibility was diverted to “cowboys” under guise of the CIA or National Security Council.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 256.

cized”—in this case, deliberately massaged and cherry-picked by Casey and other intelligence chiefs, regardless of how high the risks or low the chances of success. Even Reagan, who supposedly revived the Cold War, was strictly limited in how far he could pursue détente and diplomacy by his own foreign-policy establishment.<sup>16</sup> Under this interpretation, failure comes from not assessing objectives and then setting policies to meet them. Realists studying Central America emphasize the rationality of its militaries in continuing the war—in the name of domestic repression, and/or simply grifting U.S. aid or extorting the local bourgeoisie.<sup>17</sup>

In these Realist interpretations, it is ultimately state power and deliberate decision-making that accounts for the outsized risks and exaggerated irrationality with which the White House and the Central American militaries continued on a course that ended in a worse scandal than Watergate.<sup>18</sup> Critics note that Realism is particularly limited by its emphasis on state-to-state interaction, without considering ideological motives or irregular forces like guerrillas and paramilitaries.<sup>19</sup> The Honduran state certainly had independent ideological and financial goals, which it pursued within the bounds of its own rationality—even if they were in constant tension with the massive liabilities caused by the Contras’ physical damage and media exposure.

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<sup>16</sup> The earliest clear formulation was by Kermit Roosevelt, Jr.—the top figure in the first Cold War and CIA covert action, the 1953 overthrow of Iran—demanding that “If we, the CIA, are ever going to try something like this again, we must be absolutely sure that the people and army want what we want.” But throughout Cold-War history there simply *were* no mass popular calls for U.S. intervention to overthrow a government. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 2-3. Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 96. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 104-07. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 88-92.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Even if agents at all levels of the CIA countenanced heroin flying through Laos and Thailand on planes flown by U.S. citizens (Chapter 1, “5: Criminality”), nobody in the Nixon Administration blithely recorded flights of thousands of kilograms of cocaine as Lt. Col. North, liaison for the National Security Council—Reagan’s most intimate official body—did. Adolfo Calero’s brother flew arms out of New Orleans on a DC-6 and was obviously bringing drugs back, North noted in 1985, and he recorded in 1987 that \$14 million in Contra arms funding had come from drugs. “The Oliver North File: His Diaries, E-Mail, and Memos on the Kerry Report, Contras and Drugs,” Electronic Briefing Book 113, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Feb. 26, 2004, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB113/index.htm>. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 420. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 293. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 3-6.

More Marxian (or at least socioeconomic) analyses of the revolutions and wars of 1970s and 80s Central America emphasize the interests of the countries' agro-export class and the need for a state dedicated to maintaining existing arrangements.<sup>20</sup> This Central American–Caribbean system was anchored by U.S. dominion: independent economic or security arrangements, neutrality, and democracy were not priorities in the Superpower's "backyard."<sup>21</sup> This dominion is not necessarily one-way: politicians of the commodity-export class used the U.S. aid in the service of local conflicts, and even outright deceived Washington actors by exaggerating a "Soviet" threat in order to induce action, arms, and cash.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the Realists, a Marxian interpretation does not interpret violence or irrationality as *failures* of governance, but outgrowths of the state's

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<sup>20</sup> Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) concludes that there was no industrial bourgeoisie to support representative democracy—only landowners and export processors. These two subclasses could split from one another and fracture the "dominant coalition," but believed only economic growth under private control, with no concession redistributing land, wealth, or power to the laborers, could bring Progress. Héctor Pérez-Brignoli, *A Brief History of Central America*, trans. Ricardo B. Sawrey and Susana Stettri de Sawrey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) is not particularly "Marxian": in his analysis, the landowners, export processors, and business leaders of the Isthmus handed over all power to their militaries to fight reform, until the armed forces and paramilitaries were able to block even the slightest Washington-backed reform and, eventually, literally hold them hostage (Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996). Pérez-Brignoli marks Honduran and Costa Rican oligarchs as separate from export production, allowing them to forgo repression and allow smaller and more diversified producers compared to Guatemala and El Salvador's coffee; but his analysis finds Honduras and Costa Rica were different because of their military arrangements, not because their economies were distinct from, say, Nicaragua or even Guatemala (Robert G. Williams, *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986): 143-62). Mario Posas, *El movimiento campesino hondureño: Una perspectiva general* (Tegucigalpa: Guaymuras, 1981). Edelberto Torres-Rivas, *History and Society in Central America*, trans. Douglass Sullivan-González (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993). Carlos M. Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes: Market, State, and the Revolutions in Central America*, trans. Ted Kuster (New York, *Monthly Review* Press, 1995). As "materialist" analyses they fit closest to the Revisionist "raw materials" or export interpretation of the Cold War in the "developing" or "Third World," or "Global South" (see Conclusion, "Future Possibilities," n20).

<sup>21</sup> Even in the absence of any supposed rival Power in the Caribbean—France, Britain, eventually Germany and Russia—U.S. forces were sent to "liberate" Spanish Cuba and Puerto Rico 1898 and Colombian Panama 1903, and invade Honduras 1903-25, Nicaragua 1909-33, Veracruz in Mexico 1914, Haiti 1915-34, and the Dominican Republic 1916-24. Relations with South America proper—including the 1902-03 Venezuela Crisis or the massacre of United Fruit workers in Colombia 1928—were far less reliant on direct "gunboat diplomacy."

<sup>22</sup> Before the "Cold War," Central American officials were able to call on Liberal ideology and export-extraction interest to cry "communism" through the 1920s and early 30s; combined with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor policy" that ended the cycle of interventions and protectorates, Maximiliano Hernández Martínez of El Salvador, Jorge Ubico of Guatemala, Tiburcio Carías of Honduras, and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic could maintain their rule into the 1940s or even 60s.

function as agent of the local ruling class or “dominant coalition.”<sup>23</sup> Repression is a tool of class domination, but again Stanley notes that the violence in El Salvador was grossly disproportionate and counterproductively increased and militarized opposition.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the more institutionalist socioeconomic interpretations see the region’s militaries as strong and independent enough to go against the interests and even safety of Central America’s landowning and light-industrial oligarchical families.<sup>25</sup> The *comprador* class, which had

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<sup>23</sup> Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988) uses Gramscian analysis of the needs and periodic crises of each Central American country’s elite “dominant bloc” to explain the “civic-military” union between *de facto* authoritarian rule inside a *de jure* democratic shell, *golpista* generals maintaining legislatures and promising elections to maintain a fig leaf of international credibility (until Chile 1973 and Argentina 1976). Dunkerley notes that the working-class opposition was carefully kept out of power—elections used to legitimate that exclusion, with the “bourgeois” parties always given staged victories. But he also concludes that the agrarian and agro-export classes—enforcing the relations of export production by building up militaries and paramilitaries—lost the autonomy and independence from national or U.S. forces needed to legitimate and maintain themselves, as internal economic and political contradictions increased. Rather than a unique arrangement of a civil President declaring a lawless rule by decree and naked force in Uruguay 1973-85, it was a defining characteristic of the Latin American state since independence. Analysis of the state as well as of guerrillas or virulent anticommunism is not particularly difficult: Paul Almeida, *Waves of Protest: Popular Struggle in El Salvador, 1925-2005* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016; J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); Oñate-Madrazo, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016; Edgardo Antonio Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña en la década de los ochenta* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Elena, 2005). Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgent Groups and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992) and Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 307-25 make note that even Central America was *not* full of powerful guerrilla movements only days away from seizing the capital—revolutionaries only took power twice in Latin America, Cuba 1958/9 and Nicaragua 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Mass upheaval can even turn a military reformist—Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado in Peru 1968-75, Gen. Oswaldo López Arellano’s 1972-75 second term in Honduras, and the 1979-80 Salvadoran junta. Honduran civil-society groups grew around cooperative organizations rather than the traditional Liberal and Nationalist Parties, reorienting them to a temporarily-reformist FF.AA. but demobilizing them “in the field.” But the 1970s also saw paramilitary violence was intensified against civilian and Army reformists in El Salvador. Lapper and Pa inter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 62-64. Rachel Sieder, *Elecciones y democratización en Honduras desde 1980*, Cuadernos Universitarios 93 (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1998): 18. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 12, 19-28, 35. In Argentina’s case, the purges came after the 1975-76 defeat of the actual Montoneros and Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo; likewise the slaughter of Colombia’s April 19th Movement (M-19) and Unión Patriótica.

<sup>25</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 21, 33 also details how the “soft-line” junior officers were actually essential to running the regular Salvadoran Army: they were a particular target of the “paramilitaries”—regular troops under hardline senior officers, or armed forces not under the Army itself. He describes three sets of Salvadoran and U.S. elites, each with their own ideologies and strategic perceptions—those shaped by the National Security Doctrine, by anticommunism, and neoliberalism or coffee-export Liberalism (31-35). David Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru* (Boulder, Colo.: Rienner, 1989) still ties state forces in Latin America to the demand for low wages and high extraction; externally-funded militaries—such as those of El Salvador and Honduras in the 1980s—grow disproportionately strong relative to the components of the otherwise-weak state; the neoliberal state weakens while its enforcement apparatus strengthens (Brian Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 13-34, 41).

previously built up the militaries as their enforcers, were easily muscled aside by El Salvador's colonels or Honduras's Gen. Alvarez Martínez. The Nicaraguan National Guard even reconstituted itself outside of its former country and without any Somoza dynast at its helm,<sup>26</sup> and became an armed force bigger than the Honduran Army. Stanley's contribution is that the Salvadoran officers rationally managed the Civil War to make money rather than win it: the FMLN was an opportunity, not a threat, to the state.<sup>27</sup> This last interpretation fits with Gramscian interpretations of the state as more cohesive than any class whose economic interest it is enforcing: the bourgeoisie is dependent on military initiative, especially in weaker states, which have weaker civil societies.<sup>28</sup> States are agents with distinct powers—most notably coercion,<sup>29</sup> bringing us back to Gramsci's Machiavellian metaphor of the centaur.

“a democracy cannot fight a Seven Years' War”

—Gen. George C. Marshall, 1949

“All of the operations were reported in the American press to varying extents, while they were going on. They remained deniable only to the extent that such reports were tentative, sketchy, and unconfirmed”

—the Church Committee, 1976

### Theories of Covert Warfare

None of the four categories of Iran-Contra history-writing examine either the theory or the practice of state secrecy in much depth: none of the historical implications of the operation

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<sup>26</sup> The third Somoza, Anastasio, “Jr.,” had been detonated at point-blank range with a grenade launcher in Asunción, Paraguay, in 1980; his son Anastasio Somoza Portocarrero was an especially-interested patron of the National Guard's ideologically-focused Escuela de Entrenamiento Básico de Infantería (Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 194-96)—but his post-Revolutionary role in the Contras seems nil, especially by contrast to Lt. Col. Enrique Bermúdez Varela or Mexican cartel “Godfather” Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 118, 255.

<sup>28</sup> Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault agree that, however much analytical attention they give to it, the state is a mere vehicle to perpetuate the interests of its political class, or military officers' self-interest (O'Donnell's “bureaucratic authoritarianism”). Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 52. Otto Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratisation: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in *ibid.*: 227. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 99. Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* 1989: 13-34, 41. James Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 122.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 256.

are given enough explanation. The existing literature has already detailed how the Reagan Administration browbeat U.S. outlets such as *The New York Times* or National Public Radio (Chapter 3, “The Global News War”). The White House strongly depended on the Honduran *Fuerzas Armadas*’ (FF.AA.) willingness to cover up the news originating on the country’s soil, repressing stories from the rural frontiers, the dissident press, clergy, even military officers. But this arrangement to keep the war sufficiently quiet gave the Honduran state a practical monopoly on the power to directly reveal a story to the U.S. press, such as the 1985 “exposure” of Contra camps and headquarters in even Tegucigalpa itself (Chapter 5, “López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial”), the annual charade where Tegucigalpa announced the Contras had departed into Nicaragua (followed by every one of them being forced back), or the Holy Week incidents of 1986 and 1988 (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”) where the Ambassador was forced to practically beg President José Azcona to “request” U.S. backup against Nicaraguan troops pursuing the Contras. Surveys of U.S. covert warfare certainly agree that the covert wars did not stay secret to the target government and its allies, or even to the U.S. press.<sup>30</sup> President Ronald Reagan even invited a paradox into the analysis of covert warfare: he supported wars in Angola and Afghanistan that were not hidden from the press (and sometimes even popular with Congress) and tried to launch a public defense of the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan wars. All of Reagan’s covert

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<sup>30</sup> Covert-war history raises the question that, if all wars since World War II share key components of “covert warfare,” is the category just a catchall? Assassinations, military deception, counterinsurgency, or working with existing guerrillas all occurred in World War II. The last declaration of war by the Senate—as required by the U.S. Constitution—was in 1942, against Axis Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania: Franklin D. Roosevelt explicitly feared establishing a precedent of overstepping the law. Conventional, overt wars with thousands of ground troops—Korea, Vietnam, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama, Iraq—received no declaration. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith summarized the traditional role of the Senate and the President in war: “A democracy cannot wage war. When you go to war, you pass a law giving extraordinary powers to the President” which will be returned to the people upon victory. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008): 34. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare*, 2014: xiv-xv, 1. Armin Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* (Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 1-4. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 178.

wars were still kept sufficiently *deniable* to avoid direct Soviet confrontation or legal repercussion that would result from direct Administration involvement (Chapter 1, “4: De-Escalation”).

In the conventional analysis, the secrecy of covert warfare is aimed against the U.S. public and Congress—to conceal interventions that would have been rejected if subjected to fair debate, to avoid having to even concoct any propaganda campaign in the first place. Secrecy meant a President or CIA Director did not have to *explain* anything to civilians, to try and *convince* the voters about a situation thousands of miles away. Here, secrecy is a tool to maintain an elite group’s control over foreign policy, against public opinion or even the will of the President himself.<sup>31</sup> Elias Canetti writes that “Secrecy lies at the very core of power”; Max Weber writes that bureaucracy gets its power by withholding knowledge from the legislature to keep it powerless.<sup>32</sup> Jack A. Blum writes that “The assumption that an informed electorate will hold elected officials accountable for their conduct is at the heart of our government,” so therefore covert warfare is irreconcilable with constitutional government: wars are approved and funded without public knowledge and consent (leading to disasters such as Vietnam or Iraq).<sup>33</sup> If the public is prevented from knowledge of the true intentions of the people they vote for, of what is being done in their names, if there are no consequences for the worst illegalities—then the very concepts of voter

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<sup>31</sup> This does not indicate that Congress was itself inherently incurious, complacent, or unwilling to look beyond any Cold-War paradigm: given the enormity of the concealed crimes (which produced a rich set of conspiracy theories about the state (Chapter 8, “Conclusion”)), the secrecy under which covert action operated required active maintenance (examined here in the specific case of 1980s Honduras). Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014. Robert E. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Craig Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity: U.S. Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 47.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher A. Bail, “The Public Life of Secrets: Deception, Disclosure, and Discursive Framing in the Policy Process,” *Sociological Theory* 33:2 (June 2015): 97-124. Norbert Elias, “Knowledge and Power: An Interview by Peter Ludes,” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 203. Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (New York: New Press, 2015): 137. Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truth: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania’s Secret Police* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014): 77.

<sup>33</sup> Jack A. Blum, “Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 76. Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed., 2002: 9.



choice and public input become void.<sup>34</sup> This arrangement is termed a “deep” or “dual state”—1. elected public power and overt military force, versus 2. a self-perpetuating, unaccountable realm of deceit, paramilitarism, and non-state (but state-sanctioned) violence aimed against democratic governments.<sup>35</sup> Ex-President Harry Truman called for termination of the CIA’s paramilitary unit in 1963, saying that it both 1. let the White House conduct war without Congress but also 2. *made* rather than executed policy, dragging Presidents into wars on its own: they “don’t just report on wars and the like. They go out and make their own and there is nobody to keep track of what they are up to.”<sup>36</sup>

The process of classification does indeed restrict information, making it into a commodity that the intelligence agencies alone doled out, “instead of a necessary ingredient for deliberation that informs the democratic process.”<sup>37</sup> But it would be inaccurate to assume that the intelligence agencies were necessarily hoarding and concealing known *truths* from elected legislatures and presidents—deceiving them into following a hidden agenda, some greater plan. Knowing a

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<sup>34</sup> James W. Carey says that “journalism is usefully understood as another name for democracy”—not out of any grandiosity, but because the “fourth estate” is necessary if every voter is to know 1. the actual intentions of all candidates and 2. the actions of the government once elected, instead of just periodically reporting the candidates’ promises. A “maximalist” interpretation is that foreign policy is the United States’s “real policy”—that is, that there is no policy except for foreign policy, and the rest is window dressing or domestic crisis management. To Chomsky, “radicalization” is simply *finding out* about U.S. foreign policy—what is being done in their name. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 111 Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed., 2002: 35-39. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 189. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 3, 162, 198, 211.

<sup>35</sup> Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 92. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: iii, 194. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 54. Marcus G. Raskin and A. Carl LeVan, “The National Security State, War, and Congress,” in Raskin and LeVan, *In Democracy’s Shadow: The Secret World of National Security* (New York: Nation Books, 2005): 262. Eric Wilson, ed., *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex* (Burlington, Vt.: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Truman’s letter still concluded that “With all the nonsense put out by Communist propaganda about ‘Yankee imperialism,’ ‘exploitive capitalism,’ ‘war-mongering,’ ‘monopolists,’ in their name-calling assault on the West, the last thing we needed was for the CIA to be seized upon as something akin to a subverting influence in the affairs of other people.” Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 337. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 253.

<sup>37</sup> That is, it was standard operating procedure—meaning there was no one fatal secret that could “bring it all down.” Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018): 731. Raskin and LeVan, “The National Security State, War, and Congress,” in Raskin and LeVan, *In Democracy’s Shadow* 2005: 245, 249, 257-58. Verdery, *Secrets and Truth* 2014: 137.

secret and knowing a true fact are not identical epistemological processes.<sup>38</sup> Secrecy was what gave a cachet to “classified” intelligence—so Presidents overvalued whatever was handed to them designated as coming from a secret source, not because it was verifiable or reliable.<sup>39</sup>

Covert-war historians agree that the CIA was never an *intelligence* service,<sup>40</sup> instead compensating for lack of Soviet and Chinese sources by seeking victories in the paramilitary field since 1949.<sup>41</sup> As Director, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith had already warned that “The operational tail will wag the intelligence dog.”<sup>42</sup> Secrecy kept planners from correctly understanding the countries they targeted and blocked accurate intelligence from decision-makers even inside the CIA. Secrecy did not protect knowledge, but fatal ignorance and routine self-deceit.<sup>43</sup> CIA

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<sup>38</sup> Daniel Ellsberg warned incoming National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger that the effect of access to so much secret intelligence that he would “feel like a fool for having studied, written, talked about these subjects ... without having known of the existence of all this information,” until eventually Kissinger became “incapable of learning from most people in the world, no matter how much experience they may have” under the crushing weight of the secret knowledge. John Kurt Jacobsen, “Why Do States Bother to Deceive? Managing Trust at Home and Abroad,” *Review of International Studies* 34:2 (April 2008): 337-61. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 133.

<sup>39</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 349. Raskin and LeVan, “Introduction,” in Raskin and LeVan, *In Democracy's Shadow* 2005: xxiii-xxiv. *Ibid.*, “The National Security State, War, and Congress,” in *ibid.*: 252.

<sup>40</sup> The Directorate of Intelligence was quickly restricted to writing Presidential Daily Briefs, World Factbooks, and other summaries, while the Directorate of Operations did all the real work with informants, émigrés, and foreign officials, military officers, and intelligence agencies. Operations also managed the large-scale paramilitary actions against a target country—Tim Weiner noting that left a fatal flaw where Operations “had no patience for espionage, no time for sifting and weighing secrets. Far easier to plot a coup or pay off a politician than to penetrate the Politburo.” Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 82. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: xiv-xv. Peter Kornbluh, “The Iran-Contra Scandal: A Postmortem,” *World Policy Journal* 5:1 (Winter 1987/8): 142. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 579. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 32, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Director Gen. Smith had to admit that the new CIA simply could not admit to anyone else in Washington its inability to actually gather intelligence—and thus had no reason to exist. 40 pages of authentic intelligence on Beijing, from a country totally “denied” to the CIA, was rejected because it reported that the decision-makers of the People’s Republic were thinking rationally and could be negotiated with, rather than a “mad dog” enemy requiring more Pentagon weaponry and aggressive CIA operations, the State Department and the CIA still smarting over underestimating and “losing” China. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 89-90. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 116-17, 120-23. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 54-59, 62, 64.

<sup>42</sup> Gen. Smith “came to suspect that Dulles and Wisner ... would eventually lead him into some ill-conceived and disastrous misadventure”; 1960s Director John A. McCone fretted that Langley had to end its domination by Operations since it could not be even *perceived* as “Designed to overthrow governments, assassinate heads of state, involve itself in political affairs of foreign states” Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 53, 182, 547.

<sup>43</sup> Deceit was a habit *within* the institutions planning and conducting the covert wars: the self-appointed judges of top-secret intelligence and the commanders of the most covert operations lacked the ability to even identify the disinformation they themselves had planted (Chapter 1, “5: Criminality”). It is epistemology that notes that “Rather than oppose knowledge, ignorance is often formed by it, and vice versa,” producing a combined concept of “ignorance/knowledge.” José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 294.

officers since CIA Director Allen Dulles (1953-61) certainly were eager to mislead Presidents into escalation and to hide knowledge that would require withdrawal, in order to preserve the Agency's paramilitary power—and its autonomy. By 1961 the CIA had underworld connections, billions of unaccountable dollars, fleets of planes and cargo ships, a position of strength against their own Presidents. He was determined to expand his new Agency, but he could not stake its reputation on actual espionage, telephone intercepts, or aerial photography. If the Agency could not supply disinterested, objective knowledge, it could still offer Presidents a personal foreign-policy instrument.<sup>44</sup>

The CIA has never been able to live down its 1975 description by the Church Committee as a “rogue elephant” reliant on stirring up trouble rather than solving it—an unaccountable black-budget secret police hiding its crimes and failures. The CIA and other foreign agencies could “railroad” Presidents, force their hand, “bandwagon” them thanks to the secrecy of all their operations. The Committee had exposed two decades of coups, phone-tapping and opening mail, break-ins, secret influence over the media, patronage of mobsters and drug traffickers, proposals to launch terrorist attacks on U.S. citizens, and human experimentation.<sup>45</sup> In 1960s and 70s Directorate of Operations officers targeted Presidents and even CIA Directors with false leaks and other skullduggery because they had pursued détente or denounced overpromised covert interventions that had led to embarrassment and cataclysm.<sup>46</sup> But Tim Weiner concludes that the en-

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<sup>44</sup> Intelligence agencies undermined “Western” leaders they perceived as too soft-line—Charles de Gaulle, John F. Kennedy, Harold Wilson, Gough Whitlam, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Donald Trump. One Agency was sold as able to supply everything for covert war—the planning and logistics, the local knowledge and operational intelligence, the support operations based out of “third-party” countries, funding independent of official U.S. sources (if not legal), and contacting, arming, and training local forces. The CIA Station never acted strictly solo: even if they were reticent, U.S. military and Embassies were always deeply involved. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 202.

<sup>45</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 10, 36. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 74.

<sup>46</sup> Fired officers were able to turn their connections with other countries' intelligence agencies against Directors William Colby (1973-76) and Adm. Stansfield Turner (1977-81). Hardliners leaked false stories to the right-wing press 1963 alleging that the Soviets had tricked Kennedy and kept the missiles in Cuba; in 1980 contractor Michael Le-

tire “rogue elephant” narrative was possible only by completely ignoring all the orders and authorizations from five Presidents.<sup>47</sup> Regardless of their party or ideology, every President from Truman to George H.W. Bush had at least three covert regime changes going on at once.<sup>48</sup>

Every President from Truman to Nixon had also fired CIA agents, or browbeat and threatened the Agency to distort intelligence toward the more hawkish options—and Langley went along.<sup>49</sup> The Reagan Administration created a direct “stovepipe” to tailor intelligence to a decision already made—Casey and Gates incorporating even known forgeries and misinformation fed to the CIA by the KGB, to argue for continued increases in military spending against the Soviet Union (Chapter 1, “1: The Ignorant Armies”; Chapter 2, “Casey’s New Langley”).<sup>50</sup>

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deen spread rumors that Jimmy Carter’s brother Billy had taken money from Libya’s Col. Muammar Qaddafi and met with Palestinian Liberation Organization leaders (Chapter 2, “A ‘Black International’”). Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 111. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 244-47, 253. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 165. Kinzer, *Poisoner in Chief* 2019. Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative* 2012: 165, 184. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 439. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 364.

<sup>47</sup> O’Rourke and Prados also insist that the CIA was merely a tool of interventionist Presidents (as opposed to the usual “elephantine” explanation for hawkishness and deceit). Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: xiv. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 351.

<sup>48</sup> Dwight Eisenhower (1953-61) had the highest total amount of covert operations by number, John F. Kennedy (1961-63) the highest number per year. The targets were determined by international dynamics more than Administration—Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe and attempting to prevent independent Communist parties from winning democratic elections in the 1940s; decolonizing Africa and Southeast Asia in the late 50s; and then a new burst in Iran, Afghanistan, and Nicaragua after 1979. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 97.

<sup>49</sup> This moves beyond the conventional “rogue elephant” explanation; nor was Nixon was a “rogue President.” Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 46. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 445. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: xv.

<sup>50</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson pushed for Guatemala 1954, and North Vietnam and the Dominican Republic in 1965, and Nixon upbraided CIA officers for failing to prevent Salvador Allende’s 1970 election and for counseling *against* covert interventions. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger twisted arms to make the CIA back Angola 1975—not to change a particular regime, but because the fall of Saigon meant that “the United States must carry out some act somewhere in the world which shows its determination to continue to be a world power,” still *relevant*. Gerald Ford even told the Soviet Ambassador that he had no strategic interest in Angola, but that the Soviet arms and Cuban troops were “being perceived by Americans and played up by the media as a test for the policy of détente”—fitting Austin Carson’s thesis that domestic politics can be the largest “hawkish” factor (whether real or simply pretextual; Chapter 1, “4: De-Escalation”) in international relations. Kennedy told Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that he had no choice against the domestic pressure to order British Guianese Premier Cheddi Jagan’s covert removal, because otherwise U.S. hawks would force him to send the Marines. The “stovepipe” is an ironic reverse of the formal “disent channel” established in the State Department 1971 explicitly to prevent Foggy Bottom or the White House from only hearing one viewpoint, from being restricted to embassy staffers (who could easily have their perspectives be “captured” by officials of the host government). Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 75. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 16, 22. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 85. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 307-08.

Direct intervention in the intelligence process was almost never *needed*: secrecy allowed evidence to be distorted by more subtle and structural means—distortions which could not be easily corrected by either CIA officers or White House staffers.<sup>51</sup> No matter whether it was the Oval Office or the CIA, the covert decisions always favored new or continued covert warfare (while the Agency or the White House made its objections).

Covertiness allows a middle ground or “gray zone” between war or diplomacy, restraint and resolve, action and inaction, or even secrecy vs. publicity.<sup>52</sup> Secrecy acts as legal fiction, the state still able to insist on national security or plausible deniability regardless of how much public evidence gets out.<sup>53</sup> Deniability was important enough that Presidents were willing to give up significant amounts of controllability, and thus allow the deniable actions to escalate until the deniability itself quickly dwindled.<sup>54</sup> But it was also secrecy that let officials at every level—from Presidents and ambassadors, to Station Chiefs and advisors fighting alongside guerrillas—have a stake in starting, escalating, and continuing intervention. Any conflict was between two sorts of Cold Warrior, and (at least initially) resolved on the hawkish, interventionist side: once the signs of failure appeared, the apparatus of covert warfare was already set up to allow the hawks to throw up roadblocks against withdrawal. Ralph McGehee’s conclusion is that Presidents have wanted the CIA “free of the constraints of public exposure so that it can gather and

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Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 77, 115. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 13, 266-67. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 277, 287. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 59. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 5, 15. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 192.

<sup>51</sup> Some human element is always inevitable in knowledge-producing processes—but that does not deprive them of objectivity, of their true status. The “human factor” is not inherently corruption, something to be subtracted out. Therefore, the threat to knowledge-gathering was structural, institutional, procedural, general, rather than the specific instances of politicization (even if they were numerous). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 2, 89-90, 142.

<sup>52</sup> Actual insertion of uniformed U.S. special forces in Tehran or Abbottabad is “covert,” but requires no plausible deniability. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 58, 62. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 237.

<sup>53</sup> Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 186. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 95.

<sup>54</sup> Hmong, Cubans, and Contra forces were urged (at least initially) to strike fast and hard—even sacrificed for quick gains. Properly speaking, Langley’s control over any given covert war is distinctly limited, and the President himself has even less control. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 196-98. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 208, 638, 647.

fabricate its disinformation unharried by criticisms and ... overthrow governments without the knowledge of the American people.” Intelligence could be either 1. tailored to White House demands, or 2. used like “treats” to shape the President’s decisions, and neither “side” had an interest in peace.<sup>55</sup>

Secrecy in covert warfare is 1. never absolute, but at the same time 2. any revelation is partial. That is to say, even the “deepest” state official cannot have total command over international journalism; but the riskiest aspects of an operation can still be prevented from coalescing into a “scandal.”<sup>56</sup> The sponsored forces might themselves seek publicity: at the 1961 Bay of Pigs raid the Cuban exiles even sought out journalists for interviews and brought along photographers, to exaggerate their numbers and attract more recruits<sup>57</sup>; the Nicaraguan Contras had welcomed press attention since 1983 (Chapter 1, “3: Discovery”; Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: Borders and Reporters”). Stories accumulate, investigative journalists follow leads, and an attentive U.S. reader of the newspapers might well be able to piece together a secret operation. In the case of Nicaragua, CIA involvement in Contra training was being reported since 1981, and their involvement in cocaine was accidentally revealed 1985 (Chapter 3, “A War on News”). But covertness is not just a matter of preventing a headline, but of delaying knowledge and neutralizing the impact of stories when they do “break”—even after they become defined as a “scandal.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Note that after 1961 the CIA “establishment” at Langley was almost never recorded as the hawkish party—following Presidents such as Johnson or Reagan, or Directors such as William Casey or John Brennan. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 6. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 189, 194. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 439.

<sup>56</sup> Erving Goffman gives the categories of 1. strategic secrets (to prevent the public, and thus the designated enemy, from finding out); 2. entrusted secrets (to authenticate a contact and demonstrate their trustworthiness); and 3. “free” secrets (where one’s reputability is potentially damaged by exposing them: this sort of secret is what allows leaks to signal honesty (Chapter 1, “4: De-Escalation”). Goffman notes that all these types of secrets have to hide the fact that they are being *kept* secret. Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 114-15.

<sup>57</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare*, 2014: 246-47. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 227, 231.

<sup>58</sup> The crucial information could be delayed for decades: not until 2005 was it publicized that the Gulf of Tonkin Incident between the U.S. and North Vietnamese navies was not just overblown but fabricated out of carefully-

Whatever level of secrecy might be inherent to state action, as a government practice it still requires public justification. Officials could warn that “loose lips sink ships” during war-time, and “blowing” a special operation or delicate hostage rescues in the press would spell disaster<sup>59</sup>: but none of this applied to covert coups and guerrilla wars. Covert warfare was decided without real debate, planned without real knowledge, continued without real goals.<sup>60</sup> However strong the U.S. Cold-War consensus might have been in the 1950s, it was not usable to justify the 1975 revelations of poisoning foreign presidents, overthrowing democratic governments,

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preserved “mistakes” and altered timestamps. Johnson had even pre-prepared a war resolution to be sent to Congress, and the North Vietnamese targets were already bombed before the second “incident.” The revelation that the 1964 intelligence was “cooked” to start a war was itself delayed in 2002 by the George W. Bush Administration, which itself was cooking intelligence to start a war of aggression against Iraq. Paraguay’s Archives of Terror were found by accident in 1992; Guatemala’s police archives are literally rotting on the shelves (the National Security Archive, George Washington University, “Guatemala Police Archive Under Threat: Repository of Historic Human Rights Evidence Faces Government Crackdown,” Aug. 13, 2018, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/guatemala/2018-08-13/guatemala-police-archive-under-threat>). The Hemeroteca in Tegucigalpa is in a similar situation—its workers unpaid for months, piled with flaking volumes one must even crawl over to mine their contents. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 312. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 121. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare*, 2014: 257-59. Willard C. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 211. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 156. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 240-43.

<sup>59</sup> The trope comes from World War II (though ironically it was a Congressman who caused the only sinking): but it served as precedent to not tell the elected authorities. Britain’s “D-notice” is even more insidious and pervasive, with reporters forbidden from even saying which topic has been embargoed, or whether a D-notice itself has been issued. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 97. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare*, 2014: 133. Denis Muller and Bill Birnbauer, “The Ethics of Reporting National Security Matters,” in Lidberg and Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security—Secrecy, Surveillance and Journalism* (London: Anthem, 2018): 90-91. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 511.

<sup>60</sup> Secret agencies never hesitated to breach the most allegedly sacrosanct “sources and methods” if the publicity meant a bigger budget; and even the most dearly-won intelligence could be jettisoned if it did not fit existing policies. Deputy CIA Director Gen. Charles P. Cabell was most blunt rejecting an estimate that the Red Army would never launch an attack beyond East Germany: “We can’t accept this paper. We’ll never get any budgets through”! The most obvious motive for distorting secret intelligence was to simply preserve the institution. The reports by David K.E. Bruce (1956) and Lyman Kirkpatrick, Jr., (1961) analyzed every discoverable failure and implicated every Operations director in murder: they were promptly destroyed, with only a remaining copy or two buried in some safe. Director James Schlesinger commissioned the 1973 “Family Jewels” report—693 violations of the law that established the Agency—which was promptly vaulted. The CIA had promoted itself for decades by creating secrets of its own instead of finding out those of the Soviet Union or China: now those secrets threatened its existence. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 90. Melvin A. Goodman, “Espionage and Covert Action,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 30. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 31. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 113-14. David S. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2018): 125. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 179, 328, 501, 554.

compiling death lists, and experimenting on unwitting U.S. citizens.<sup>61</sup> However, the Casey Doctrine required the operation of *multiple* simultaneous covert wars—and impunity for even officials who had knowingly cooperated with cartels and death squads, with murderers of U.S. citizens. Covert-action historians have concluded that secret intervention puts the White House in a corner, leaving less room for maneuver to withdraw from rhetorical commitments to the supposedly-threatened states—South Vietnam, Zaire, or Honduras. Reagan found himself unable to back down from his own clichés of non-negotiation with Moscow or Tehran, of “freedom fighters,” of his “wars” on drugs and terrorism (Chapter 2, “Iran and the Contras”).<sup>62</sup>

But all of these explanations of state secrecy still conceive of it as a one-way source of power and autonomy.<sup>63</sup> Current histories of covert warfare largely take secrecy for granted—as not something requiring active maintenance, not something needing *explanation*. But specifically examining all these covert wars shows that secrecy is not a default social condition, not some metaphorical material “barrier” (even if permeable). Examining the specific ways that stories were originated and undermined in Honduras reveals an active process that required constant

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<sup>61</sup> The breakdown of this supposed 1940s-50s consensus supposedly led to the CIA’s reinvention under Director William Casey. See above, n45. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 85. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983): 203. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 174.

<sup>62</sup> Acknowledging the hair-raising atrocities of supported irregular forces would mean that the patron Power could no longer fund them, or pretend that they could be reformed into the trope of “moderate rebels” or reframed as “freedom fighters.” Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 118-19. Blum, “Covert Operations,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 83. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 171-72. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 70.

<sup>63</sup> Most writers caution against assuming the omnipotence or omniscience either Langley or the CIA Stations. Even after the revelations of the mid-1970s Congress took care “not to learn too much,” agreeing that there was certain true knowledge they were not to be entrusted with. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence chairman Barry Goldwater said “I don’t believe in the Congress knowing too much intelligence. There’s no way you can keep the secrets. There’s no way you can get these congressmen [and staffers] to keep their mouths shut when they learn something hot. They can’t wait to get to the Rotary Club back home and say, ‘Now let me tell you fellows what’s really going on’ ”; his counterpart Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York) said that when Casey or other CIA officers briefed the committee he “wanted to shout at them, ‘Stop! We’ve heard enough. No more!’ ” Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 64. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 216. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 231, 374-75, 476. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 152. Marcus G. Raskin and A. Carl LeVan, “Introduction: No Democracy, No Security,” in Raskin and LeVan, eds., *In Democracy’s Shadow: The Secret World of National Security* (New York: Nation Books, 2005): xxiii-xxv. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 2, 137-38. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 47. Wilson, ed., *The Dual State* 2012.



maintenance. The Honduran state could threaten to stop hiding stories that embarrassed the White House, but that power had only been *loaned* by the Reagan Administration—or, more properly, originated in the process of the two states agreeing to keep the war (sufficiently) secret. More importantly, the covert war could be constantly exposed not just by journalists and generals, but by *campesinos*, Evangelical clergy, soldiers not enthusiastic about being outgunned and outnumbered by the Contras on their own soil. The most remote parts of impoverished Central America could still initiate stories that would reach *The New York Times* and threaten the supposedly most popular President in history.

[philosophy] “is much more like plumbing—the sort of thinking that people do even in the most prudent, practical areas always has a whole system of thought under the surface which we are not aware of. Then suddenly we become aware of some bad smells, and we have to take up the floorboards and look at the concepts of even the most ordinary piece of thinking.”<sup>64</sup>

—Mary Midgley, 2001

## A THEORETICAL TOOLBOX

An extensive literature on “Iran-Contra’s” secret negotiations and covert warfare has already been written—and another extensive literature written on the theory and history of covert warfare since the 1940s. The existing historiography of Iran-Contra already covers Congress’s reluctance, the CIA’s disengagement (nominally there were *no* active CIA agents involved, the operations handed over to agencies such as the White House’s National Security Council or the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Aid Office), and the 1980-82 networks of cartels and death squads that the Contra War “bought into” (Chapter 2, “A ‘Black International’ ”). But so far these histories have centered on state sources—either the Reagan Administration (1981-89) or on the Argentinean junta (1976-83). Once the Contra War is seen in the greater context of decades of covert-war conduct, none of the contemporary narratives from the 1980s (rogue “cowboys,” a scandal for Reagan, an operation by secret agencies) proves to be adequate. This dissertation instead fo-

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<sup>64</sup> Liz Else, “Mary, Mary Quite Contrary,” *New Scientist*, Nov. 3, 2001.

cuses on 1. what is missing from this broad literature that, specifically, 2. the archive of 1980s Honduras can provide as a historical source.

There have also been more in-depth studies of how news stories were suppressed in El Salvador and Nicaragua—the 1981 El Mozote Massacre, or Witness for Peace’s 1983-85 accounts of U.S.-supervised destruction (see Chapter 3). Even Eugene Hasenfus’s 1986 shootdown and the scandal it launched have already been given some epistemological interpretation—how the White House could do nothing about the spread of the initial story, but also the ways in which a scandal greater than Watergate could have no consequences.

This dissertation analyzes how Washington and Tegucigalpa worked to suppress and undermine (or promote) news—of massacres, of HIV, of pharmaceutical shortages. But this process was not just a matter of threatening journalists and making calls to editors. These stories existed on a media “landscape” that extended geographically from border villages in Intibucá or El Paraíso Departments to the Director of the CIA’s second office. Examining the specific complications around the stories that originated in 1980s Honduras shows the vulnerabilities of the largest state criminal operation in covert-war history.

Media theory specifically examines how covert wars are kept from turning into “scandals,” keeping the most pertinent elements out of the proverbial headlines, or how state crime is reframed as uncontroversial (even if some of the *means* might be questioned). Theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Noam Chomsky, and Erving Goffman provide insight into how the media, the state, and the public interact: this allows for new analysis of how covert warfare in general must handle the press and potential domestic exposure, using Honduras as a specific case.

Epistemology is the study of the reliability of individual perception, attention, and recollection, of how people justify their beliefs. Expanding on that, epistemology also analyzes how most all knowledge of the world (outside of immediate, lived experience) is inescapably secondhand—mediated. So epistemology must also examine how people assess the reliability of sources and media, the verifiability or falsifiability of an event, turning to experts or seeking out corroboration. A new or controversial story must be “warranted” by lawyers or clergy with better access to the international press: 1980s Honduras has several cases of a subtler attack against the warrantors, to undermine the authentication of witnesses or follow-up to initial reports. Epistemology therefore provides some useful tools to unite secrecy studies, media theory, or even to help complete the history of medical neglect and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Honduras (Chapter 10).

Media coverage has several elements that set it apart from historical analysis; of course the White House could directly pressure editors and journalists, and contemporary press coverage rarely challenged any of the Cold-War premises of the Central American war. The news is periodic and short-term: yesterday’s headlines rarely carry over to today, and tomorrow’s retractions are always in the back pages. Falsehoods have to seem like truths, using the same processes of warrant and verification and spread by the same media.

Theories of hegemony complement media studies: rhetoric—like that supporting the Contra War—did not have to be *believed* by voters, so long as Congress and the press did not subject it to any sustained questioning or offer any alternatives. A false consensus was enough (even if it could prove vulnerable). Hegemony or ideology do not even have to be publicly articulated: the boundaries of discourse are not overtly enforced—but almost never crossed. Ideology

provides flexibility, withstands the exposure of cover-ups: tacit vagueness becomes a strength, so Reagan's attempt to publicly defend his foreign policy became explicit, and failed.

Dictatorships such as those of 1970s Chile or Argentina are restricted to cruder sorts of media manipulation—open censorship, unconvincing appeals to rhetoric. For this reason, Noam Chomsky notes that tacit manipulation of media narratives is a sign of *democracy*—that the civilian state has built up enough consent to try to reshape society, rather than simply enforcing a cover-up. Adulterating how damning stories are received in the press is still as much a manipulation of society as secrecy. But this means that coercion and repression show a state's social-political *weakness* as well as its forcible power.

These theories all contribute to the larger project of finding out where the Contra project was most vulnerable—where covert warfare in general can be exposed. Washington and Tegucigalpa tried to repress news of their secret war and to rewrite public consensus—but the record also shows numerous failures. Their strongest efforts indicated which stories risked the greatest exposure—massacres, dealing with cartels and terrorists, scandals that the most experienced public-relations “spin-master” could not anticipate. President Reagan, CIA Director Casey, and Gen. Alvarez Martínez proved to be threatened by the most isolated campesinos and parish priests, by widows organizing and protesting in the cities, by church volunteers in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

“War is God's way of teaching Americans geography.”

—anonymous

“News is only the first rough draft of history.”

—Alan Barth, 1943

### Media Theory

True and false information are transmitted from sources to local and then national audiences, confirmed, disputed, retracted, brought back decades later (below, “Epistemology”). The

most basic media analyses focus on 1. owners and editors (and the rich or elected who influence them) and 2. journalists and their relation to sources; “news” is a product made by a specific cohort of individuals and institutions. This ultimately leads to 3. matters of audience reception—including the influence of news stories on government officials. As an institution the press emphasizes or deemphasizes certain concerns, chooses topics and sets agendas, frames events, “primes” the topics of debate, refuses coverage to stories if they were not already covered in the past, and keeps debates and the premises they are based upon within acceptable bounds. News is not a mirror of society, but a product of social activity.<sup>65</sup>

Conventional media theory emphasizes the role of newspapers, magazines, radio, and television in the “construction” of social reality for the audience. Communication within even a small community is “mediated,” and most U.S. citizens will never be personally involved in writing law at the state or Federal level, or travel firsthand to war zones.<sup>66</sup> Media theorists also emphasize the indirect and complicated nature of the news’s relationship with its audience—it certainly shapes and restricts the views presented, but people are never at the total mercy of me-

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<sup>65</sup> Bennett notes that category of bias is not “journalists abandoning their professional norms and practices to insert their personal prejudices into their reporting” against the socialization and the institutional structure of being a reporter, but that “the most important biases in the news occur not when journalists abandon their professional standards but when they cling most responsibly to them”—to professional norms and standard practices about “official” sources, newsroom practice, or attitudes to stories already being covered in the “alternative media” (in the latter case, the commercial press tends not towards “debunking” of alternative stories, but toward discrediting and discarding the entire topic because of *who* covered it). Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 182. Robert M. Entman, “Framing Media Power,” in Paul D’Angelo and Jim A. Kuypers, eds., *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (New York and London, Routledge [2010] 2015): 337. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xv, 2, 298. Marcello Maneri, “Media Hypes, Moral Panics, and the Ambiguous Nature of Facts: Urban Security as Discursive Formation,” in Peter Vasterman, ed., *From Media Hype to Twitter Storm* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018): 43.

<sup>66</sup> One extreme of interpretation holds that news constitutes thought and defines the “consensus reality” for a society, that it is a necessary defining element of democracy itself (see above, “Theories of Covert Warfare,” n34); the other extreme, that any coverage can be readily dismissed, doubted, or denied by the audience, and no more influential than church denomination. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: xix, 17. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): ix, 3, 107.

dia owners and government officials: they can become aware that they are *not* experiencing the world firsthand, through the microphones and cameras.<sup>67</sup>

*Agenda-setting* or *saliency* describes which figures or what issues get the coverage. What is “newsworthy” is selective—that which is not taken for granted, that which draws attention.<sup>68</sup> Audiences are cued to a certain topic by coverage: these are usually the broadest issues—immigration, the budget, the Space Race, terrorism, street crime. Isolationist or working-class issues would be given little “play,” since almost no Congresspersons would do so on their own initiative. Once a story was “dropped,” it was not usually returned to the agenda—letting it be reframed as discredited or irrelevant.<sup>69</sup>

*Priming* is an elaboration on the previous analysis, that news coverage conveys the agendas of owners or politicians. Readers and viewers are presented with heuristics and shortcuts that resonate the previous coverage, their own existing beliefs, and society’s “common knowledge” and larger narratives. Priming gives them more choice (though still limited) over which items on the agenda to pay attention to, or even which stray contradictions to exclude, reject, ignore, and so on. To media analysts, this lets the audience comprehend and respond to social situations.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Traditional sociology characterizes human action and choice as products of norms, which are derived from greater “society”: newer, interpretivist sociologists say that viewers have enough agency to change what is considered “newsworthy” without causing change in larger social institutions, or that the audience can use norms as a resource or “toolkit” or “language” to construct meaning on their own—that the media is not one-way. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 15. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 16. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 206.

<sup>68</sup> Near-identical stories can get strikingly different media responses (see Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine,” n86). Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 8-9, 58.

<sup>69</sup> This broadness—as wide-ranging as Bourdieu’s “fields”—also lets the content be conveniently vague, presenting the scenario of a *good* against a *bad* side. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Taylor and Francis, [1973] 2011). Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 18. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 295.

<sup>70</sup> Priming can make test audiences agree (if not *believe*) that most abortions are in the third trimester, or that much of the Federal budget goes to the puniest of offices, such as NPR or NASA. Entman, “Framing Media Power,” in D’Angelo and Kuypers, eds., *Doing News Framing Analysis* 2015: 332-33. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 17, 19-24, 27, 161.

What is selected for coverage is then *framed* in a specific manner: some facts are given more or less relevance, given different weight, or reframed to change their meaning.<sup>71</sup> Unlike agenda-setting (which focuses on *which* events are presented), framing adjusts the saliency of events, *how* they are interpreted. Framing does not dispute any of the acknowledged facts of the matter, but lets journalists and editors define the interpretations or meanings given to the event, such as shifting coverage of the Vietnam War from body counts to peace with honor after 1968. Frames are value judgments—but tacit ones, not argued or disputed before the cameras.<sup>72</sup> In basic epistemology (below), a fact or assertion requires a host of other tacit, presumed facts to validate it, to make it understandable. Facts are identified *as* facts by “everyday methods of attributing meaning”: it took a change for the President reelected in a landslide 1972 became a crook 1973.<sup>73</sup>

Journalism training emphasized discrete, short-term, concrete *events* over any complex, structural, long-term factors, which E. Barbara Phillips describes as constant “novelty without change.” But the press also maintains the *appearance* of consistency, a wider frame: that they simply wrote a new story given new information (as opposed to than disregarding factuality in the rush to get the “scoop” or avoid being left out of the “pack”). The Reagan Administration often exploited this pattern, making leaks in order to grab the headlines; the holes poked in the

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<sup>71</sup> Framing lets people (journalists included) identify information as information. This is what allows the process of framing to be “a potential choice between alternative interpretations”: a frame thus has to be competitive against rival ways to interpret a given event. Schudson downplays framing—“Almost all discussion of the power of the press centers on [framing], which, under ordinary circumstances, may be the least important,” by comparison to the *content*. Entman, “Framing Media Power,” in D’Angelo and Kuypers, eds., *Doing News Framing Analysis* 2015: 332-33. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 26-27. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 18-20. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 182-83.

<sup>72</sup> For example, when crime is discussed, “framing” is the act of including or excluding talk about jobs or education as well as prisons and police patrols. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 27-30, 162. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 28. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 7, 184, 195, 216.

<sup>73</sup> With Watergate 1974 the once-popular Nixon underwent a rapid—and inescapable—reframing: the President was a crook; taxpayer dollars were going to terrorists and nun-rapists and child-murderers; the CIA sneakily planted mines; the White house circumvented the law and the Constitution; that the Administration had committed crime rather than neglected to do due diligence or was misguided by its zeal to rescue hostages or was hijacked by rogue CIA Directors or cowboys. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 85-86.

story by investigative journalists or anonymous government leakers would be buried under a new round of daily headlines.<sup>74</sup> That is to say, the new media management was about building up a narrative, rather than hiding any particular action.

Media theory analyzes the usual *modus operandi* of the press, more than it does specific instances of manipulation, propaganda, or censorship *per se*. Larger-scale media campaigns to reshape how the public thought about tobacco, fossil fuels, or the “Vietnam syndrome” were more cost-efficient than fighting to deny each new piece of news after the fact. This allowed for Gramsci’s “war of position” (below, “Ideology and Hegemony”)—but by those wealthy enough to create think tanks and non-governmental organizations out of whole cloth, rather than real activist and working-class organizations.<sup>75</sup>

Media theory also provides ways to differentiate how knowledge is distributed (and restrained) between countries. Models of the role of newspapers in the “public sphere” derived from 18th- and 19th-century Britain, France, and the United States are separate from those of Italy or Latin America. Those newspapers are characterized as clientelistic and partisan, requiring state or private patronage to survive: but that allowed for a different sort of independence, separate from the more commercial logic of competing political parties or of commercial culture industry.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 127. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 113. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 135, 196.

<sup>75</sup> See below, n96. Robinson, “Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?” in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 55, 57.

<sup>76</sup> Jürgen Habermas’s classical model of the “public sphere” was based on the autonomy allowed to British and U.S. newspapers by commercialization (which spurred professionalization as a backlash) and then was threatened by monopolism. Daniel C. Hallin, “Field Theory, Differentiation Theory, and Comparative Media Research,” in Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005): 226-29, 230-34.



Media theorists also provide the means to distinguish news-making institutions from the economic and political factors that sustain those institutions. Pierre Bourdieu analyzes the press as a free-standing “field,” as qualitatively distinguishable from the other human pursuits like science, academia, economy, religion, politics, culture. Editors, journalists, and interviewees are positioned amidst existing forces and relationships, even working to change the field itself.<sup>77</sup> Bourdieuan media theory explores how journalism does not simply buttress the *status quo*, but provides an avenue for social movements to transform relations of power. The media can uniquely designate stories as true, spread testimony and how the witnesses had interpreted it to millions, and underscore the gap between politicians’ promises to those who had voted for them versus their hidden actions.<sup>78</sup> Bourdieu also pointed out that the state—his “political field”—has significant autonomy from even economics (at least in the short term): officials are able to consult nobody else but make the decisions for even the armed forces, to refer to no media other than what they chose.<sup>79</sup>

Noam Chomsky’s media analysis especially focuses on the concept of the *narrative*, which serves an ideological purpose (below, “Ideology and Hegemony”): in the “propaganda

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<sup>77</sup> The intent here is not to dissolve these subjects into abstractions unconnected to any material factor, but to be able to analyze the unique needs and contributions of each of the “fields.” as independent aspects of human behavior. There is no human culture, no human individual, that lacks any one of these dimensions: there is no society that does not have politics, does not use language, does not hear facts or falsehoods at second hand from other people, does not use tools—even state atheism requires strong and definite positions on religion from all its subjects. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in Benson and Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* 2005: 30.

<sup>78</sup> A “maximalist” argument might be that the press is what lets a sustained revolution occur, as in 1790s Paris; more modest would be that political discourse is much more immediately influential on the use of power than economic changes (which are slower). See below, “Ideology and Hegemony,” n143. Benson and Neveu, *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*, 2005: 9-10. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 207.

<sup>79</sup> Though in Bourdieu’s conception all fields are able to independently increase their autonomy, to maneuver against state domination or economic power: priests or journalists repressed in one country could quickly turn to their counterparts abroad (and officers could build a network to catch them, such as Operation Condor). Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in Benson and Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* 2005: 30, 35. Hallin, “Field Theory, Differentiation Theory, and Comparative Media Research,” in *ibid.* 230-33.

model,” narrative 1. maintains a state’s public image, reinforces ideologies, appeals to national mythologies and values, and 2. obfuscates, neutralizes, or rationalizes violence abroad. In Chomsky’s analysis, covert media influence, false ideology, and rhetoric are deployed rather than the cruder techniques associated with dictatorships—open censorship or purely Hobbesian self-interest. He asserts that this hegemony operated because the state cannot force obedience without first building consent, exploiting the usual systems of human meaning-making.<sup>80</sup>

One key definition of “narrative” is whatever is left over after the initial story that supported it has been retracted, after the breaking of new stories and the failure of outright censorship: it continues in the headlines while the corrections are relegated to the back pages weeks after any Congressional debate had ended. Chomsky defines narrative as resilient in the face of exceptions, as defining the burden of proof, as obviating the need for those who adhere to it to argue with dissenters or even make assertions.<sup>81</sup> This narrative can contradict any actual evidence—up to a point, but then it is abandoned for a new narrative.<sup>82</sup>

Chomsky emphasizes media manipulation because the U.S. state is limited “in the capacity to control its population by [open] force, and must therefore rely more heavily on the more subtle devices of imagery and doctrine”: Antonio Gramsci’s hegemony was not defined by lower-class assent to a state “project,” but by consensus between the leaders of the groups (new or

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<sup>80</sup> Explicit censorship has two weak points: 1. covering up misdeeds can threaten even military regimes once they’re exposed—redoubling the exposure; and 2. censors have to be loyal enough to believe that they are restricting false rumors, and so can miss precisely what they’re supposed to be looking for (see Chapter 1, “5: Criminality and Extremism,” n187). That means a hegemony that the state is attempting to enforce through the media, and thus is riddled with vulnerabilities that dissidents can seize. See below, “Ideology and Hegemony,” n139. Benson and Neveu, “Introduction: Field Theory as a Work in Progress,” in Benson and Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* 2005: 9-10. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 256. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 26-27.

<sup>81</sup> Those really dedicated to a narrative enter a classic paradox of knowledge—they only become more defensive and resistant when hearing contradictory knowledge, and this applies to presidents and generals. Nobody really *believes* that they are willfully deceived or deliberately villainous. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 114, 118. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 9. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 173. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 190.

<sup>82</sup> This is then cited as proof that “the system works,” that media coverage of an issue has always *been* adequate. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv, 34.

old) that did obtain representation in a civilian government.<sup>83</sup> Another significant advantage is that a particular narrative does not have to be widely- or deeply-held: as long as it is the only story presented and publicly discussed, as long as it is not *seriously* questioned, that is enough. If the press keeps up the false consensus, then the public is free to believe whatever it wants: true stories are limited to retractions in the back pages, weeks or months after the false headlines. Therefore, media management does not demand the buildup of *consensus*, just *adherence* in public.<sup>84</sup> In this model of media influence, deceit is secondary to ensuring the exclusion of alternative interpretations of the facts. This dissertation uses a narrower definition of “narrative” than Chomsky does: “narrative” only means a consistent, cause-and-effect plot or story, with specific actors, places, and events<sup>85</sup>—rather than Chomsky’s catch-all synonym for contemporary consensus, media framing, or hegemony.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Though Gramsci is applied to states with militaries far stronger than the civil government, with separate agendas and “history” (Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security,” n70). Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 256.

<sup>84</sup> The polls would be shaped by the narrative—agenda-setting: e.g., the polls would ask not “should the U.S. government intervene in country X,” but “what should be done about country X?” Andreas Glaeser, *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 57. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 34.

<sup>85</sup> The major narratives appearing in this dissertation include the United States is under threat from foreigners; Honduras is a fledgling democracy and Oasis of Peace (against the provocations of the deceitful Sandinistas); the Nicaraguan Revolution has been betrayed; the Contra War forced U.S. patriots to act as wickedly as the bloodthirsty, underhanded Red villains themselves (Chapter 8, “Conclusion”). Something “hegemonic” (below) would require that actual opposition was removed or labeled as discredited, while expected opponents concerned themselves only with *how* the war should be conducted, not *whether* it should be—Phil Donahue and Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) were pushed out of their positions, but it was endorsements by the likes of Christopher Hitchens or Sen. John Kerry (D-Massachusetts) that reversed the public profile of the Iraq War: now it could no longer remain within the frame of a war caused by oil or by creationists—now factions in the United States had agreed that *something* had to be done about Iraq, and the only dissidence was over *what* to do. “Narrative” would also cover the broadest contexts such as Cold-War anticommunism—or those narratives particularly frustrating to history undergraduates, such as the “fall of Rome” or the popular belief that most all authorities between the 6th and 16th centuries held that the Earth was flat. Even if it were no longer taught by grade- or middle-school teachers, the flat-Earth myth will still persist because it “had” to have happened: this matches Stanley Cohen’s observation that moral panics are never arbitrary, but resonate with preexisting currents within a society. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 150-51. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

<sup>86</sup> Chomsky’s “narrative” can also be criticized as evading the need to determine whether the press and politicians are sincere believers, are deceiving themselves, are cunningly lying, and so on. His “narrative” brackets off the question of whether the audience accepts it or privately doubts it while pretending to go along only to avoid trouble.

1980s media narratives were aimed at endorsing the Reagan Administration's actions rather than at giving the public any understanding of foreign relations. These were clichéd scenarios where one side attacked the United States or its allies unprovoked, and the other defended itself (while being unfairly accused of imperialism, and its ungrateful Western European allies criticized Washington). In this worldview, one side of the sides perpetrated terrorism that targeted civilians, the other had unfortunate collateral damage as a side-effect of regrettably-necessary operations. Reagan's new rhetoric and foreign policy was justified by narrative—budget-breaking military buildup framed as self-defense; intervention overseas, justified as supporting self-determination and electoral democratization; righteousness of U.S. cause, but also constant threat and victimization by foreigners (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives”). They justified censorship and punishment of dissent against such “subversives” as the National Council of Churches or the North American Congress on Latin America.<sup>87</sup>

Coverage of U.S. foreign policy by the “mainstream” (or commercial<sup>88</sup>) news fulfills the role of an ideology. It was not just the state's secrecy but the nature of the news that consistently prevented the public from understanding foreign events, from knowing what their elected representatives were actually doing.<sup>89</sup> Unless they were historians or specialists, the Reagan-era public

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<sup>87</sup> Narratives need coherence and explanation; they have a level of consensus that let those employing the narratives draw on (and lay claim to) national collective memory. Use of narrative allows for officials to deem certain ideologies and concepts obvious and commonsensical—and that therefore dissent was obfuscation of the facts, making excuses for the crimes of the enemy state, a sign that one was not a “true” member of the national community. Peacebuilding requires new narratives—bottom-up small groups that resist, construct new narratives, and disseminate them—but they can also be top-down, radiating from a center like a new government during a “democratic transition.” Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 126. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 48. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 351, 354. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv, 181, 205.

<sup>88</sup> As opposed to alternative press, investigative journalism (including by the mainstream Associated Press, United Press International, etc.), or academic writing. The framing of “commercial” or “for-profit” press is also to contrast with “mainstream,” a framing which tacitly implies some reason to believe that *The Washington Post* or *Time* should be particularly objective, careful, contextual than any other source, just because they are national-level periodicals. There is no reason to assume that even the Honduran news is particularly accurate: even the canniest investigative journalist is not a historian, statistician, etc. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 145-46.

<sup>89</sup> To coin a phrase, “history is what news becomes”: a perspective of even a few days can show how rapidly a story can change, of how the initial stories contradict the later retractions. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 177.

were presented with no sources of foreign current events other than U.S. newspaper and TV reports. A completely unreal picture of the world can be presented not just to the general public but to the state decision-makers themselves (below, “Ideology and Hegemony”).<sup>90</sup> The “fourth estate” also maintains its image as “a countervailing force, a critical tool,” the *sine qua non* of democracy,<sup>91</sup> since voter knowledge of what officials are actually planning and doing is indeed more crucial than the mere ability to periodically elect them.<sup>92</sup>

International events are framed as “crises,” dominating the headlines and then discarded. The events were presented without their history, without background, continuity, or linkage to other events—the only discussion was *how* to deal with the threat. Barbara Tuchman notes that treating world events as simply *happening* to innocent U.S. citizens, unexplained and out of the blue, is not a neutral frame but the foundation of the ideology fundamental to U.S. foreign-policy decision-making, legitimating state decisions and avoiding criticism.<sup>93</sup>

Even if Cambodians and Nicaraguans had been forced to live through U.S. foreign policy, there was never any supervening need in the newsrooms or Congressional committee chambers to cover the decisions behind the bombing. Tuchman says that “as ideology, news blocks inquiry by preventing an analytic understanding through which social actors can work to under-

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<sup>90</sup> Senators or even CIA Operations officers are no more likely to *know* more about any particular target country (Chapter 1, “The Ignorant Armies”) than an academic specialist, or even the proverbial reader with a good selection of subscriptions (“regular readers of daily newspapers have prediction rates that rival the success of experts,” Goodman writes). Gramscian historians of the Cold War doubt that there was even a “consensus” within the United States 1945-65, just a media that rarely bothered to investigate overseas intervention in general (though that raises the question of whose consensus defines “hegemony”— broader social groupings, or simply the national press?). Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed., 2002: 37. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 350. Grovogui and Leonard, “Uncivil Society,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 174. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 60-61. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 4, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in Benson and Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and The Journalistic Field* 2005: 42.

<sup>92</sup> Above, “Theories of Covert Warfare,” n34.

<sup>93</sup> The commercial media was the only source of history education for the vast majority of U.S. citizens: “Iran” became boiled down to “Khomeini,” “Nicaragua” to “Ortega.” Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 287. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 177.

stand their own fate” and circumstance. Depriving voters understanding of what had even been done meant that the public had no meaningful control over politics beyond the momentary disputes of the two parties. Public knowledge was increasingly restricted to the end stage of the policy process: policies now had to be “sold” to minimize a swing to the other party: Robert M. Entman describes such media-centered campaigns as allowing “democracy without citizens.”<sup>94</sup>

Few of the covert wars launched since 1953 have been absolutely secret—but they were *sufficiently* secret. The 1981-90 wars across three continents—labelled the “Reagan” or “Casey Doctrine” (Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine”)—further reduced the level of covertness: the wars were backed by Congressional funding and Presidential publicity. Only a few covert wars were controversial enough for their leaks to be made into scandals, reframed as acts against the law and Constitution.<sup>95</sup> Even the journalists who were actually sent to a target country could not be trained experts in that country’s history: after the Vietnam War intervention was deemed dangerous mostly for threatening to let the President send thousands of troops into a “quagmire.”

Foreign-policy journalists can fail by accepting the “bargain” of maintaining “access” to a powerful source—in exchange for not applying too much pressure; journalists can overemphasize getting the “scoop” out first rather than investigating the story, or not challenge the hundreds of bought or ideological “counter-experts” from the think tanks. Simple editorial pressure—Chomsky’s “flak”—was easy to orchestrate for those with deep pockets: lawsuits, “astroturf”

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<sup>94</sup> That is, the assumption that journalism is intimately connected with democracy more than any other profession—in epistemic terms, that its warrant comes from informing voters what politicians are really planning. Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 26-27. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 16. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 39. Jesse Owen Hearn-Branaman, “What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism,” in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 28. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 303. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 180.

<sup>95</sup> Gregory F. Treverton, *Covert Action: The Limits of Intervention in the Postwar World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987): 188.

campaigns that counterfeited a grassroots movement, public-relations-crafted letter-writing campaigns, phone calls, petitions.<sup>96</sup>

It is easy for press bureaus to just depend on officials, reporters “embedded” with military forces—or never leaving the capital cities such as Saigon or San Salvador. Journalists did always report the incidents of torture, mass murder, rape, or bombing—but at second hand, keeping them unwarranted “unconfirmed reports”—unconfirmed because no officer or official had *confirmed* them. This was not due to any “fog of war,” but an operational framing—that they were still only rumors, that the processes of verification and warranting were not possible. By 1968 more critical editors and journalists became aware that they were routinely lied to—that the Johnson Administration itself had been misled by overoptimistic reports from Saigon, that secrecy was a euphemism for embarrassing or even criminal activities.<sup>97</sup>

Chomsky’s “propaganda model” emphasizes the boundaries of “permissible” discourse: certain dissenting ideas might be brought up in the press, but only with the intent of portraying them as beyond the pale, rare, radical, held by only a minority of thinkers. Hegemony is reinforced because even critics stay within these boundaries—that they are “mainstream” and the academics and critics are departing from acceptable discourse into radicalism.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> This full-court corporatist press took the followers of Rachel Carson and Ralph Nader by shock; the New Right fought for hegemony via institutions, rather than simply pushing the particular agenda of one particular industry (Chapter 10, “Conclusion”), a sophisticated philosophy of science to stymie it). Hearn-Branaman, “What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism,” in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 27. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 23-24, 26-27.

<sup>97</sup> Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 99. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 80-81, 134. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 286.

<sup>98</sup> Such narratives include that those deciding U.S. foreign policy are well-intentioned, that they respond to events rather than provoke them, that U.S. use of force is only to counter expansionism abroad, or that foreign-policy disasters are departures from centuries of U.S. values. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 170, 229-30. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 53-55, 57, 113. Chomsky, ed. James Peck, *The Chomsky Reader* 1987: 132. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xi.

Rather than  censorship, these limits are unspoken, and thus invisible, simply the  fair rules of neutrality and objectivity, as opposed to  criticism,  alternative press, or  advocate journalism. “The more the debate rages within permissible bounds, the more effectively the unquestioned premises” are reinforced by the absence of alternatives.<sup>99</sup> Those few activists who insisted that the FMLN could legitimately defend itself against the death-squad state, that the 1982 Salvadoran elections might be of limited legitimacy, or who investigated massacres on the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan frontiers were condemned as conveying falsehoods coming from Havana or Moscow. Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori note that the press attitude to any particular target country is “what must be done” about it—not *whether* any action should be taken against it. The goal of overthrowing the Sandinistas was never questioned by this mainstream press, despite a scandal that nearly ousted a President.<sup>100</sup>

Reagan’s 1984-86 campaign to restore Contra aid insisted that Nicaragua was launching a reign of terror and gearing up to invade every one of its neighbors. The press could express its hesitation—but going further and *asking* for specific details or pushing back against the campaign’s entire premise “would have implied that the President was either a liar or a fool, hardly a politically neutral message.” Those voting against Contra aid always made sure to damn the Sandinistas ahead of time—losing the fight for discourse before they began it. The issue was not any disagreement about acknowledged  facts, but over their  framing: the limits and language of

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<sup>99</sup> Chomsky notes that these “radical” views would be mainstream in Western Europe. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 124-25, 127. Hearn-Branaman, “What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism,” in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 29. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv. Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*: 5.

<sup>100</sup> Herman and Chomsky themselves noted it would be unsurprising to see the middle-of-the-road, corporate media taking a systemically anti-Cold-War position against the white House, no matter what the decade: the pushback from the anti-Central American peace movement was less definitive than that against the Vietnam War. James C. Cox and Alvin I. Goldman, “Accuracy in Journalism: An Economic Approach,” in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 193. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 26. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 138, 147. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 167, 286.



the debate remained those of the resurgent Cold Warriors. The Senate authorized millions in lethal aid scheduled to start November 1986.<sup>101</sup>

Angolan or Polish victims were “worthy” of sympathetic coverage—Palestinian, Turkish, or Timorese ones not. This domestic aspect to the Casey Doctrine went beyond the mere “double standards” one might expect: even Pol Pot’s obscenities were easily blamed on the Vietnamese who had invaded to oust him, everyone killed before *and* after 1978 now laid at Hanoi’s feet, serving double duty. Elections in designated enemy countries were simply proof of rigging and strong-arming of the populace. Contrariwise, “demonstration elections” to secure U.S. funding for a state, now reframed as on the road to “democratization,” were “pseudo-events” aimed at U.S. media attention and securing funding—votes held only because the U.S. press was paying attention. The countries were framed as “fledgling democracies,” and any repression or deceit were just growing pains.<sup>102</sup>

But adherence to the interventionist ideology did not spontaneously arise: it had to be constructed, perpetuated, enforced. A key neoconservative narrative of the 1980s was that the press was overly critical of Reaganism: in fact they simply supported a Cold-War line that was not as right-wing as that of the new Administration. The accused media was obligated to condemn themselves as being insufficiently patriotic or credulous towards Reagan, or not accusatory enough against designated enemy states such as Bulgaria or Vietnam.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Chapter 3, “The Global News War.” Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 74-75. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 231-32. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 87, 89, 92.

<sup>102</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 12. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 31, 155, 167, 186-87. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 90, 139, 261.

<sup>103</sup> Such as the purges of the 1948-53 Red Scare, the constant intelligence exaggeration of the Soviet threat, then the New Right backlash after 1975. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 115-16, 167. Entman, “Framing Media Power,” in D’Angelo and Kuypers, eds., *Doing News Framing Analysis* 2015: 331. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 301. Robinson, “Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?” in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 56.

Ironically, the press was the main vehicle to convey the attacks against itself by neoconservative institutions such as Accuracy in Media and the Office of Public Diplomacy intent on “disciplining” the reporters away from investigative journalism (Chapter 3). Figures such as Claire Sterling (Chapter 2, “Casey’s New Langley”) refused to appear unless their critics were excluded, citing both the critics and their own potential (and self-imposed) absence from the screen as proof of a massive coordinated Soviet campaign that extended from the Salvadoran countryside to the White House press pool. Washington’s Freedom House had condemned “im-balance” in the reporting on El Salvador 1982, its leader pleading, “Must free institutions be overthrown because of the very freedom they sustain?” He demanded more trust in the White House and less unfavorable coverage of the covert wars.<sup>104</sup> *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense* figures Arturo Cruz, Sr. and Jr., condemned the U.S. press as releasing an unrelenting barrage of pro-Sandinista propaganda while the underrepresented Contras could barely be heard on Capitol Hill. Lt. Col. North insisted that “With few exceptions, the Sandinistas received unusually gentle treatment in the American press,” as did the FMLN. Reporters actually romanticized the Contras while accusing “the media” of romanticizing the Nicaraguan Revolution.<sup>105</sup>

Such accusations were visibly false to anyone with knowledge of Central America, but the more the press condemned Managua to “immunize” itself, the more strength it lent to Administration accusations that it was pro-Managua. Chomsky’s propaganda model does not give a historical analysis for the 1980s’ atmosphere, of the New Right carefully attacking academics and

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<sup>104</sup> Chomsky quips that Freedom House upbraids the media for not having been more enthusiastic about Vietnam than “U.S. intelligence, the military command, [or] Johnson’s ‘Wise Men.’” Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 5-6. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 22, 28, 104, 119, 169-70, 226. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: x.

<sup>105</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 209-10.

investigative journalists,<sup>106</sup> nor the near-failures that would have exposed the atrocities the neo-conservatives supported, but also their own status as reckless amateurs and ideologues.

Noam Chomsky's "Propaganda Model" is more complex and flexible than just asserting that a political-media elite constrains a relatively inert public by defining the limits of which frames or conclusions were "acceptable" or "mainstream."<sup>107</sup> Reagan deployed rhetoric of a worldwide movement of democratic freedom fighters in order to justify the actual practices of the Reagan Doctrine: violence and lawlessness, terrorism and drug trafficking. The exposure of these actions contradicted the rhetoric and allowed the revelation of arms-for-hostages and Hasenfus's shutdown to become a proper *scandal*—Reagan's interventions meant he accumulated a level of personal liability.<sup>108</sup>

The Propaganda Model has been criticized for providing no details of the necessary mechanisms to suppress a story, or the new White House's *need* to attack the press and Senate 1981-89. Rather than a triumph of the Cold Warriors over any dissidents or the natural domi-

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<sup>106</sup> Chomsky insists that Iran-Contra exemplified the self-proclaimed U.S. right "to rob, to exploit and to dominate" anyone anywhere in the world—to mislead the public while acting in their name, to see the U.S. public as a key enemy. Chomsky does hold that the reaction to the Vietnam War and the Church Committee alarmed political elites enough to demand a more obedient media, a political culture less questioning about interventionism. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 1. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 53-55, 57. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 1, 41, 209-11, 256-57. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 3. Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed., 2002: 15. Hearn-Branaman, "What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism," in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 32. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 201. Robinson, "Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?" in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 54-56. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 16. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 168.

<sup>107</sup> The Propaganda Model has also been criticized for anonymizing the journalists, ignoring sociology's examination of their use of the institutional values of their employers and editors—which provided opportunities for resistance by investigating on their own. Hearn-Branaman, "What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism," in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 25-26, 33. Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., "Conclusion," *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 285.

<sup>108</sup> He emphasizes that it was the media "enforcers" of the narrative who were taken by surprise—Congress and the White House knew better, while the press was used to conceal the actions from the public, going along without knowing what it was covering up. Chomsky, ed. James Peck, *The Chomsky Reader* 1987: 132. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 11. Christian Fuchs, "Propaganda 2.0: Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model in the Age of the Internet, Big Data and Social Media," in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 84.

nance of a secretive state over the public press, the Reagan Administration's control of Central American news was a *post-hoc*, backfilling effort at damage control, for the reason that the "Teflon President" could *not* defend the Contra War. Even successes at managing narratives drove the Reagan Administration into a corner: narratives of a nation restored to its post-WWII position as "the world's moral leader," of a fighter of terrorism, a country that "just said no" to drugs<sup>109</sup>—those could not survive the news of negotiations with cocaine kingpins, hostage-takers, and an assortment of brutal murderers.

"Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist."

—John Maynard Keynes, 1936

"They are lying. We know they are lying. They know we know they are lying. Yet, they are still lying."

—Alexander Solzhenitsyn (attributed)

### Ideology and Hegemony

Various schools of analysis define *ideology* primarily as a way to obscure and distort reality, with a broad enough consensus to be effective across social and political groups.<sup>110</sup> Media analysts go further, saying that all U.S. press coverage of foreign policy falls under this definition, effectively concealing the reality of overseas actions from the U.S. public.<sup>111</sup> Marxian theorists define ideology as including 1. dominant falsehoods (transmitted via churches, media, schools), 2. explicit class self-interest (including the ideologies of middle-class revolutionaries),

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<sup>109</sup> Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 109-10. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 155-56. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xv, 33, 184, 261-96. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 71. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 302. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 557. Robinson, "Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?" in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 56. James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 82-111. Christopher Sharrett, review of *Manufacturing Consent* by Herman and Chomsky, *Cinéaste* 28:1 (Winter 2002): 49. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 420, 655. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 216, 373.

<sup>110</sup> And appeals to ideology or false ideology can simply be accused of being vanguards' last resort if the working classes happen to disagree with their revolutionary doctrine. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 1. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 287.

<sup>111</sup> Since of course few U.S. citizens have personal or professional experience in a target country. Under this interpretation, "sustained coverage of foreign policy" is almost synonymous with a "scandal." Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 59.

and 3. class experiences that supposedly can not even be understood by others. Ideology provides a systematic distortion that means the pathological nature of an action eludes the perpetrator<sup>112</sup>—key to driving the covert-warfare cycle forward (Chapter 1, “8: After the End”).

The concept of ideology also proves useful because it is not limited to what is publicly articulated—not actively denied or openly distorted—but also what is *not* said or done. Methods of knowledge-making can obscure truth as well as reveal it. Ideology prevents the recognition and naming of social problems, lets certain topics be avoided, lets realities be replaced with rhetorical conceits.<sup>113</sup> In Antonio Gramsci’s interpretation, hegemony serves its function as common discourse, as the boundaries of even vicious debate: it covers a diversity of worldviews, while keeping them inadequate as instruments of criticism, as compatible with existing power structures—to render those structures “natural” and hard to recognize, obscuring their backing by state force.<sup>114</sup>

Ideology avoids falsifiability by means of vague generalization, or simply by making sure that whatever corrected the headlines of the week before stayed on the proverbial back pages. The institutions transmitting hegemonic norms pretend they are neutral, objective, and universal—“views from nowhere.”<sup>115</sup> Ideologies must avoid detail or explicitness,<sup>116</sup> which would in-

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<sup>112</sup> While Chomsky argues it is *not* an unintended pathology. Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 34. Charles W. Mills, “Ideology,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 102.

<sup>113</sup> See also Chapter 10, “Conclusion.” Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 179.

<sup>114</sup> For instance, Witness for Peace insisted that they were patriots, Christians, veterans, and middle-class parents—tacitly excluding the categories of “activists” or critics of U.S. foreign policy (see Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right,” n174). They concentrated on Contra atrocities rather than the accomplishments of the Nicaraguan Revolution. The anti-Salvadoran-War campaign dealt with similar dilemmas, but did not work to visibly distance itself from the actual FMLN, even if it could criticize actions or factionalism. Benson and Neveu, eds., “Introduction,” *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* 2005: 9-10. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 32. Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016.

<sup>115</sup> Which raises the opposite problem with critical theories—that any standard can be picked apart, “unmasked” as ideological and false, any statement undermined by what it supposedly *really* “means.” Lorraine Code, “Epistemic Responsibility,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 95.

<sup>116</sup> James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 150.

crease their vulnerability to discrediting news stories: this contrasts them to propaganda campaigns, which are visibly *not* implicit. That provides ideology with its strength: finding a single “breaking” fact would not automatically free the working classes to perceive their own reality for the first time.<sup>117</sup>

Ideology is what allows for explanations for contradictions to narratives in a way that does not require further examination or criticism—ideology is *rationalization*, rather than *reasoning*.<sup>118</sup> It allows the dismissal of incompatible facts and frames—to withstand contrary news that let a reader piece together what might really be happening, to fend off the failure of cover-ups, or endure longer-term investigations: historians are perfectly free to write whatever they wanted about covert warfare decades after the fact.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, hegemony does not require an ideology or world-concept that is all-encompassing, able to fend off any challenges: vagueness lets ideology appear to be flexible enough to deal with exceptions (though only up to a point).<sup>120</sup> Analysts of ideology define it by its robustness—its ability to withstand the public debunking or

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<sup>117</sup> Karl Mannheim’s own model of *Ideologiekritik* aimed to simply unmask “false consciousness” imposed by the propertied classes on the working classes. Here ideology pretended to be natural, objective *fact* but could never grasp the totality of society, adequately cover historical fact, or handle the constant exceptions that occurred in reality. But unmasking hypocrisies and pointing out contradictions were not enough to defeat an ideology, or prevent a new one from being quickly assembled and gaining dominance thereafter. Theodor Adorno noted that orthodox Marxism had been botched by the assumption that simply revealing the truth would make it detonate across the working class—that the worker’s movement simply has to expose a contradiction and the revolution would come. Leon Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge: A Comparative Study in the Theory of Ideology* (New York: Lang, 1994): 31, 51-53, 56, 67, 89-92. James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 150. Robert K. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 45.

<sup>118</sup> It is further defined as *wrongful*, as reifying and naturalizing the social and artificial, as justifying, rationalizing, legitimizing wrongful domination and hierarchy. Critics in turn would counter that such a critique is too Functional-ist, calling society a “cooperative venture for mutual advantage” among rough equals rather than *always* having been an apparatus willing to deploy inequality, iniquity, brutality. Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 1988: 34. Mills, “Ideology,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 104-07.

<sup>119</sup> Butler, “How Low Can Transparency Go?” 2017. Hearn-Branaman, “What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism,” in Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 28. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 51. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 13.

<sup>120</sup> Durkheim, Weber, and especially Foucault say that deviancy is proof that the reigning social metaphysics is dysfunctional, incomplete, inadequate—that hegemony maintains its consensus only as long as enough people seem to go along with it, even if they *are* only pretending. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 35.

the failure of cover-ups.<sup>121</sup> Ideologies are not a passive reflection of socioeconomic structure, because they must cut across class lines. Ideology or hegemony operates by supplying the norms, values, or worldviews that allow people to interpret events, which distribute meaning and values (or “framing,” or epistemic categories) to most all members of society via education, politics, the media across many divisions of class and identity.<sup>122</sup> Gramsci interprets ideology an active and productive system of meanings and “commonsenses,” a way of describing as well as obscuring reality, which even the most marginalized can make use of. Ideologies therefore cannot be pure fabrication or obviously self-contradictory.<sup>123</sup> A ruling ideology’s makes vagueness into a strength, but it cannot be *entirely* made up out of deceit and mystification—its distortions still rely on the reality that they distort.<sup>124</sup>

Gramsci expanded the concept of the “ruling class” into a “dominant coalition” of several subgroups. The coalition 1. supported and was supported by various elements of the state—

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<sup>121</sup> In other words narrative/ideology/hegemony is not *broken* by facts that expose them as false, but is *replaced*. Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge*, 1994: 89. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xv. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 51. Michaela Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge: The Life and Work of Peter L. Berger*, trans. Miriam Geoghegan (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction Publishers, 2013): 24.

<sup>122</sup> The need to avoid disrupting “hegemony” was why the Reagan White House had to rely on fake independent media groups and covert threats to individual journalists: its own pronouncements about “freedom fighters” and “fledgling democracies” limited its ability to act. Officials also present hegemony as a national project, as unifying everyone in the nation regardless of distinction of class or faction. Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 129. Brian Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 70, 87. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 154-56. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 52-54. Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 118-19.

<sup>123</sup> This definition includes common sense and folklore as measures of subordinated real experience—not orthodox Marxian “false consciousness”: Gramsci sought to describe the politics of how peasants, proletarians, women, minorities organized themselves and sought literate allies. Robert Bocock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 59. George Hoare and Nathan Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci: His Life, Thought and Legacy* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016): 92. Branwen Gruffydd Jones, “‘Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories’: Possibilities and Contradictions of Emancipatory Struggles in the Current Neocolonial Condition,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 211. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 42, 45. James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 162, 168.

<sup>124</sup> If ideology were entirely composed of self-evident fabrication and contradiction, it would convince nobody; ideology serves ruling-class interests tacitly, rather than out of a deliberate plan. E. Doyle McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 28, 42.

military, but also legislative and judiciary power—and 2. must include or at least deal with the country’s subordinated and marginalized groups—immigrants, minority groups, smallholders, proletarians, *campesinos*: this alliance can be disarticulated during times of crisis.<sup>125</sup> Ideology also lets these classes hide their secrets from even themselves, to transmute their weaknesses into seemingly-unchallengeable strengths.<sup>126</sup>

Gramsci’s state is an institution dedicated to remaining cohesive and enduring, managing crises to keep them from becoming too acute, able to use selective force against even the most wealthy and well-connected. It is not a neutral arbiter but the *most* interested party, with institutional motives of its own, such as keeping members of the state and public pliable or ensuring a self-perpetuating political class or military “bureaucratic authoritarianism.”<sup>127</sup> “Civil society” is

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<sup>125</sup> Politics, culture, or religion had to be analyzed separately, since they were not simply alibis for economic motives—instruments of a ruling bourgeoisie—even if they remained subordinate to power and force. Gramsci explicitly theorized his coalition by drawing on the Italian experience: the proletariat–bourgeois relationship that Marx drew from France and Britain had more intermediaries in the Latin world—clergy, landowners who retained their political independence, civil servants, even Freemasonic lodges (which the new states worked to replace with mass party politics). Ideology is also needed by bourgeois ruling classes because their habit of competition causes rivalries, *preventing* unified action as a class and requiring the state as a “tiebreaker”—always reliant on the enforcers of the state that they had constructed. In Italy the industrial bourgeoisie of the north were unable to develop a hegemony, simply allying with the poorer landowners of the South, a configuration which repeats in Latin America. Gramsci does not just “bring back the state” but the civil state—not just the state as wielder of rationalized force (which still leaves the civil state at the mercy of its army) nor as an enforcer of class interest. He interprets civil politics—that is, the *absence* of overt repression—as the main way that the working class were diverted and smothered, as the main route by which overt force was legitimized. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 51, 54. Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* 1989: 13-34, 41. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 122, 159-62.

<sup>126</sup> For example, the bourgeoisie must disguise its class origins in the factory system, which provides their income and influence. Elected party representatives must believe (or act like they do) that their power and opportunities for profiteering are earned by their own merit and that their voters approve of all their actions, since otherwise they always had the option of voting someone else in (no matter if working-class representatives never happened to win elections). This contrasts to the ideology around, say, hereditary nobility. The worst Cold-War atrocities were still done under cover of a U.S. “moral authority” drawn from World War II (Chapter 1, “0: Premises”): few candidates seriously questioned covert warfare even after failure and blowback. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 150.

<sup>127</sup> However there is a division—either 1. civil governments can pressure top officers, or 2. militaries dominate the formal state, where even NCOs can pressure Presidents, kidnap oligarchs, even kill their own superiors. Karl Polanyi argues that (nominal) independence of the state is what allows its intervention in the economy as the only way to manage the externalities of capitalism and allow for “social reproduction,” which made labor available for economic production. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 52. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 97, 99. Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 24. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996.



also not necessarily a counterforce to the state—*weaker* when the formal state is weaker, especially since weaker states have stronger militaries and rely more on force.<sup>128</sup> Gramsci emphasized state and the culture as the location where the meanings and values that maintained or transformed social reality operated (while the changes of economic history were far slower, and depended on state action).<sup>129</sup>

Precepts and ideologies do not necessarily have to be privately believed by individuals, as long as it hegemonic tropes or stock phrases are publicly repeated or adhered to. If a story is not on the proverbial television, is it news?<sup>130</sup> Gramsci writes that the purpose of hegemony or ideology is to hold together the power-holders in a society, rather than to convince the working classes.<sup>131</sup> To Gramsci, cultural politics is not an “irradiation” of a singular perspective into an inert mass of subjects,<sup>132</sup> not a top-down consensus or imposed narrative by an elite hoarding secret knowledge. Gramsci’s elites are *part* of culture, themselves subject to narratives and tacit beliefs, rather than cunningly reengineering society.<sup>133</sup> Ideology is why decision-makers are unable to recognize their own pathological, counterproductive behaviors. Ideology is why holders of power are able to make the most secret, unaccountable decisions ignorant of the needed knowledge.

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<sup>128</sup> Gramscian theory emphasizes newer states like Italy, Germany, and Russia with weaker civil governments—and stronger militaries—over classical Marxism’s study of France and Britain. Holman, Otto. “Internationalisation and Democratization: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 227.

<sup>129</sup> And, again, the state was the only institution able to deliberately alter the economy. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 33.

<sup>130</sup> Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 56. Remedios, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge* 2003: viii. Robinson, “Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?” in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 55-56.

<sup>131</sup> Outright clichés and stereotypes are likelier to be noticed as such by the audience, to be called out or “reappropriated” by the target groups themselves. Grovogui and Leonard, “Uncivil Society,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 173.

<sup>132</sup> This especially contradicts Louis Althusser’s concept of the individual subject constituted from outside by the Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses (school, church, media). While the dominant class/bloc organized state, family, school, sexual relations, religion around its class relations, Gramsci’s state is as much subject to language, literature, journalism, law, policing as anyone else—giving avenues for change. Bocock, *Hegemony*, 1986: 15-16, 36. Hyug Baeg Im, “Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci,” *Asian Perspective* 15:1 (Spring-Summer 1991): 152. Francis Remedios, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge: An Introduction to Steve Fuller’s Social Epistemology* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003): 18.

<sup>133</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 48.

Gramsci's elites are under the *most* illusion, while the working classes still had a worldview that was not completely false.<sup>134</sup> This produces a significant level of fragility—the evaporation of Reagan's slogans of “Just Say No” to drugs or “we do not negotiate with terrorists” with Iran-Contra 1986, or Nicolae Ceausescu's incomprehension as all the old clichés suddenly ceased to work in Bucharest 1989.<sup>135</sup>

As an tool of analysis, hegemony does come with several conceptual gaps.<sup>136</sup> It might be reduced to lazy “everybody knows” clichés—the U.S. public embraced a rightward “backlash” in the late 1970s, that Washington and Langley simply pursued hawkish interventionism regardless of cost—dodging the need to analyze the covert wars, cover-ups, and scandals that nearly ousted Reagan himself. If it is a paradigm so unnoticeable, so impossible for members of society to “think your way out of,” how would it even be possible to define and analyze?<sup>137</sup> At the maximum level of generalization, hegemony can be everyday assumptions that not even the furthest-

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<sup>134</sup> Gramsci calls it a “contradictory” rather than a “false consciousness,” since however much ruling-class hegemony their worldview had to incorporate they still have a working-class or marginalized perspective. Mills, “Ideology,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 102.

<sup>135</sup> The context that supplied words with their meanings inverted overnight in this situation, revealing that everyone—even the speakers had only been pretending to go along. These shifts transmute narratives that were once deemed mandatory or neutral into “deviant” ones. One day, all the “voluntary” petitions of support and decades-old slogans stopped *functioning*. Millions had publicly pretended to believe concepts that they privately believed false, the public (unintentionally) deceiving the Party rather than the other way around. Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 10-11.

<sup>136</sup> For this reason, this dissertation does not *just* make a “Gramscian” analysis of news of covert war in Honduras: hegemony joins media theory, narrative, framing, and social epistemology to cover the apparatus to suppress true news.

<sup>137</sup> So, tautologically, hegemony is tasked with both 1. managing dissent by limiting debate and 2. blocking dissent so certain concepts are given circulation (here defined as “mainstream”) only briefly and with the intent of dismissing them. Is it a comprehensive and inescapable consensus explaining everyone from the hardest right wing to Maoist splinter cults, or simply the agreement of a well-insulated political elite and the press dependent on them? If, after all, the “subaltern” is defined as those never recorded except in the words of the authorities, how can theorists and historians really claim to describe the details of a “counterhegemonic” project that was never put to print, but could be glimpsed and reconstructed during points of unrest and revolution? What *does* allow people to discover the falsity of their society's ideologies, given their function in integrating the individual to their institution or society? Michael Joseph Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Allen and Unwin [1979] 1992): 92. Julian Saurin, “The Formation of Neo-Gramscians in International Relations and International Political Economy: Neither Gramsci Nor Marx,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 34, 38.

out dissident can escape it, visible only decades later.<sup>138</sup> Chomsky draws his concept that hegemony is necessary to civilian democracies in the absence of regular visible force from Gramsci: hegemony is a harder goal for police states with little else than batons and bayonets to support them. A purely “Hobbesian” state would lack the moral credibility and law-and-order ethics required to justify human-rights violations.<sup>139</sup> But Gramsci theorizes hegemony as a constant contention of partial perspectives—allowing once-hidden facts to escape constraints and enter the wider public consciousness.<sup>140</sup> The dominant as well as the popular groups must mobilize a counterweight to the state, must contend in a “war of position.”<sup>141</sup> Using Gramsci therefore allows analysis of where hegemonies, ideologies, narratives, etc., prove to be most *vulnerable*.

“Counterhegemony” is the name Gramsci gives to the process of moving beyond the hegemonic process itself, about the ability to contradict dominant narrative when it is forced to shift. Within the hegemony people are free to argue as much as they like otherwise—over agreed terms, between the existing boundaries. Grassroots identification and sharing of contradictions is

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<sup>138</sup> Chomsky theorizes consensus as operating in the *absence* of force: the public may well avoid “false consciousness” but if there is a consensus among the civil and military agents of power, they can restrict discourse (especially in countries with low mass literacy). But hegemony is a flexible enough concept to be used when there *is* force and lack of public (*i.e.*, civilian) consensus. If only one independent Senator supports a policy that over two-thirds of the public desires despite the best efforts of the political class—*has* “hegemony” even been achieved? “Hegemony” definitely describes the pre-invasion phase of the Iraq War, where Phil Donahue and Bill Moyers were fired while the liberal veteran Sen. John Kerry and the atheist “bulldog” Christopher Hitchens backed it. This effect was much wider than just “breaking” a specific frame of an Administration dominated by oil executives and readers of Tim LaHaye’s apocalyptic novels. The term “hegemony” may also work for the forcible cases of military regimes such as the 1976 Argentinean junta (Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context”; Chapter 8, “Conclusion”) or Turkey’s 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, 2007, and 2016 coups in the name of enforcing a “Kemalist” *laïcité* that even Mustafa Kemal’s own party had pragmatically left behind by the 1940s. These forcefully marked the limits of politicians, academics, and journalists. Blum, “Covert Operations,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 83. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 256. Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 1988: 35. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 187.

<sup>139</sup> The Nazis were especially reliant on euphemism—“enhanced interrogation,” “special treatment,” “night and fog,” “resettlement.” In 1943 the *Schutzstaffel*’s leader and architect of the Holocaust insisted that its perpetrators had all remained *decent* people. Boccock, *Hegemony* 1986: 28. Gill, “Epistemology, Ontology, and the ‘Italian School,’” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 39.

<sup>140</sup> Steve Fuller notes that ideas produced to support one class or set of interests can be used to support another. Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 1988: 57. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 31.

<sup>141</sup> Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in Benson and Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* 2005: 39. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 136.

aimed at shifting these dominant terms—without requiring any dramatic overturning of the state or social order. The press can still critique society, open a social space for members of the public to communicate with other non-politicians.<sup>142</sup>

Chomsky argues that the Vietnam War (which was reframed not just as a failure, or a mistake, but wrong) and the revelations of the Church Committee *did* force a real improvement in the average public knowledge of covert warfare and escalation. This required an increase in covertness to conceal naked state terrorism in Chile or Central America. But this only delayed the activists and journalists who were now able to recognize it, and increased the level of scandal for the White House.<sup>143</sup> No amount of public relations or telegenic rhetoric could “turn the tide” of U.S. public opinion in favor of the Salvadoran military or the Nicaraguan National Guard (especially if it risked direct escalation).<sup>144</sup> Conflicts over witnessing and warranting elsewhere in 1980s Central America have already been analyzed (Chapter 3, “El Mozote” and “Debunked by Being Right”): the stories created and suppressed inside of Honduras were also part of this larger process of trying to shift the worldview of *U.S.* audiences.

Gramsci theorized counterhegemony in order to find a new way of knowing, to bring politics and power into the open, so that they could be opposed and overcome. Dick Pels writes that

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<sup>142</sup> Even if it may leave new narratives, such as “Vietnam” becoming shorthand for U.S. suffering caused by conventional intervention: this still allows room for pro-hegemonic interpretations—the of “low-intensity” or “proxy warfare” to avoid U.S. “boots on the ground,” comfortably fitting within Allen Dulles’s starting premises. Chomsky himself accepts the idea that the United States is inherently violent and expansionist, that it needs an enemy (without accounting for the equally long history of U.S. isolationism)—which few neoconservatives would disagree with. See above, “Media Theory,” n107. Im, “Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci” 1991: 152. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 3. John Schwarzmantel, “Introduction: Gramsci in His Time and in Ours,” in Mark McNally and John Schwarzmantel, eds., *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2009): 9.

<sup>143</sup> It was Iran-Contra that gave Chomsky his prominence, more than his writings on the Vietnam War. He notes that he could give talks in Reagan-era Georgia and Kentucky that he could not have given on even Boston Common in 1968. Manufactured consent had limits, and learning practically anything about what the secret state government *did* will make voters practically into radicals (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”). Chomsky, ed. James Peck, *The Chomsky Reader* 1987: 337. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 5-7. Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed., 2002: 39.

<sup>144</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 306.

Michel Foucault observed that exerting power is when “*others* were performing the action and not you. It was a consequence, not a cause, of collective action. Power ... was in other users’ hands.” Power is never just a brute threat, but an advantage or asymmetry of knowledge: this includes the ability to maintain narratives and restore secrecy after exposure.<sup>145</sup> Gramsci adopted Niccolò Machiavelli’s metaphor of a state as a centaur: the ability to use force and the ability to convince both complement one another. Coercion and consent are not contrary opposites, but part of the same process of statecraft. Military and police obedience is not a given: the armed elements of the state require agreement with a broader consensus as much as schools, churches, and newsrooms.<sup>146</sup>

Hegemony is defined as when force is *not* in play—at least in public, restricted to only the marginalized and the deviant.<sup>147</sup> Gramscians define “crises” as failures of hegemony or consent, coercion as state forces proverbially “showing their hand,” exposing power as backing the social consensus all along.<sup>148</sup> From this interplay between force and assent, Gramsci produced the metaphor of the “war of position,” by analogy of guerrilla harassment of enemy units and supply lines: subgroups that seek change by working within civil society and through party poli-

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<sup>145</sup> Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1993): 106. Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285. Stehr and Meja, “Introduction: The Development of the Sociology of Knowledge and Science,” in *ibid.*: 19.

<sup>146</sup> Though a criticism could be made that there is *too* much emphasis on conformity, consensus, tacit agreement—leaving no *real* way to rebel since a mysterious “system” is still flexible enough to absorb it.

<sup>147</sup> This is more Foucault’s focus. Bourdieu calls the rhetorical equivalent of this force “symbolic violence”: exclusion, silencing, othering, who is defined as not belonging to the “body politic.” Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 52. Grovogui and Leonard, “Uncivil Society,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 173. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 51-52.

<sup>148</sup> Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, trans. Pedro Sette-Câmara (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012): 186. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 4. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 126.

tics to change the existing hegemony and build consensus. Then they are able to engage before the frontal “war of maneuver” to seize the state in a classical revolution.<sup>149</sup>

In public, generals such as Jorge Rafael Videla of Argentina or Gustavo Alvarez Martínez of Honduras had to at least *pretend* to represent the values and aspirations of the civilians that they had barred from all power, in order to defend the actions that they simultaneously denied. The civilians of Chile and Argentina had been forced into atomized passivity by their coup—but this cut the new military regime off from all chance of building the support that earlier, quasi-populist generals might have tapped into. Coercion and repression, especially in the open, are signs of political *weakness* as well as of physical power.<sup>150</sup> Censorship, social disarticulation, the destruction of interpersonal trust are the opposite of the Gramscian definition of hegemony—that they reveal the “beast” aspect of the centaur.”<sup>151</sup>

Gramsci describes hegemony in terms of its flexibility to threats, or boundaries on discourse that even radicals cannot escape—but also as providing a way to identify weak points in a regime even when troops take the streets. Repression indicates that a state is lacking hegemony: the greater the state’s threats, the greater the threat to the state. The risks to President Reagan,

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<sup>149</sup> The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the defeated revolutions in Germany and Hungary 1918-20 had little chance to make their case beforehand: one successfully seized the largely force-based Imperial Russian state, the other was crushed by paramilitaries, *Beamtter* bureaucrats, and political parties which all endured the end of even the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires. “In the East [of Europe], the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous. In the West, there was a proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state tottered, a sturdy structure of civil society was immediately revealed.” Italy’s *biennio rosso* had deeper roots, but its suppression produced the first Fascist dictatorship 1922. Boccock, *Hegemony* 1986: 77. Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, 2012: 93. Grovogui and Leonard, “Uncivil Society”: 170. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 31. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 95.

<sup>150</sup> And even they had to turn to marches, World Cups, public-relations firms, and starting wars with Chile and Britain to keep up the patriotic image and divert from the prison murders they were perpetrating (Chapter 6). Gen. Videla had a brief “honeymoon” with the bourgeoisie as the military failed to bring an end to political violence or the economic improvement it promised. Generally the press, Congress, Catholic Church, international organizations—all crucial—were the sharpest opponents of the 1970s type of regime. Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, 2012: 186. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 117. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 2006: 47, 52.

<sup>151</sup> Violence is therefore not a “breakdown of order” or “Communist subversion” but a “slippage” from the usual concealment of force against its own citizens. Boccock, *Hegemony* 1986: 28. Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, 2012: 186. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 52. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 4, 52. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis*, 1998: 126.

CIA Director Casey, and Gen. Alvarez Martínez came not from any official agency in Washington or Tegucigalpa, but with clergy in the Honduran countryside, the widows of death-squad victims, or an Iowan couple boarding a northbound bus in Managua.

### Frames and Loops

The sociologist Erving Goffman examined the relationship between individuals and institutions—self-presentation in everyday life, or patients’ preservation of the self once inescapably placed into asylums or nursing homes.<sup>152</sup> This provides several concepts applicable to witnesses and the viewers and readers of media, or for the more diffuse behaviors that operate within institutions—even covert warfare itself (above, “Theories of Covert Warfare”). Goffman takes several metaphors from theater—the “backstage,” the roles that doctors and bureaucrats backed by institutionalized power “play.” His subjects act on knowledge, rather than dependent on narratives or “scripts” that they have been socialized into.<sup>153</sup> But Goffman also analyzes the power that lies in getting subjects to “agree to” an institution at the individual level, to proverbially “let it into their head”: institutions draw power from being seen as “self-evident”—as not even needing defending or describing (above, “Ideology and Hegemony”).<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> While media analysis and covert-war studies explicitly emphasize the *lack* of all face-to-face interaction that Goffman specialized in; he expanded to examining the everyday, the taken-for-granted, and re-categorizing it as something to be critically analyzed.

<sup>153</sup> Though he has been criticized for neglecting power and politics, the potential of a society to be changed by its members: that he depicts only people gaming the system, seeking loopholes. Luiz Carlos Baptista, “Framing and Cognition,” in A. Javier Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 57. Bocoock, *Hegemony*, 1986: 7. James J. Chriss, “Goffman as Microfunctionalist,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 184. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 52. Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992): 95. Benjamin McMyler, “Responsibility for Testimonial Belief,” *Erkenntnis* 76:3 (May 2012): 338. Ramón Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman: The Structure of His Sociological Theory Revisited* (London: Routledge, 2016): 37-39.

<sup>154</sup> Goffman focused on ambiguity and avoidance rather than *resistance*: he has also been criticized as unsystematic, focusing on the marginalized and the surprising. Chriss, “Goffman as Microfunctionalist,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy*, 2003: 184. Thomas J. Scheff, “The Goffman Legacy: Deconstructing/Reconstructing Social Science,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 61. Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman* 2016: 37-39.

The main “Goffmanian” concept used in this dissertation is *framing*, already used in media theory to *re-frame*, “spin” a true story into something false without having to commit the efforts required for cover-up and denial (below, “An Anatomy of Denial”). Framing is what allows for the implication, interpretation, or definition of a fact to be changed while the fact itself remains acknowledged (rather than denied, Cohen’s second-degree, “interpretive” denial).

Goffman expanded on framing: he theorized a social consensus similar to ideology, which provided sufficiently-plausible explanations for out-of-context events that were inexplicable under normal rules, that might otherwise contradict what any given individual might know.<sup>155</sup>

Goffman’s frames are used to identify what is “realistic,” versus what is a “put-on” or literally staged. Goffman’s examples of reframing usually use a revelation of falseness: that an alarming or embarrassing assault was a prank, not a robbery—or people initially perceiving a deadly shooting as a car backfiring, firecrackers, or an act. One of his examples is the police carrying “drop” guns to frame their victims as would-be victimizers of the police, reflected in the CIA and Pentagon keeping whole warehouses of Eastern-Bloc arms to plant in target countries to “prove” hidden aggression. Framing is important because “frame-ups” use all the same techniques as the way in which frames normally regulate interactions or give a quick, heuristic guard against the falsehood. Manipulation of the authenticating mechanisms themselves is powerful because any given person is dependent on others for the means to interpret what they perceive. In turn, an exposure, leak, or reframing can itself be exposed as a misdirection, or falsely alleged to be one—and so on.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> This separates a frame from a category, or just the process of interpretation. Burns, *Erving Goffman*, 1992: 257-58. Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 2-3, 28, 30. Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 40, 44.

<sup>156</sup> Burns, *Erving Goffman*, 1992: 257-58, 288-90. J. Angelo Corlett, *Analyzing Social Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996): 28. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 107. Treviño, ed., “Introduction,” in *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 40, 44. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 141. Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman* 2016: 180, 190.



Goffman uses framing as a way to separate “scenes” from one another or to indicate what should be “disattended”—to remain “unseen” although everyone can see it. All attention must be selective, in order to be able to make any sense of the observer’s world.<sup>157</sup> Goffman’s “back-stage” provides enough secrecy from the audience to allow some degree of covert contact between opponents, to maintain communications and keep secret information that might discredit the “performance” of warfare or peace negotiations (Chapter 1, “4: De-Escalation”). “Discrepant” roles like ambassadors or spies can “give the show away” by breaching the front- and back-stage<sup>158</sup>—downed U.S. pilots like Allen Lawrence Pope 1958, Francis Gary Powers 1960, and Eugene Hasenfus 1986.

Goffman explored several other concepts essential to understanding the behavior of the Reagan Administration. “Looping” was coined for the Kafkaesque process where an individual’s natural response of self-defense against attacks is used by the institution to justify further attack: attempts to flee prisons or asylums are remade into proof that their categorization as people who needed to be detained was valid in the first place.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, a target state’s reactions to covert intervention is easily repurposed to justify more interventionism.

“We must therefore take it for granted, that the public and private edifices, so pompously described, were nothing more than irregular masses of stone heaped upon one another; that the celebrated Mexico [*i.e.*, Tenochtitlan] was nothing more than a little town, composed of a multitude of rustic huts, irregularly dispersed,” the Spanish misled by a long sea voyage and by their Catholic fanaticism

—Abbé Guillaume Thomas Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, vol. 2, 1770, trans. J.O. Justamond

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<sup>157</sup> Stagehands, special effects, janitors are not relevant to the performance, or erroneous perceptions such as jailing the innocent. Or similar neighbors having to be “seen not seeing,” even turning on radios and phonographs to cover up the screams during a *desaparición* (see Chapters 6 and 7). Burns, *Erving Goffman*, 1992: 288-89. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 2-3, 207, 210, 222-23, 234, 255. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* 1992: 111, 118-20.

<sup>158</sup> Treviño, ed., “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 36. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* 1992: 43.

<sup>159</sup> A concept useful even in foreign policy—attacks against independent revolutionaries “justified” when they are forced to turn to Moscow for survival. Ann Branaman, “Interaction and Hierarchy in Everyday Life: Goffman and Beyond,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy*, 2003: 111-12. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* 1992: 34. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 35. Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 36.

## An Anatomy of Denial

State crimes are not perpetrated in a social vacuum: their perpetrators and protectors are practically forced to deny the event and to diffuse the reaction once it is (partially) found out. Under this understanding of state criminality, violence and denial are part of governance, rather than a “breakdown” of state rule.<sup>160</sup> Taryn Butler notes that denial and secrecy worked *against* the Reagan Administration itself, forcing it into a defensive, rearguard position against verifiable, highly-damaging events in Central America ever since the 1980 Río Sumpul Massacre. The Administration had to expend significant effort, and survived several near-failures. Reagan’s personal popularity, acting ability, or any supposed restoration of Cold-War consensus were not enough to convince the U.S. public to take on the neoconservatives’ view of El Salvador and Nicaragua. It could intimidate journalists, spread propaganda against them (Chapter 3, “A War on News”), have them fired (Chapter 3, “El Mozote”)—but did not have full *control* over the press. The Central American counterrevolution led to shoot-downs of airplanes, criminal connections, massacres, and forcible disappearances that would have fatally damaged the Presidency on their own—unless certain witnesses were discredited or warranting journalists fired.<sup>161</sup>

Stanley Cohen has produced a highly comprehensive analysis of denial of state or private violence. Discredit, propaganda, disinformation, spin, public relations, whitewash, and cover-up become necessary because victims and observers are able to bear evidence that is difficult for the perpetrators to either explain away or pressure the media into ignoring.<sup>162</sup> Cohen focuses on how

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<sup>160</sup> Note that, against theories of the “monopoly on force,” armed uprising, street violence, vigilantism, arms proliferation do not *weaken* the repressive power of the state (see above, “Ideology and Hegemony,” n151; Chapter 7, “Regalado: The Human-Rights Death Squads”).

<sup>161</sup> Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Mark Hertsgaard, Edward A. Lynch, etc., do not focus on the “near misses,” only on the successful censorship that *did* occur—regardless of contingency. Butler, “How Low Can Transparency Go?” 2017. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 77.

<sup>162</sup> See also below, “Epistemology,” n195-96. Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 4. Peter Fourie and

dissidents and witnesses are *denied*, while Goffman emphasized how such persons are *ignored* and marginalized. Even murderous generals know that to fight the mothers of the disappeared is to engage them, to give them some recognition and draws more attention to the issues<sup>163</sup>: this would restrict the generals' control over the "escape" of news from the country. Since state actors might even prefer to *avoid* going through Cohen's stages of denial, this dissertation's analysis of how stories were neutralized cannot rely only on Cohen.

Cohen provides a toolkit of ways that interested parties can intervene in the flow of warranted knowledge: preempting reports, justifying events, appealing to higher loyalties, rewriting history as it happens. 1. Literal denial attacks "the reliability, objectivity and credibility of the observer." Once an event is admitted, 2. interpretive denial destabilizes the connection between terms and their meaning: jargon and euphemism muddy thought, to reframe or recategorize the event being described. Cohen noted that after Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla was forced to admit the disappeared, he then insisted that his own victims had absconded abroad and blamed him instead. The corpses in the Río Sumpul were initially denied as dummies from a military exercise (Chapter 4, "The Sumpul Massacre: The Honduran Press"). 3. Implicatory denial diffuses and minimizes an event and responsibility for it: blaming guerrillas wearing army uniforms, or simply insisting that a massacre was being given too much prominence in the press. The neighbors of the victims of disappearance had to be "seen not seeing" the plainclothesmen in the street, to turn up their radios to drown out the cries for help, to avoid collective action or contact with the international press (Chapters 6 and 7).<sup>164</sup> Denial also allows new groups such as the Madres de la

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Melissa Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism: South Africa's Failure to Respond* (London: Routledge, 2010): 165.

<sup>163</sup> Gen. Videla could call his victims Communist terrorists—but could not believably do so for their Mothers.

<sup>164</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: xi, 7-8, 60-61, 64, 98-99, 105-13. Jonathan Kwitny, *Endless Enemies: The Making of an Unfriendly World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984): 356.

Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires, to turn common ground into contested ground, to trap Gen. Videla's regime in its own rhetoric.

Studies of ideology, narrative, and hegemony (above) have shown that the state also can build up a more subtle, systemic way to deny events even before they happen, which Cohen simply places into his "implicatory" category. Appealing to more widespread narratives and ideologies had the advantage of vagueness, to avoid the risk and publicity brought by *detail*. Denialism works better when it is tacit rather than deliberate—to not have to *deny* an incident, but to encourage the press itself to maintain that there is no issue at all to pursue.<sup>165</sup> It was more convenient (in the short term) and more sustainable (in the long term) to buttress ideologies that could justify interventionism or state murder, and cast doubt on any contrary stories.

In Cohen's words, denial allows perpetrators such as Gen. Videla to insist both that "nothing happened"—and that "they got what they deserved." Such a self-contradictory politics was predicated on a violence that Michael Taussig sums up with the phrase "terror as usual." Cohen warns that "Trying to 'expose' this contradiction misses the point,"<sup>166</sup> since denial's ability to contradict the truth comes from being able to contradict itself. Simply insisting that an administration in Washington or Tegucigalpa was acting hypocritically or used contradictory rhetoric is not the same as actually detailing criminal actions or warranting witness testimony.

Peter Fourie correlates different levels of denial with the process of democratization: under this understanding, a military regime under curfew, its press and legislature shuttered, can better keep secrecy and silence or demand that history be rewritten—literal denial. But civilian governments have to rely on more subtle, general, widespread, flexible forms of denial (like "Media Theory," above). A democratizing state can fend off criticisms of denialism: after 1994,

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<sup>165</sup> Fourie and Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism* 2010: 55. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 170-71.

<sup>166</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 84, 103. Michael Taussig touches on this in *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

demands for financial transparency in South Africa became far easier to rebuff as harsh or unfair, compared the apartheid regime under solid international condemnation. Under Fourie’s interpretation, the different levels of deception were an index of a state’s constraint by its public (or the international press). Functioning press, politics, international human-rights movements are defined by their ability to spread and support witnesses’ stories, and that requires more systemic, pervasive, resilient denial.<sup>167</sup>

“Enlightenment is man’s leaving his self-caused immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one’s intelligence without the guidance of another.”

—Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” 1784

“‘If I should call a sheep’s tail a leg, how many legs would it have?’ ‘Five.’ ‘No, only four; for my calling the tail a leg would not make it so.’”

—Abraham Lincoln, 1862

### Epistemology: How We Know What We Know

Epistemology is not the study of what *is* true, but of *how* people find and communicate knowledge, how we define and examine its truthfulness, what tacit assumptions everyone must make.<sup>168</sup> Social epistemology is the formal study of the communication and “warranting” of information between people—1. how individuals get their knowledge at secondhand, through established procedures of acquiring true knowledge and justified belief; 2. within society in general, especially through the socially-acquired categories of thought or language that people use to identify events as meaningful; and 3. how true (or false) information is used in institutionalized practice—media, science, or a state waging covert warfare.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Fourie and Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism* 2010: 197-200. Jacobsen, “Why Do States Bother to Deceive?” 2008: 339.

<sup>168</sup> By contrast to epistemology, it is ontology (or philosophy, or science) that is defined as that which deals directly with truth. It is also not restricted to symbolic logic, Bayesian statistics, or calculating *P*-values (after all, what might something so academic as Boolean tables have to do with atrocity and mass impoverishment?). But as a discipline it also examines trust, reliability, and the role of society in individual thought more systematically than just gathering some impressionistic or stream-of-consciousness generalizations. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 5.

<sup>169</sup> For example, the question “how are you?” is not a *meaningful* communication: it is never meant to be answered. Epistemologists take care to distinguish “knowledge” from guesses, suppositions, half-truths, or bullshit—categories of communication that the speaker does *not* themselves believe to be true. William P. Alston, “Belief-Forming Prac-

Since knowledge-claims and meaningful communication are not immediate, testable, repeatable personal experiences, individuals' evaluations of truthfulness comes from socially-taught criteria (as opposed to *a priori* reasoning). Epistemology concerns criteria such as coherence, the reliability of an intermediary, the verifiability or falsifiability of an event, the process of seeking out corroboration from other witnesses or from experts.<sup>170</sup> Some epistemologists argue that only firsthand evidence counts as truth, others that prudential or pragmatic reasons are more than sufficient.<sup>171</sup> Different camps of epistemologists argue that secondhand testimony can be justified only by firsthand observation, others, that secondhand corroboration is enough. Others hold that there is no reason that testimony should be less reliable than one's own perception—but that witness's own memory and judgement can come under cross-examination.<sup>172</sup> Witnesses are usually held accountable for the accuracy of the event they are reporting, counting them as “warrantors,” or verifying them with a third-person body of evidence.<sup>173</sup> Previous analyses of foreign relations or denial have relied on the categories of the “credibility,” “popularity,” “legitimation,” “deniability,” “international image” of the state being analyzed—but epistemologists do not take such synonyms for granted.<sup>174</sup> Denialism can easily make use of evidence and argumentation—

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tices and the Social,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 29. Benjamin McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 54. Remedios, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge* 2003: 107.

<sup>170</sup> These are not all different schools of thought, where one epistemologist is a “coherentist” and another an “inductivist,” but describes the topic of their study, the operations and theory of all of these separate methods of approaching and seeking after truth.

<sup>171</sup> McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* 2011: 153.

<sup>172</sup> Even giving one's own name can be called “secondhand” knowledge, since after all you only heard *that* from your parents. Both the “verificationists” and their opponents “have difficulty making sense of the way in which testimonial knowledge is ... distinctively mediated by another mind”: “belief based on testimony is distinguished from belief based on argument precisely because it doesn't involve a subject's coming to her own conclusion about things.” McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* 2011: 7, 155. Schmitt, ed., “Socializing Epistemology: An Introduction Through Two Sample Issues,” in *Socializing Epistemology* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 5, 8-10, 16.

<sup>173</sup> Miranda Fricker, “Group Epistemology? The Making of a Collective Good Informant,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 84:2 (March 2012): 260-61, 264, 268. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 205, 220.

<sup>174</sup> Christopher A. Bail, “The Public Life of Secrets: Deception, Disclosure, and Discursive Framing in the Policy Process,” *Sociological Theory* 33:2 (June 2015): 97-124.

shifting the standards of evidence, pressuring witnesses, aiming to overwhelm contrary evidence or quibble its relevance and truthfulness.<sup>175</sup>

“Classical” epistemology investigates the reliability of individual perception, attention, recollection, *a priori* induction through “pure reason,” and justification of beliefs. A belief can be falsified no matter how much and how excellent the evidence is, because any evidence can be “defeated” or undermined by further evidence.<sup>176</sup> Social epistemology concerns 1. the ways in which individual eyewitnesses record or transmit these observations to others, how they testify to what they witnessed and how their stories spread, and 2. how most all knowledge of the world outside of one’s immediate lived experience is inescapably socially-mediated and secondhand.<sup>177</sup>

Because some degree of ignorance is inevitable, epistemologists insist that lies are not distinguishable from true stories—not initially, not without follow-up—for the reason that they exploit all the same means of transmission and authentication as the most unalloyed truth. However consistent or agreeable the news *sounds*, it still remains secondhand, so the process of doubt

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<sup>175</sup> Grilling a plaintiff on the stand, secretly recording conversations, or stealing private correspondence can be called “normatively” wrong, but still be truth-serving and “veristic”—perhaps even the only way to obtain accurate knowledge and transparency. Hypothetically, laws penalizing denial of genocide or terrorism in the name of safeguarding the truth would also come in quite handy for a state claiming atrocities in another state it has targeted for intervention. Honest science was reframed as “junk science” and paid-for distortions as “sound science,” by insisting that the former has surrendered its dedication to the truth. Cox and Goldman, “Accuracy in Journalism,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 190. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 217. William J. Talbott, “The Case for a More Truly Social Epistemology,” review of *Knowledge in a Social World* by Goldman, ed., *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (January 2002): 201-04.

<sup>176</sup> Epistemology is one of the humanities that has specifically studied physical/psychological differences in sense and memory. Any eyewitness can be fallible—not paying attention, imperfect recollection even if they were (such as the case of volunteers asked to watch a basketball game and ignoring someone in a gorilla suit walking past), bad lighting, blariness, not knowing the whole situation (Goffman’s reframing). These real issues with eyewitness testimony are almost always excluded from questions of *justification*, which is a separate issue from the truth of the testimony. Alston, “Belief-Forming Practices and the Social,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 32. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World* 1999: 44. Thomas Nickles, review of *Social Epistemology* by Fuller, *Isis* 81:4 (December 1990): 806.

<sup>177</sup> Both ignorance and “secondhandedness” are as unavoidable as lines converging on the horizon to the human eye (that is, there is no omniscient “orthogonal view” available).

is brought to a halt by either 1. the “economy of trust” in the person or institution who supplied the story or 2. with “background” knowledge that is not explicitly contested or scrutinized.<sup>178</sup>

The truth of secondhand testimony is “justified” differently from individual perception. Social epistemology supplies the concept of “warrant,” where testimony is propagated and its truthfulness supported by intermediaries, often of higher social (and reputational) standing than the witnesses themselves. The testimony of an illiterate *campesina* is given international audience via priests, lawyers, journalists, doctors, professors, and publishers.<sup>179</sup>

Targeting the warrantors (rather than the witnesses) allows state agents more flexibility when either 1. denying a real atrocity or 2. claiming a supposed atrocity done by the target state (2a. and reframing critics and skeptics asking for evidence as themselves the denialists). This method of falsehood counterfeits the usual processes of proof and verification, perverting *testimonio* itself.<sup>180</sup> So epistemology allows analyses of news “management” more complicated and contested than simply *scandals* or *cover-ups*, of claims or denials: Administrations even before

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<sup>178</sup> An East German “Party man” would doubt West German radio’s quotations, and the Sandinistas were free to make accusations of U.S. intervention without a “smoking gun” pilot. At some point even the most skeptical cease their questioning (David Hume quipped that even the most skeptical always leave a building by the door and never by the window): such tacit, implicit knowledge is described as being simply “bracketed” off. It may very well be true that an apolitical newspaper reader in 1982 did *not* have the warrant to believe the El Mozote Massacre was true—but that was because the Administration had taken backstage action to make sure of that. Glaeser, *Political Epistemics* 2011: 189-90.

<sup>179</sup> *Testimonio* is not a process of inquiry that ends with the text simply being *believed* after a dispute over its validity. Many theories of warranting maintain that even an undistorted self-presentation like that of Rigoberta Menchu is inevitably reframed, due to the inequalities of class, literacy, or ethnicity between witness and warrantor. So warrant is something they are forced to seek from a second party, in order to have an audience wider than those they can meet face-to-face. Steve Fuller does not hold that warrant-seeking is merely dissemination of ideology, however (coming back to the subaltern “paradox,” where *all* contexts for the subaltern’s testimony are derived from the dominant culture, down to the language). Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 1988: 11, 13. McMyler, “Responsibility for Testimonial Belief” 2012: 344.

<sup>180</sup> “Atrocity propaganda” has a long history of both 1. demonizing the target state and 2. obfuscating the process of reporting, responding to, and investigating real atrocities. One famous false witness was “Nayirah” in 1990, claiming that invading Iraqis had thrown premature Kuwaiti infants out of incubators to die: she was the Kuwaiti Ambassador’s daughter and set up to testify before Congress by public-relations firm Hill & Knowlton. For Honduras 2009, Lanny Davis was hired by the *golpistas* to iterate a well-detailed version of what had “happened,” to sway interpretations of the coup in the United States and act as liaison with his longtime client, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Daniel Beckman, “The Labyrinth of Deceit: Secretary Clinton and the Honduran Coup,” Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Apr. 12, 2017, <https://www.coha.org/a-labyrinth-of-deception-secretary-clinton-and-the-honduran-coup/>. Fernando Broncano, “Trusting Others: The Epistemological Authority of Testimony,” *Theoria: An International Journal for Theory, History and Foundations of Science* 23:1 (61) (January 2008): 11-22.



Reagan had fought the transmission of news, undermined witness credibility, and worked to shape the reception of emerging stories.<sup>181</sup>

Sociologists of knowledge emphasize that language and knowledge are inescapably social, collective, and secondhand: the ideas and language of an individual eventually have to come from somebody else. We are left in the epistemic predicament of having to rely on practically a whole world of knowledge that one could never experience on one's own.<sup>182</sup> Coordinated belief saves individuals much effort by dividing up the labor of inquiry. Individuals' standards of belief—whose knowledge-producing activity is pragmatic or reliable—come from peers, friends, academia, the media, and so on, rather than abstracted one-on-one interactions in a vacuum.<sup>183</sup>

“Constructionism” theorizes the ways in which an individual's reality is mediated by categories and communications from an institution or society at large to describe and explain events

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<sup>181</sup> Emphasizing coherence and consistency can also create a dilemma, of “good” outcomes from bad causes: someone might oppose the Vietnam or Iraq Wars because they personally disliked Nixon or George W. Bush, with no issue with wars under a well-spoken Democrat. These processes cannot be formulated as a simple Boolean contradiction where X is NOR Y. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard, *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 2011): 28.

<sup>182</sup> Classical epistemology has no room for “the other person,” but that is the only way we come to know anything: everyone is dependent on a cascade of hundreds of others, each in turn dependent on hundreds more. “Consensualism” goes to the extreme that knowledge is *only* collective, since an individual's discoveries are moot unless someone *else* is told about them. So someone else's word, someone else's authority requires both trust and verification (though of different emphasis between the two). The Foucauldian “linguistic turn” insisted that language is of key importance because it comprises the relationship between individual consciousness and social existence—like the media, which interprets the domestic political and social situation or foreign events for most all U.S. citizens. In epistemic terms it is Reductionist to insist that only personal experiment is justified knowledge: “many of us have never seen a baby born,” visited foreign countries, confirmed astronomical observations. Scientists rely on numerous experiments they could never replicate on their own—in fact one of the marks of “crankery” is putting accepted science to experimental test. It is considered be perverse, like testing the roundness of the Earth or putting the Holocaust to the chemical test (Will Storr, *The Unpersuadables: Adventures with the Enemies of Science* [New York: Overlook Press, 2014]) or grilling the survivors of a massacre for a decade. Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge* 1994: 114. Corlett, *Analyzing Social Knowledge* 1996: 3. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 13. Lisa Guenther, “Epistemic Injustice and Phenomenology,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 200. Jennifer Lackey, “Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others,” in Goldman and Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology* 2011: 76. McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* 2011: 4. Schmitt, ed., “Socializing Epistemology,” in *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 4.

<sup>183</sup> Goldman, “Social Process Reliabilism: Solving Justification Problems in Collective Epistemology,” in Lackey, ed., *Essays in Collective Epistemology* 2014: 20. Schmitt, “The Justification of Group Beliefs,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 263.

and to spread their own experiences to others. Media analysis (above) treats the press and television as “constructing” reality for its U.S. audience, complicating and problematizing its relationship with “the truth” that someone actually present to be an eyewitness would see. But even if the media does not host outright fabrications or wild speculations—or, worse, half-truths—it still remains the only institution transmitting events from the rest of the planet.<sup>184</sup>

To social epistemologists, the act of describing or categorizing an event is also an attempt to persuade other humans of its truth. Foucault held that the struggle for knowledge and consciousness is Modernity’s chief control mechanism, making politics a fight over *whose* constructs would interpret social reality for the public. Ideologies are not tissues of rhetoric, but operate within real social structures that constrain human thought and action, allowing for dissident ways of knowing.<sup>185</sup>

No knowledge is transparent or instantly-understandable: therefore there is an inevitable tacit, socially-learned aspect to recognition or identification.<sup>186</sup> To Foucault, the description or category “constitutes” what is described—homosexual versus either top or marica, Anno Domini versus Common Era, HIV/AIDS versus GRIDs, the poor versus either proletariat or labor force,

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<sup>184</sup> Understanding the world is an action, done in terms that are social, historical artifacts; naming and categorizing are conceived as *acts* to convince other hearers or to bring order on the world of first- and secondhand knowledge. Only some Constructionists, however, hold that an individual’s world is outright *created* and purely-linguistic (a stance which has been branded as “veriphobic,” or even downright Orwellian). Cox and Goldman, “Accuracy in Journalism,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 193, 195. Goldman, “Social Epistemology: Theory and Applications,” in Anthony O’Hear, ed., *Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 4. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 1-4.

<sup>185</sup> This is the proverbial “threat of a good example”: new knowledge means new options of political action and potential social organization, of democratizing theory for working-class people without university education. This control mechanism is not necessarily conceived as “ruling” the minds of subjects, but dominates the state and private interests able to oppose real alternatives—the counterhegemony. Charles D. Battershill, “Erving Goffman as a Precursor to Post-Modern Sociology,” in Stephen Harold Riggins, ed., *Beyond Goffman: Studies on Communication, Institution, and Social Interaction* (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 1990): 168. Henrik Lundberg, “Between Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim’s Quest for a Political Synthesis,” in David Kettler and Volker Meja, eds., *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* (London: Anthem Press, 2017): 14. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 47. Stehr, “Knowledge Societies,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 305.

<sup>186</sup> Mannheim said that knowledge was 1. referential to *something* real/nonsocial, but 2. situated in a structure (science, history) and 3. oriented within society (recalled, communicated, examined). Kettler and Meja, eds., “Introduction,” in *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* 2017: 8. Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge*, 1979/1992: 90.

worker control versus Big Labor, the Holocaust versus the Shoah, morally-culpable denial of a massacre versus healthy doubt of claims by an interventionist state, disbelief or atheism, teenagers or youths, poisoning from a spill or conversion disorder from chemophobia, deliberate massacre or typical, random violence.<sup>187</sup> This process is more fundamental than reframing (above, “Media Theory”): concepts can change but still maintain an equal to external, material reality.<sup>188</sup>

The broadest type of “epistemic injustice” is the exclusion of a whole category of witness—illiterate, female, Native- or African-descended—from free access and participation in nationwide practices of communication and knowledge: they become mis- or underrepresented, their status as witnesses or authorities qualified, instrumentalized, coopted. This inequality or iniquity excludes “subaltern” groups from staking claims or speaking for themselves, and distorts and obscures their experience from collective understanding.<sup>189</sup> Americas Watch noted that the

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<sup>187</sup> Epistemic distinctions as delicate as sensitivity versus specificity are essential to the practice of medical diagnosis. More banal examples include languages that do or do not distinguish green from blue or yellow, and we identify or recognize house or cow in our visual field from socialization alone. Alston, “Belief-Forming Practices and the Social,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 30. McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture* 1996: 2. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 49-51, 58. Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge*, 1979/1992: 115. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 22, 86.

<sup>188</sup> This is the *a priori* argument against Positivism. Schmitt, ed., “Socializing Epistemology,” in *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 23, 25.

<sup>189</sup> In this interpretation, epistemic injustice harms knowers of all categories, by keeping the knowledge of some from all the rest (though other interpretations conclude that it benefits a majority or a dominant subgroup by keeping out certain viewpoints). To Pragmatist epistemologists, such injustice is not “as unfair exclusion from a process of pooling of knowledge” but an injury to collective activity, that it obstructs something crucial for a society or state to *be* defined as democratic. Betty Friedan called her issues “the problem that has no name”: until the phrase sexual harassment was coined, people could recognize a boss’s behavior as taking of advantage rather than flirting (even if bystanders *could* have seen it as taking advantage), while also as not rising to the level of an actionable criminal act. The lack of a category prosed a *hermeneutical* epistemic injustice, since the experience would not be communicable or understandable to those who had not experienced it themselves. Kristie Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 33:1 (2012): 26-29. Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 2013: 3-4, 101, 295. Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., “Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 13, 16. Shannon Sullivan, “On the Harms of Epistemic Injustice: Pragmatism and Transactional Epistemology,” in *ibid.*: 205.

U.S. Embassy in El Salvador “even lacked a category by means of which to assign responsibility to government forces”<sup>190</sup>

Miranda Fricker points out that there are few stereotypes about marginalized groups that do not stigmatize them as untrustworthy witnesses<sup>191</sup>—or even as so deluded that there is no need to examine any of the “evidence” they present, to address the topic. Since even the simplest knowledge depends on corroboration and acknowledgement by others, Lorraine Code notes that these attacks break the bonds of trust, keeping people isolated from one another in society.<sup>192</sup> Undermining the reliability of certain members of society allows witnesses and warrantors to be attacked as secret betrayers of the group, “unmasked” as fooled by alien disinformation rather than trustworthy peers and neighbors.

Social epistemology treats society in general or a particular institution as more than a mere aggregation of its individuals,<sup>193</sup> circulating knowledge within itself, which produces and uses true (or false) discourse.<sup>194</sup> To Michel Foucault, the spread of ideas, facts, and allegations

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<sup>190</sup> The only options were “ ‘guerrillas,’ ‘possibly guerrillas,’ ‘far right,’ ‘possibly far right,’ or ‘unknown assailants.’ ” In 1986 the Embassy claimed the FMLN killed 17-21 civilians for every one killed by the security forces. Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 171.

<sup>191</sup> And of course listeners’ trust and credence in a source do not necessarily guarantee truthfulness (or even that the listener “believes” what they hear). Amy Allen, “Power/Knowledge/Resistance: Foucault and Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 192. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* 2007: 32, 45, 76. Alvin I. Goldman, “A Guide to Social Epistemology,” in Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 21.

<sup>192</sup> Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 36. Pohlhaus, “Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 18.

<sup>193</sup> Some theories of social epistemology hold that a group can seek goals of justification or verification *without* the individual members recognizing what is needed—without a central guiding individual: these theories are “at odds with entrenched traditional views about the autonomy, self-sufficiency and rationality of individual reason.” Fuller, “Review: Social Epistemology: A Philosophy for Sociology or a Sociology of Philosophy?” *Sociology* 34:3 (August 200): 575. Miriam Solomon, “A More Social Epistemology,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 219.

<sup>194</sup> Social epistemology analyzes just far institutions can be described as “knowing” (conventional formulas like “the FBI said,” “Langley believed,” “the Senate funded”): this dissertation is careful to only use “Langley” for the CIA’s headquarters, as opposed to the Director (who commanded an Enterprise of persons who were *technically* not “CIA agents”), or to use shorthand like “Tegucigalpa” or “the state.” A jury (given only admissible evidence) can be said

depends on power within society, their proponents and advocates deploying them as part of political negotiation and strategy, as “micro”-level mobilization. To Pierre Bourdieu, knowledge is spread by circulation, accumulating credit according to “social capital” in the marketplace of ideas, conditioned by social structure. Here facts do not “speak for themselves,” as the expression goes, but are constituted by rules of proof.<sup>195</sup>

Bruno Latour argues that facts can diffuse on their own through knowledge networks, by contrast to socially-oriented theories about how flow and reception of ideas is shaped by power: ideas have impetus from their truthfulness, overcoming political resistance (even if it takes time) or the quibbling of the rules of evidence.<sup>196</sup> Stories such as the El Mozote Massacre, missiles for hostages, or the shutdown of a pilot in an illegal operation run by the head of the CIA were “explosive” and scandalous—but the Salvadoran massacre was covered up in 1981 and then maintained as a nonstory until the 1992 excavation, and Senate reports on the drug-financing aspects of the Contra War drew little scandal in 1989. If the story itself can not be outright contained, then the reception of the story can be conditioned.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 1 summarizes the history of U.S. covert warfare before and after Iran-Contra. None of the interventions remained “secret,” but the level of revelation did vary; in every case

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to be “justified” in believing its verdict, even if not a single one of the twelve jurors is *themselves* considered individually justified, because standards of evidence differ. Lackey, ed., “Introduction,” *Essays in Collective Epistemology* 2014: 3. Christian List, “Group Knowledge and Group Rationality: A Judgment Aggregation Perspective,” in Goldman and Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology* 2011: 223. Remedios, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge* 2003: 30.

<sup>195</sup> To Foucault, resistance comes from several social locations, but still in relation to power rather than outside and against the state—it is relational, rather than oppositional. Chriss, “Goffman as Microfunctionalist,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy*, 2003: 184. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* 1992: 119. Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 2013: 15. Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 279, 285. Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman* 2016: 37-39.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, in particular Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

the planners of the war were able to keep certain key facts away from Congressional controversy. By not taking secrecy for granted, we can see how several aspects common to covert wars—drugs, terrorism—were the most vulnerable to exposure. There are numerous points in every covert war where secrecy was exposed, threatened, or had to be actively defended. Iran-Contra proves that journalists were not simply helpless in the face of unstoppable government secrecy. There have been numerous opportunities to disrupt every covert war, and secrecy is contingent rather than inevitable. The cycle is important in analysis because *every* President since Truman has had a covert war that could have become as scandalous as Iran-Contra—but was simply not followed up, allowing the perpetrators continued impunity.

Chapter 2 reviews the paramilitary networks set up in 1970s Central America: the main components of what would become known as “Iran-Contra” were all in place even before Reagan’s 1980 election. The Argentinean junta supervised the formation of the Contras 1978-82; Langley was left to pick up the pieces. CIA Director William Casey in turn created the “Enterprise” to circumvent the law, under his personal authority but separate from the Agency and the Oval Office. Without even Reagan’s knowledge, one man was able to monopolize the operation of covert warfare, funded autonomously by Saudi Arabia or the Medellín Cartel. Investigative journalists found some of the potential scandals (which would have been greater than the one that broke out 1986), but the most dangerous crimes were delayed until the “Teflon President” had left office. Arguably this impunity was what made Iran-Contra foundational to Washington’s ability to deceive the public in the next century.

Chapter 3 examines how news from El Salvador and Nicaragua was repressed—suppressing Embassy reports, having journalists reassigned, or discrediting the hundreds of U.S. citizens who had lived in the areas attacked by the Contras, returning with pieces of weapons

stamped “Made in USA.” Of course it would have been a disaster if journalists pursued the 1981 El Mozote Massacre, but if the White House’s own cover-up had been revealed then Reagan’s Presidency would have been in danger. Casey’s projects of secret warfare and cartel funding provided power and secrecy, but also came with a high level of vulnerability. The poorest Honduran campesinos or Iowan church volunteers could still endanger the “Teflon President” himself, and the covert war survived only because there was no a serious push to investigate at the time.

Chapter 4 concerns Honduran spread or obstruction of stories about the Salvadoran forces’ massacres against escaping civilians. The Carter-appointed Ambassador even attacked those who went to the border to question the survivors at the Río Sumpul 1980: simply *going* to see for oneself was condemned as a sign of mistrust and prejudgment against the Embassy’s assurances. Honduras was the site of the first denial of a massacre in Central America—a crucial precedent for the 1981 El Mozote Massacre, which would have been dangerous to Reagan himself: there, the White House made a risky intervention to get reporters reassigned and keep the stories from turning into scandals.

Chapter 5 moves to Tegucigalpa’s involvement in the war against Nicaragua—usually having to deny the Contras’ presence in Honduras every year, but also its ability to pressure the White House by withholding certification of Nicaraguan “invasions” 1986 and 1988 (just when Reagan needed Contra funding from the U.S. Congress). Tegucigalpa’s cooperation was what had let Managua be framed as making unprovoked attacks, and also as unfairly accusing Honduras of protecting the Contras. The Reagan Administration had to give the Honduran military power in the press—power over Washington which it could manipulate or withhold. Denial and media control exposed weakness as well as strength—where true knowledge could do the most

harm to the state and its counterrevolutionary project. Control over the news provided *opportunity* as well as an expression of power relations, marking where the United States was most vulnerable to stories originating in even the most isolated villages.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the practice of “forcible disappearance”—systematic, deniable political murder by the secret police against civilians. The technique had been refined in Argentina after 1976 to provide “plausible deniability,” specifically to avoid the consequences that Gen. Augusto Pinochet’s public violence had earned in Chile. The perpetrators still had to deny the capture, and assert that the disappeared were secretly terrorists who had abroad—but this allowed the survivors to force an engagement with the military state. The U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa was intimately involved in the targeting, torturing, and releasing of the disappeared since 1981—posing a tremendous risk to the White House. But in the end Washington’s involvement only became an issue in the U.S. press in 1995. Even in 2023 the Honduran civil state is not aware of the full range of perpetrators given in the unredacted 1997 CIA report.

In Chapter 7, the mothers and wives of the people secretly murdered by the state organized themselves into a movement able to produce enough pressure to cause the overthrow of Argentina and Honduras’s generals 1983-84. Eventually the human-rights organizations were able to recruit the perpetrators—even the generals themselves. The practice of disappearance increased rather than decreased the quantity of undeniable stories in the international press. Neither Tegucigalpa nor Washington could discredit the mothers and wives of the “disappeared” as Russian dupes.

Chapter 8 examines anticommunist ideologies and narratives—as a way to interpret events, or a “resource” to divert from news that came from even priests or doctors. Any negative news on Central America was interpreted as Kremlin influence, under the assumption that lack



of proof was itself proof of an enemy cunning enough to erase all fingerprints. Anticommunism motivated half a dozen covert wars under Casey, but only one became controversial, forcing Reagan put his own popularity on the line with an unprecedented *public* case for war against Nicaragua. Blaming Managua for crime and cocaine in 1984 left him personally exposed in 1986 after his promises of a “war on drugs” or that “we do not negotiate with terrorists.” Anticom-munist narratives allowed for more general attacks, without requiring a risky amount of *detail* that could be contradicted by later actions. Even if Red-baiting was not able to make anyone agree that dissidents were a threat, it still discouraged any contrary explanation from getting too much coverage in the news.

Tegucigalpa’s campaigns against the reputation of Catholic priests, medical doctors, or human-rights organizations, the network of CIA assets, death squads, and cartels in the Contra War would have been unable to have kept going. Chapter 9 covers Honduran military officers’ attacks against the Catholic Church: the clergy had warranted stories of massacre and genocide that reached the international press. Generals and colonels quickly understood that they themselves could not condemn Catholic clergy or laypersons as agents of the Kremlin—but that the fundamentalists specifically geared to Cold-War views on economics or international politics *could*. Only a *new* denomination could fight Catholic priests’ ability to warrant and certify campesino stories on their own, religious terms. Evangelicalization may be the only time Cold-War armed forces *persuaded* the popular classes to isolate and demobilize themselves in Latin America.

Chapter 10 examines how officials and some doctors denied news of new venereal diseases—culminating with the HIV/AIDS that would ravage Honduras—in order to keep U.S. soldiers in the country: anyone condemning venereal disease was accused of being an agent of a

global Soviet disinformation campaign. The Colegio Médico exploited the same methods that certified true science: only doctors could know how to exploit the ways in which credentialed, state-paid M.D.s. were designated as “unscientific.” Ultimately the military was unable to debunk *madres*, M.D.s, or clergy—but Reagan’s war in Nicaragua would not have been able to keep going without the military regularly attacking all these warrantors, even if at the expense of the FF.AA.’s own public reputation.

# Chapter 1

## The Cycle of Covert Warfare

“we are facing an implacable enemy whose avowed objective is world domination by whatever means and at whatever cost. There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply. If the United States is to survive, long-standing American concepts of ‘fair play’ must be reconsidered. ... It may become necessary that the American people be made acquainted with, understand and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy”<sup>1</sup>

—the Doolittle Report, 1954

“How would it be if the United States were viewed by the rest of the world as interfering with the elections directly of other countries and everybody knew it?”

—Joe Biden, 2021

### Introduction

Armin Krishnan counts sixty-three U.S. covert actions to overthrow a government during the Cold War: he used nearly fifty interventions across four continents and seven decades as “case studies” for the concept of covert warfare.<sup>2</sup> Most all of the covert wars went through

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<sup>1</sup> Lt. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle explicitly framed a set of virtues as U.S. national virtues—only to jettison them all in order to preserve the United States itself, and acknowledged the cynicism of such a move. But despite advocating for measures modeled on the Gestapo and NKVD, his Report still insisted that the public be fully informed about every undemocratic action. Melvin A. Goodman, “Espionage and Covert Action,” in Craig Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity: U.S. Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 27. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008): 11. Armin Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* (Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 11. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 109.

<sup>2</sup> The main countries targeted with election interference, coups, guerrillas, paramilitaries, assassinations, and other attempts at “regime change” were: France 1946-47, Italy 1947-68, Albania, Poland, and the Baltic and Ukrainian Soviet republics 1949-53, North and South Korea 1950-53, Yunnan 1950-53, Japan 1952, Iran 1953, Guatemala 1954, Indonesia 1954-58, South Vietnam 1955, Syria 1955-57, Laos 1955-73, Lebanon 1957-58, Tibet 1958-74, British Guiana 1960-64, Cuba 1960-64, the Dominican Republic 1960-68, Congo-Léopoldville 1960-68, North and South Vietnam 1962-73, Iraq 1963, Brazil 1964, Chile 1964-73, Indonesia 1965-66, Thailand 1965-69, Cambodia 1970-75, Bolivia 1971, Kurdistan 1972-75 (Iraq and Iran), Portugal 1975-76, Angola 1975-92, South Yemen 1979-82, Afghanistan 1979-92 and after 2001, Nicaragua 1980-90, Cambodia 1980-92, Ethiopia 1981-83, Chad 1981-90, South Sudan 1983, Haiti 1986-94 and 2004, Panama 1987-89, Iraq 1992-96, Russia 1996, Venezuela 2002, Georgia 2003-04, Iran 2005-08 (via the exiled Mujahedeen-e-Khalq and Balochi separatists), Libya 2011-12, Syria 2011-17, and Ukraine since 2014. In Ecuador 1963, Ghana 1966, Greece 1967, Chile 1973, Argentina 1976, or Turkey 1980 the CIA had foreknowledge of the coup but hid it from the democratically-elected target government (but did not explicitly *plan* it). Lindsey A. O’Rourke categorizes these interventions as 1. direct offensive proinsurgency against a military rival—the Red Army or People’s Liberation Army during wars or crises (Korea, Hungary), 2. “preventive” intervention (where the target state is acknowledged as posing no threat to the United States and is not a Soviet ally), 3. to maintain the hierarchy of Powers and their subordinated states, in the name of international order and regional stability, and 4. regime maintenance, to prevent election or insurgency from changing an ally. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 428-29. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 6-9, 35. Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 5, 15-6, 39-40, 47, 62, 65, 109, 111, 117, 146-49. James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 55-62.

somewhat distinct phases, occurring mostly in the same sequence, and ended (or, more properly, restarted) with personnel from one intervention pushing another war a few Administrations later. Each phase represents a different aspect—a defining characteristic—of covert warfare. Presidents and the foreign-policy officials who outlast them then always make the same choices all over again, bend the sequence of covert warfare back until it swallows its own tail and begins once more, becoming a *cycle* of intervention.

Truly *covert* warfare does not seem possible, but 1. if we do assume that covertness is a matter of degree and 2. that secrecy cannot be taken for granted, these parts or elements of covert warfare are the means (and motives) for secrets *staying* secret. The Contra War—with Nicaragua as the target state and Honduras as the “partner state”—was not a one-off scandal restricted to one Administration: it was part of Director William Casey’s planned campaign of covert (or at least deniable) wars that armed and funded local paramilitaries across three continents, making the covert wars of the 1950s-70s under even Director Allen Dulles seem quite ad-hoc by comparison.

An empirical summary detailing how covert warfare actually operates is important, because otherwise foreign-policy analyses can become too general—that U.S. foreign policy was aimed at fighting the Kremlin around the world, or that it punished “good examples” by installing dictatorships, or that it merely followed the lead of local armies, that Latin American military officers have always been reactionary, that Reagan won in a landslide of support for his policies as the voters swung rightwards, that the planners of Iran-Contra were ignorant ideologues or that they represented a criminal “deep state.” This chapter is not the place to tackle any one of these assertions, but to avoid taking any element of covert warfare for granted.

Between 1978 and 1990 the U.S. role in the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan counterrevolutions moved through every phase of the covert-war cycle. The uprisings were judged as simply a final encirclement by Havana and the Kremlin, and any Central American factors were dismissed out of hand—few of the people making the decisions spoke Spanish, not even the CIA officers. Most reporters expressed doubt at Reagan’s warning of Nicaraguan T-54s rolling into Texas—but this language was in line with decades of Cold-War rhetoric, so nobody called for invoking the 25th Amendment for mental incapacity. After all, Reagan had won after promising to save the United States from resurgent foreign aggression—another decades-old narrative. Any friendly efforts by the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) and *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) were simply interpreted as typical treacherous ruses commanded by the Kremlin. The Administration’s involvement depended on “buying in” to the existing projects of partner states and more experienced extremists (Salvadoran and Guatemalan death squads, the Argentinean junta, Mexican and Cuban cocaine traffickers, Israeli arms dealers)—even some precedents set up under Jimmy Carter. Despite their habit of murdering children and paying airplane pilots with cocaine shipments, the Contras were depicted as “freedom fighters” seeking multiparty elections against a “satellite” dictatorship of Russia. The escalation to air, land, and sea warfare led to controversy in the Senate as early as 1982, and then a full cut-off 1983-84. The goals for Reagan’s Contra support were never clear, but Langley acknowledged that the FSLN and FMLN could not be ended by any level of warfare, even (forbidden) direct invasion. The usual procedures of mercenary pilot “hygiene” and deniability developed in 1950s Indonesia or Cuba were not applied: Eugene Hasenfus survived with definite proof he was working for a U.S. state-run “Enterprise” in October 1986. With the end of Reagan’s term, Central America was then discarded as a focus of U.S. foreign policy (until a renewal of the Drug Wars

and the 2009 coup in Honduras). But without a fundamental shift in the institutions of U.S. foreign policy, Iran-Contra officials returned to deceive the public and manipulate opinion into backing the invasion of Iraq in the name of avenging the September 11, 2001, attacks (below, “8: After the End”; Conclusion), restarting the cycle and repeating all of the steps there.

“a passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite Nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite Nation of privileges denied to others”

—George Washington, 1796

“We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests [instead,] are eternal”

—Lord Palmerston, 1848

## 0: Premises

During the Cold War U.S. foreign policy was in the hands of about five hundred top-of-ficeholders—in the White House, the CIA, the Department of State—shared a common set of beliefs about the role in that justified decades of election interference, coups, assassinations, and paramilitarism in dozens of states, that kept restarting the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The attempts to overthrow over forty countries are inextricably rooted in World War II—but also where Washington had earned the international reputation that was promptly eroded by overt and covert intervention.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984): 5, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Usually the foreign-policy language is that of Idealism or ideology. But church massacres, truck bombings, decapitations, flayings, drugrunning, eviscerations are not dysfunctional, anarchic, counterproductive, or runaway excesses, but the consequence of a definite belief that villagers in Bolivia, Laos, or Mozambique are unwitting agents of a wave of a totalitarianism aiming at the continental United States itself. But however much the ethical senses are activated by such abominations, condemnation cannot substitute for analysis: the Cold Warriors were not cunning cynics, but ultimately believed that annihilating the poorest and most remote people in the world, thousands of miles away, was self-defense in a fight for survival, a global battle for humanity’s soul that pitted all that was wicked against all that was good. The narratives of U.S. self-image included toleration, openness, reformism, and republicanism—a country with an articulated *mission* that should be brought to the rest of the continent, and then the world, separate from the self-interest, Realism, colonialism, and politicking of old Europe. Only “the enemy” threatened other states, interfered in governments. U.S. values, interests, ideologies, and fears were also designated as those of all humanity: John Prados concludes that this language of universalism was what best cloaked military force—almost *requiring* it to be covert after 1945. Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 63-65. Alan McPherson, “U.S. Government Responses to Anti-Americanism at the Periphery,” in Bevan Sewell and Maria Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery: The*

It may seem even perverse to talk of *morality* in a context of assassination and overthrow of recognized leaders, or alliances with organized crime—but the planning of the secret wars was motivated by an ideology that claimed a new national self-image as the “Arsenal of Democracy” that had supported the Resistance in France and Poland, liberated Dachau, and then demanded decolonization from the Western European Allies.<sup>5</sup> Hesitating when it came to any perceived challenge—however distant or indistinct—was likened to 1920s-30s “appeasement” or “isolationism” that had supposedly allowed Adolf Hitler to conquer a whole continent and set his eyes on the entire globe.<sup>6</sup>

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*Shifting Margins of U.S. International Relations Since World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 87, 89. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): xii. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 534.

<sup>5</sup> *Hyperpower* is a specific foreign-policy term that has been used to cover military and economic imperialism, self-perceived U.S. “exceptionalism,” cultural dominance, or simply the fact that the United States was left with far fewer deaths and far more factories by two world wars. U.S. hyperpower could present itself as qualitatively different from the British hyperpower of the 19th century, demanding Western Europe decolonize from Asia and Africa (to prevent revolution)—and justifying its own covert coups as countering “Soviet imperialism,” a Monroe Doctrine extended worldwide. *Hyperpower* (as specifically opposed to *imperialism*) also explains why even target states like Cuba, Angola, or Nicaragua felt the need to try and remain friendly with Washington rather than declare themselves dedicated to overturning its dominance (below, “1: Refusal of Neutrality”)—everyone, even Moscow and London, was obliged to curry the favor of one specific state. Daniela Spenser, “Standing Conventional Cold War History on its Head,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 394.

<sup>6</sup> After Germany stormed through every nation on the European Continent (except Sweden, Switzerland, and Spain) and Japan struck Pearl Harbor, 1930s “isolationism” was blamed for the explosion of fascism and totalitarianism: the “good war” accreted older narratives of U.S. exceptionalism, unilateralism, and wounded innocence. World War II was used to provide the warrant for all subsequent U.S. interventions—total warfare, collective punishment of civilians, urban saturation and nuclear bombardment. George Orwell coined a rigorist new ethics for the Cold War, one where “Those who ‘abjure’ violence can only do so because others are committing violence on their behalf” and “Pacifism is objectively pro-fascist. ... If you hamper the war effort of one side, you automatically help out that of the other.” Eisenhower initially supported Paris in Indochina 1946-54, then opposed France, Britain, and Israel during the 1956 Suez Crisis: the old Great Powers of Europe saw themselves as challenged more by Washington than by Moscow, grudgingly evacuating their empires and trying to retain their global reach. He also saw Britain and France as bigger potential rival Powers in Latin America than the Soviet Union. But while the newly-decolonized states did not follow the model of the 1940s-50s Soviet Union, they refused to make themselves exclusive allies and “sister republics” of the United States. U.S. covert warfare was devised to target states *friendly* to Washington, quickly costing it any goodwill or power of example (ironically both Kennedy and Reagan tried to restore this lost hegemony, which had been earned in wartime). Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 63-65. H. Bruce Franklin, *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 27, 86-91. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 70, 261-62. Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984). Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 93, 96. Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: State University of New York Press,

The interventions in Guatemala 1950-54, Cuba 1960-62, the Dominican Republic 1965, and Nicaragua 1979-90 were justified as mutual defense of sovereign allies against an aggressive, interventionist superpower bent on takeover by force. Before Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy announced in 1961 that “we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means,” and that the freedom of the United States itself was under threat from Indochina and Cuba. To the Cold Warriors, Ho Chi Minh or Fidel Castro represented intervention imposed from outside, and by definition could not be “nationalist.” Therefore, any U.S. involvement was framed as guaranteeing independence *against* interventionism. This view was tied to the Cold Warriors’ geopolitics: *every* country was considered crucial, not just treaty allies such as West Germany or nations lying on vital sealanes, such as Greece and Taiwan.<sup>7</sup>

The candidate Reagan of 1980 explicitly aimed to recapture the position of unquestioned world power that the United States had in 1945, and to prepare the U.S. public for more active military involvement abroad—to *support*, not just accept, policy, thus avoiding the need for secrecy altogether. Reagan’s CIA Director William Casey loathed the idea of oversight by any

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2011): 45. Willard C. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 42, 323. Robert J. McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center: The Cold War, the Third World, and the Transformation in U.S. Strategic Thinking,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 24. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 114, 228. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 334. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 7, 122, 288, 628, 640. Elizabeth D. Samet, *Looking for the Good War: American Amnesia and the Violent Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021). Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 224. David Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film* (Chicago and Edinburgh: Fitzroy Dearborn/Edinburgh University Press, 1999). Spenser, “Standing Conventional Cold War History on its Head,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 386.

<sup>7</sup> Secrecy was crucial to covering up the real history of each intervention—which came in the wake of decades of disasters, each of which had started out as promises of success without public exposure. The past was obscured from the top decision-makers themselves: the few neoconservatives who even knew about the 1953 coup in Iran declared that it was irrelevant to the 1979 Islamist Revolution: it was just a shocking attack that needed to be dealt with, not explained. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 89-90, 166-68. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 154, 173, 176, 204-05. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 257. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983): 132, 139. Ned O’Gorman, “The Logic and Rhetoric of Power: George F. Kennan, Paul H. Nitze, and Planning for Cold War,” in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War: The Rhetoric of Hearts and Minds* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018): 330. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 115. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 210.



elected representative other than the President: during wartime, he believed that he had the right to lie to the public in the name of preventing the designated enemy from learning his plans.<sup>8</sup>

Afghanistan was a good opportunity, Casey said, because “Usually it looks like the big bad Americans are beating up on the natives. Afghanistan is just the reverse. The Russians are beating up on the little guys.”<sup>9</sup> In Laos, one of the CIA trainers of the Hmong said had “a sense that we had finally found people who would fight the communists and occasionally defeat them in guerrilla warfare. It was a sacred war. A good war.”<sup>10</sup> But the Cold Warriors remained unable to understand why they could not simply replicate the French Resistance or Polish Home Army in Ukraine or Albania, in China or Korea (Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine”; Chapter 3, “The Global News War” and “The Reagan Doctrine”).<sup>11</sup>

U.S. Cold Warriors simply equated revolutionary nationalist movements with the fascist aggression against Ethiopia and Manchuria of the 1930s. History was reduced to crude analogy: if Washington allowed a new “Munich” by abdicating its responsibility to the rest of the world

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<sup>8</sup> E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987): 23-25, 49, 130.

<sup>9</sup> Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 164. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 226.

<sup>10</sup> This contrasts with their orders to gather cellophane bags full of human ears, which Tony Poshepny used to shock his Yalie superior officer. One trainer of the Hmong “Secret Army” was shaken after they were chased out of Laos itself, cursing himself as a “Judas goat” who had led a flock to slaughter and eliminated a whole generation in a meat grinder: two decades later he worried, “I wonder how the CIA officers leading the Miskito Indians to fight in Nicaragua will regard themselves in ten years.” Rep. Charlie Wilson had similarly been swept up in revolutionary (or counterrevolutionary) mystique: George Crile III writes how “Wilson had always told his colleagues that Afghanistan was the one morally unambiguous case that the United States had supported since World War II,” but after their “victory” he was forced to watch them revert to “nothing more than feuding warlords obsessed with settling generations-old scores” with the hundreds of millions’ of heavy arms he himself had given them. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 174. Robert Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 2012): 203. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 253-55.

<sup>11</sup> Agents working with the Kurds of Iran and Iraq in the 1970s and the Miskito of 80s Nicaragua also said that they felt justified working with them—until the other “freedom fighters” clashed with their initial idealism. The OSS’s clandestine experience required friendly populations, locals and ex-soldiers who could provide shelter, healthcare, and communications. A large factor in covert-war failure was the CIA’s inability to grasp the reason why the French and Italian Resistance largely overlapped with the Communist Parties—which in turn weren’t Stalin’s slaves opening the gate to the Red Army. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 131. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 63. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 29, 70-71. Jack Terrell, with Ron Martz, *Disposable Patriot: Revelations of a Soldier in America’s Secret Wars* (Washington: National Press Books, 1992). Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 68.

by “appeasing” Moscow’s supposed influence, there would be a “new Pearl Harbor.”<sup>12</sup> To the Cold Warriors, any dockworkers’ strike or surprise election could be a sign that the KGB was on the move (or at least poised to take advantage). They were certain that Moscow operated through avenues so subtle that they left behind no trace (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives”; Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security”). Cold Warriors were explicit that nationalism, independence, condemnation of economic exploitation, or the participation of left-wing parties would mean “subversion by ballot” for the democracy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The chiefs at Langley had always fretted about this second “Pearl Harbor” (which Moscow was never planning); in 2001 the CIA then missed an attack that produced casualties and shock on the same level as Pearl Harbor—ironically caused by previous covert-war efforts (below, “5: Criminality and Extremism”). 1940s reports described Stalin’s master plan as starting with Greece, Germany, France, and Italy, followed by an atomic first strike on the United States and *Blitzkrieg* out to Iraq, Britain, Spain, and Norway—allegations that were “not just fanciful but deliberately misleading and downright dishonest,” with no evaluation of the Red Army’s position after 25 million Soviet deaths. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 329. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 171-72. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 86-89. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 90-91. McPherson, “U.S. Government Responses to Anti-Americanism at the Periphery,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 83. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 100. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 218.

<sup>13</sup> After winning a plurality in the legislature 1946, the Stalinist Czechoslovak Communist Party’s militants occupied all the ministries and union “self-defense” militias armed themselves 1948, while the Army stayed neutral. 1940s and 50s thinkers from Karl Popper to Herbert Marcuse agreed that democracies that allowed an inherently antidemocratic movement to participate would cease to be democracies, Sidney Hook explicitly defending the use of the 1940 Smith Act against the Communist Party of the United States as well as Hitler’s U.S. advocates. Elections were potential threats to democracy—unless the public voted the *correct* way. Most Cold Warriors actually did have a more realistic view of the Politburo—secretive, difficult, and unreliable, but still human, with rational security interests, goaded into interventions by supposed “satellite states” like North Korea and China, a siege mentality rather than belief in its invincible conquest of the world, and even willing to pursue constructive Superpower relations. However, “surprises” or “crises” such as Korea, Hungary, Berlin, Cuba, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, Angola, Iran, and Afghanistan allowed the hardliners to roll the consensus back to the view that the Kremlin were the new Nazis, “monsters of sorts ... lacking in all the elements of common humanity—men dedicated to the destruction or to the political undoing or enslavement of this country and its allies.” “The Truman doctrine assumed that no one would be free to choose unless the USSR was kept at tank’s length.” Washington’s self-appointed foreign-policy planners held that the elected and independent left-wing parties of France, Italy, Greece, Iran, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Vietnam represented only terror, controlled press, rigged elections, gulags. Therefore the people could not be *free* to choose unless Communist parties were forcibly prevented from any involvement in the state—otherwise the countries forfeited their sovereignty from U.S. intervention (in the name of fighting the “intervention” of an “alien doctrine”). McGehee’s moment of doubt came when he revealed that the Communists could not be defeated in Vietnam and, worse, that the National Liberation Front not only had local support but numbered in the millions, rather than a few thousands of cutthroats despised by the peasantry, as Bangkok and Saigon had claimed. There were ten or a hundred times more NLF members than the top officers and officials in Washington and Arlington had insisted: and peasants fed and recruited for the NLF, participated in its political action, joined its Farmers’ Liberation Association and Women’s Liberation Association. Of course if President Johnson publicly admitted this, he would have had to withdraw from South Vietnam altogether, and he snapped that the CIA’s true reports were like the times when his boyhood cow “old Bessie swung her shit-smear tail through that bucket of milk.” Resilient and popular support was not *conceivable* under the dominant Cold-War ideology. McGehee developed *more* effective counterinsurgency tactics in Thailand than any deployed in South Vietnam—but even empirically-better counterinsurgency was dis-

There were several periods of thaw (or at least pragmatism) in the Cold War—but after each détente came the retrenchment.<sup>14</sup> For over half a century, one Administration after another would revert to the belief that a defeat “anywhere is a defeat everywhere,”<sup>15</sup> fleeing back to heated Red-Scare clichés, as though Joseph Stalin had never died. Even the most hardline could cultivate Marxist-Leninist allies for Washington: Marshal Josip Broz Tito’s Yugoslavia, Nicolae Ceausescu’s Romania, the People’s Republic of China and its allies—the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and even the Khmer Rouge government-in-exile.<sup>16</sup>

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missed, with prejudice. Likewise when the CIA’s Tracy Barnes commissioned a poll in Cuba and found overwhelming support for Castro, Johnson simply discarded the results since they went against the policies already decided upon. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 244. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 64, 77, 103, 113. Siba N. Grovogui and Lori Leonard, “Uncivil Society: Interrogations at the Margins of Neo-Gramscian Theory,” in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 174. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 174. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 42-43, 90-92, 94, 117. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 44. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 229-30. Gilbert M. Joseph, “What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 13. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 46-47, 75, 92, 107, 111-12, 292, 301, 318-19, 329. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 100, 103, 107, 109, 112-18, 121-23. John M. Murphy, “In Pursuit of Peace: John F. Kennedy, June 1963,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 374. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 29. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 22, 26, 145, 164, 246, 248.

<sup>14</sup> Nikita Khrushchev with Eisenhower and Kennedy, Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Zedong with Nixon, Mikhail Gorbachev with Reagan, even under Vladimir Putin periodically. “Détente” originally applied to Richard Nixon’s new approach to Soviet (and Chinese) cooperation, but also applies to Eisenhower, Carter, and Reagan and George H.W. Bush after 1985. The hardliners attacked the concept of détente itself: this was not a “bias” in analysis, but a dismissal of the notion that the Soviet Union could even be analyzed or treated diplomatically. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 122, 303.

<sup>15</sup> Dean Acheson had to admit that he had been exaggerating when he wrote 1950 that “to the Kremlin the most mild and inoffensive free society is an affront, a challenge and a subversive influence.” Truman himself thoroughly refused Paul H. Nitze’s NSC 68 (1950), putting the amateurish work under lock and key; the Doolittle Report was not well-received either. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 123. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 89, 292, 315. Murphy, “In Pursuit of Peace,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 374. Sewell and Ryan, “Introduction,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 4.

<sup>16</sup> Tito’s Yugoslavia was even called Washington’s “most precious asset” and given Marshall Plan funds for “regime maintenance.” The Cold Warriors were still fixated on the Soviet Union, but to the extent that they were willing to see the Non-Aligned leaders Tito, Ceausescu, Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, Zaire’s Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, Guinea’s Ahmed Sékou Touré, Somalia’s Siad Barre, even the Khmer Rouge as workable allies (see below, “5: Criminality and Extremism,” n169). Peru’s Maoist Shining Path was an explicit narcoterrorist organization, but even at the height of Reagan’s anticommunist crusade and War on Drugs it did not draw a fraction of the response as the little island of Grenada. Long-term designations of states as enemies and allies are “path-dependent” rather than based on U.S. self-interest or rationality—especially since long-term foreign-policy officials are a small, closed and self-selected group of state actors: they have never shown forgiveness for the Cuban, Libyan, and Iranian Revolutions, whereas Jerusalem or Riyadh are given an alarming amount of forbearance. Moscow has even periodically asked to

Reagan called the Soviet Union “the focus of evil in the modern world” and the sole aggressor behind four decades of the Cold War,<sup>17</sup> and his Administration insisted that Nicaragua was a unique atrocity in Latin America while the military regimes of Guatemala and Chile were just victims of bad press orchestrated by the Kremlin (Chapter 3). Lt. Col. North was not condemned by Sen. Daniel Inouye as a “rogue elephant” threatening the President, but as “adopt[ing] and embrac[ing] one of the most important tenets of communism and Marxism: the ends justify the means” (Chapter 8, “Conclusion”).

“the principle of neutrality, which pretends that a nation can best gain safety for itself by being indifferent to the fate of others ... has increasingly become an obsolete conception and, except under very exceptional circumstances, it is an immoral and shortsighted conception”<sup>18</sup>

—Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, 1956

“John Foster Dulles had taken the view that anything we can do to bring down these neutralists—[these] anti-imperialists, anti-colonialists, extreme nationalist regimes—should be done”<sup>19</sup>

—Amb. Harrison M. Symmes

## 1: Refusal of Neutrality

The Cold Warriors perceived all the peripheral and postcolonial states of the world as simply a single undifferentiated space, a “flat” chessboard between the two ultimate victors of World War II.<sup>20</sup> Those states that declared themselves “nonaligned” or refused to cut off Soviet contact were seen as secretly on the Kremlin’s side. Cultural or historical explanations that went

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join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, then confronted with categorical rejection. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 57. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 201, 239. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 127, 152-56. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 548-49.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, FL,” Mar. 8, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-convention-national-association-evangelicals-orlando-fl>.

<sup>18</sup> O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 108.

<sup>19</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 137.

<sup>20</sup> McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 23.

beyond a strict East–West game were dismissed as false equivalence at best, or condemned as “both-siding,” “what-aboutism,” and apologism for dictatorship.<sup>21</sup>

The Domino Theory functioned as an ideology (Introduction, “Ideology and Hegemony”): the centuries of local conflicts, society, or politics were ignored, and the entire country was instead treated as mere means towards an undefined outside goal. Laos or Katanga were never considered on their own terms, only the fear of a grand Kremlin design to stab towards Thailand, the Persian Gulf, India, or the Panama Canal, presumably ending with ending with “America, the last domino.”<sup>22</sup>

Harry Truman saw the Soviets as advancing in states he had previously judged peripheral—Greece and Korea; Richard Bissell, Jr., warned that “The true weakness in America’s de-

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<sup>21</sup> Interventionists assumed that the KGB was already intervening in the target state, and with the advantage of no free press, and would intervene once it detected that the CIA was. Some even hoped after 1991 that new access to Soviet archives would rewrite Cold War history, but nothing groundbreaking has been documented. This resembles the reasoning of the “theory of two fires” (Chapter 7, “López Reyes: Interregnum,” n126) that Latin American counterrevolution was primarily state forces versus the armed guerrillas, both of whom victimized civilians. Christopher Andrew, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 78. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 87. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 9, 206. Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002): 78. Michael D. Gambone, *Small Wars: Low-Intensity Threats and the American Response Since Vietnam* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013): 81. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 78, 282. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 72. Jeane Kirkpatrick, “The Myth of Moral Equivalence,” *Imprimis* 15:1 (January 1986): 1-6, <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/the-myth-of-moral-equivalence>. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield* 2011: 26, 163, 187. David Ronfeldt, *U.S. Involvement in Central America: Three Views from Honduras* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1989): 14.

<sup>22</sup> The “domino theory” did not have to be constantly prevalent if it was always the fallback analysis after any setback or crisis for U.S. interests—that the wars in Indochina were secretly aiming at Taiwan and the Straits of Malacca, that the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) was not just an Angolan combatant but directed against the regimes in Zaire and South Africa. It dismissed any local or even Kremlin factors, distorting the intelligence-production process all the way up and down the chain. The KGB was assumed (in the absence of any actual knowledge) to operate beyond the basic norms of human conduct—beyond humanity—so to the Cold Warriors no political action or psychological warfare could be ruled out. The theory was directly derived from Hitler—first taking German Austria, then the Sudeten mountains around Bohemia, then Danzig and Memel within two years of the 1938 Munich Agreement, and then all Europe was under the iron heel from Brest to Stalingrad. This was also entirely false to the historical events of 1938-49: Nazi Germany’s sensational expansion was not due to a covert “fifth column,” and the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe was through T-34s and then NKVD troops, not political subversion. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation* (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 5-7. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 95-96. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 12. Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984).

fenses” was in the emerging “Third World,” not West Germany.<sup>23</sup> But Washington was merely *playing* at strategy: Cold-War thinking meant that was no longer any possible way to distinguish between “vital” and “peripheral” interests: rhetorical commitment to a target state was enough to continue military involvement, in order to avoid being seen as “backing down.”<sup>24</sup> So now peasants in the smallest and most distant nations—Cambodia, Grenada, Nicaragua, Chad—were interpreted as long-range threats to the well-being and even existence of the continental United States itself. The *more* remote from oilfields and ocean straits the state, the less of a security or economic interest it had, the greater the potential danger it was believed to pose as a “soft target” for the Kremlin. The CIA was able to draw disproportionate resources and build up tens of thousands of infantry and its own air force *because* they were considered areas where the international press or the Kremlin could draw relatively little attention.<sup>25</sup> Without any means of evaluation and analysis, the United States did not have a foreign *policy*, unable to determine which countries might become important, which leaders to overthrow.<sup>26</sup> Afghanistan and Honduras were

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<sup>23</sup> The Truman and Eisenhower Administrations focused on Europe and Japan, or on sea access—Malacca, Panama, Gibraltar, the Dardanelles, the Suez, Hormuz. But Truman felt hawkish domestic pressure to respond in Korea, wrecking his strategy of “containment”: Stalin was even surprised as nearly 2 million U.S. men were mobilized after Truman declared Korea outside the boundaries of the states that Washington could guarantee. Eisenhower redirected the CIA away from espionage in Europe to operations in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Austin Carson, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018): 160-3. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 145. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 1. Sewell and Ryan, “Introduction,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 3-4, 21. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 76.

<sup>24</sup> This quickly led to the deadly logic of the Vietnam War—to not ever appear to be “backing down,” to send in more soldiers to . McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 20. David Ryan, “The Peripheral Center: Nicaragua in U.S. Policy and the U.S. Imagination at the End of the Cold War,” in *ibid.*: 293.

<sup>25</sup> Dulles still saw Asia and Latin America as a sideshow compared to Europe—but was met with only failure in the zones he believed crucial: coups in the newly-designated “Third World” were simply easier to pass off as successes. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 47, 56, 71, 82, 126. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 38. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 23. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 107. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 62.

<sup>26</sup> To foreign-policy historians, Idealism is characterized as a counterpart (rather than an contradictory opposite) of Realism: both doctrines operate on the same, hegemonic assumptions that blinded Washington to any honest interpretation of world events, while condoning authoritarianism (as Kirkpatrick’s “lesser evil” against totalitarianism in her condemnation of Kissinger-style Realism). The Realists explained the self-defeating course of the Cold War as warfare being the usual condition of states, with no moral or legal niceties: therefore neutrality today meant hostility tomorrow, and the health and wellbeing of the Continental United States depended on pacifying a “strategic zone” that expanded until it covered the globe. Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori note that neither the Realists (who put

used as mountainous backwaters in the 1980s—always aimed at neighboring countries, rather than treating the country as of any real importance in itself.<sup>27</sup>

The authors of U.S. foreign policy gave short shrift to the idea that a smaller state might have a need to be friendly with Moscow as well as Washington. Those governments that established trade and military agreements with the Soviet Union, nationalized resources, or encouraged working-class political and economic involvement were targeted as Soviet beachheads. Social programs, unions, infant-mortality, health, literacy, agrarian reform, and food sufficiency posed only the “threat of a good example.”<sup>28</sup> Instead, U.S. Cold-War planners deemed neutrality and even democracy as simply pipelines to dictatorship. Eisenhower said that he mistrusted neutral states such as Sukarno’s Indonesia even more than Soviet-Bloc ones, insisting that Moscow was “the ultimate winner in any revolution” and that the United States was the loser in any case

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national interest above ideology in explaining state behavior, but who they also describe as cod Machiavellians playing at geostrategy) nor the Idealists (with their lofty disregard for the mere history and reality of a target state) of the Cold War could identify the weakness of an unpopular but heavily-armed regime like the Somozas’, nor the Sandinistas’ persistence, nor Washington’s relationship with Belgrade or Riyadh and Islamabad. Combined with the domino theory, whatever happened in even the remotest country was a threat to all humanity, and especially the United States: interpreting any change as a secret Soviet takeover quickly undermined the actual U.S. interests. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 14-19, 24, 30, 50, 52-53, 117, 119, 131, 179, 202. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 225. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 339.

<sup>27</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 136-74. McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 19.

<sup>28</sup> Khrushchev explicitly pointed to this non-exclusiveness as a considerable advantage for 1960s Soviet foreign policy. Chomsky, the major popular Cold War “revisionist,” theorizes that U.S. interventionism is driven by the need to punish and “condition” states until they offer up unrestrained economic exploitation of their resources and proletarians—but also concludes that the political and covert interventions required to do so actually damage the local private sectors, U.S. investors’ holdings, or overall development (see Conclusion, “Future Possibilities,” n20). Theories of imperialism (as opposed to hyperpower) have U.S. foreign policy motivated by keeping the rest of the world (European Powers included) dependent and developing, as opposed to *developed*. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 47-50, 54, 67-68, 72, 82-84, 93, 125, 129, 192. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 8-10. Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 1. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (Tucson, Ariz.: Odonian Press, [1992] 2005): 44. Ronald W. Cox, *Power and Profits: U.S. Policy in Central America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994): 115. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 200, 203. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 96-97, 177-78. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 192.

of change.<sup>29</sup> His Administration insisted that it was the duty of all countries to choose one camp—that nonalignment was a contradiction in terms. Eisenhower agreed with the Dulles brothers that any government not openly allied with them should be changed, through deniable methods.<sup>30</sup> Indonesia’s government was the first to be explicitly targeted for its nonalignment, in 1958; neutralist candidates would likely have won in South Vietnam’s 1955 and 1971 elections but were blocked; and Laos’s neutral government was overthrown 1959/60.<sup>31</sup>

Secrecy allowed decades of critical misjudgments: Washington covertly worked to overthrow leaders such as Laotian neutralists, Patrice Lumumba, Fidel Castro, and the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA),<sup>32</sup> impelling them to turn to the only other superpower available to provide political, economic, and military aid: Washington then interpreted this as a first strike by Moscow, allowing the intervention to become its own justification—that previous neutrality was just typical foreign perfidy aimed at victimizing the United States once again—a “loop” (Introduction, “Frames and Loops”) justifying the initial assault.

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<sup>29</sup> Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 27, 76

<sup>30</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 119, 135. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 166. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 77, 136.

<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower himself said over 80% of South Vietnamese would have voted for neutral reunification 1956, but Diem canceled the referendum. By 1971 Hanoi was ready to settle the war with mutual withdrawal and a neutral South—but only with NLF participation in the government and a free election, which would likely result in the victory of a noncommunist moderate like Gen. Duong Van Minh, who had overthrown Diem. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 142-3. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 91-92, 104, 119. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: ix. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 159. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 133. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 169. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 345-6. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 212.

<sup>32</sup> The Kremlin had turned down the Congolese independence movement’s request for assistance against Belgium 1958. Over 1960-63 the Vientiane Station encouraged Maj. Gen. Phoumi Nosavan to break the ceasefire with the Pathet Lao guerrillas against the U.S. military’s advice: his forces were thrown from the border with China to that with Thailand, but Washington could now accuse the Pathet Lao of violating the ceasefire and sent 5,000 soldiers to northern Thailand. Agostinho Neto was closer to Tito and opposed by pro-Soviet factions in the MPLA, leading Moscow to terminate aid in the 1960s. Brzezinski later bragged about encouraging Afghan paramilitaries a month before the 1979 invasion, to lure the Soviets into a full-scale intervention that would discredit them internationally and serve its own “Vietnam” (as though Moscow had inveigled Washington into its invasion fifteen years earlier): historians judge this to be overblown: the mujahedeen had no organization, sanctuary, or local sponsor to protect supply lines. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 92. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 248. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 336. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 37, 48, 185. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 158. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 64. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 274, 440-42, 470. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 648.



OSS paratroopers had brought arms and supplies to the Vietminh, saving Ho Chi Minh himself from malaria.<sup>33</sup> Ho's 1945 proclamation of independence and neutrality cited the United States's 1776 Declaration, and he hoped for aid from Truman—who instead reluctantly backed France's 1946-54 war. To the 1950s Cold Warriors, the *lack* of proof that Ho was subordinated to the Kremlin was itself cited as proof that he was so loyal to them that the Soviets did not have to directly supervise him.<sup>34</sup> U.S. intelligence described Iran's Mohammad Mosaddegh as a "Communist dupe" in 1953, a nationalistic "near lunatic" who wept in public and wore pajamas. But at the same time Mosaddegh told the U.S. Embassy that he expected to be rescued by them; Eisenhower never believed the Prime Minister was Soviet-aligned—even proposing giving him a \$100 loan to stabilize his government.<sup>35</sup>

Richard Nixon had concluded in 1954 that Sukarno was "completely noncommunist"—but when the Indonesian President went to Moscow and Beijing after visiting Washington 1956, U.S. decision-makers interpreted that as a betrayal. Jakarta's Station chief sent heated cables 1957: "Situation critical. ... Sukarno a secret communist. ... Send weapons," convincing the Dul-

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<sup>33</sup> Britain and the United States had been strongly involved with the left-wing guerilla leaders of Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaya during the war. The reshuffling of the Allies immediately after the war saw OSS-assisted guerillas in Albania, Greece, the Philippines, and China now attacked as Kremlin agents. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 18. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 130. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 210, 548-49.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. analysts even considered that Ho might be anti-Stalinist when he obtained recognition from Yugoslavia. But North Vietnam was also recognized by Moscow and Beijing 1950, which "confirmed" instead the Domino Theory that any neutralist was secretly a Red. Acheson said this "should remove any illusions as to the 'nationalist' nature of Ho Chih [*sic*] Minh's aims, and reveal Ho in his true colors as a mortal enemy of native independence in Indo China," reframing any Western intervention as a *restoration* of Vietnamese national independence from foreign puppets. Truman opposed France's return to Vietnam, whereas the French Communists' Maurice Thorez said they "did not want to liquidate the French position in Indo-China." 1950-52 U.S. aid was \$100 million a year and by 1953 Washington was paying 40% of Paris's war budget in Indochina—while Eisenhower and the CIA evaluated that military victory was impossible. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 173. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 127-28. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 149-52. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 162-65. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 140.

<sup>35</sup> Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 284. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 74-76. Andrew J. Rotter, "Narratives of Core and Periphery: The Cold War and After," in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 66. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 84-85, 560.

les brothers in charge of the State Department and the CIA that Sukarno was “past the point of no return.” But the Embassy and CIA headquarters then reported that the generals considered themselves “sons of Eisenhower” and Sukarno remained favorable to the same superpower that had just tried to overthrow him 1957-58.<sup>36</sup>

By 1958 the U.S. alliance with Cuba’s Fulgencio Batista had proved internationally embarrassing (below, “5: Criminality and Extremism”), CIA officers proposing to secretly give Castro’s men cash and guns. “My staff and I were all Fidelistas!” after the fall of Havana 1959, Miami’s Station chief recounted. Eisenhower refused to open full relations with the Revolutionary regime, and then authorized assassination in 1960: there was nothing Castro *could* do to win over the Administration.<sup>37</sup>

In 1960 Prime Minister Lumumba of the former Belgian Congo was faced with a mutiny, and requested Soviet aid (after being refused by Eisenhower). The U.S. Embassy and CIA Station in Léopoldville insisted that it was a “classic Communist effort [to] takeover [the] government.” The ambassador called him “a Castro or worse,” Foggy Bottom remotely diagnosing him as “messianic ... irrational and almost psychotic,” the CIA saying he was a dope-addled dupe. But the White House had already been planning his ouster three days before he requested the Soviet aid, commissioning a sniper and sending the CIA’s “poisoner-in-chief” with an untraceable

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<sup>36</sup> As early as 1955 the CIA and White House had seriously plotted Sukarno’s assassination, alongside China’s Zhou Enlai. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 124-26. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 108. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 143-46, 148, 153.

<sup>37</sup> One CIA officer briefed Castro for his April-May 1959 New York visit, and hailed him as “a new spiritual leader of Latin American democratic and anti-dictator forces”; another insisted that “Castro is not only *not* a communist, but he is a strong anti-communist.” By December 1959 Dulles rewrote a Cabinet note for Castro’s “elimination” with “removal.” Sabotage began early 1960, detonating the French *La Coubre* in Havana harbor and killing dozens; even U.S. Agency for International Development employees were involved in assassination plots. The National Security Council demanded that the CIA find evidence of Soviet involvement in the Revolution before Castro’s 1960 turn to Moscow as a consequence of the assassination attempts. CIA analysts found that the Castro brothers were among the *more* moderate members of the July 26th Movement (against, say, Che Guevara or Camilo Cienfuegos); the Movement saw the island’s Communist Party as fusty and restricted to the cities. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 26-27, 175-76, 184, 319. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 142-44. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 58. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 206-09, 211, 264-65. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 155.

poison hidden in a tube of toothpaste. Until he was abducted, murdered, and his cadaver dismembered and dissolved in a barrel of acid in January 1961, Lumumba continued trying to get an appeal through to Washington.<sup>38</sup>

The “double game” of both negotiating with and trying to overthrow a leader remained a constant factor in covert foreign policy. In 1961 British Guiana’s Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan was being publicly wooed by the State Department, while the CIA covertly worked to overthrow him.<sup>39</sup> In 1965 an interim President of the Dominican Republic hurried to the Embassy for protection against the military’s airplanes—while the Armed Forces had simultaneously received U.S. approval to strafe his Presidential Palace.<sup>40</sup> Chile’s Salvador Allende was anxious to preserve full relations with Washington—even more so than his conservative predecessors—and hesitated to make any move towards Moscow even to save himself.

U.S. liberals applauded the overthrow of tyrants such as Batista or Somoza—but once Cuba or Nicaragua had failed to behave in ways recognizable within the U.S. context, they expressed a disenchantment at “betrayal” of the revolution.<sup>41</sup> Nicaragua’s Sandinistas provided the hawks with few possible atrocities to work with: they conducted no large-scale executions, did not repudiate the debt that the Somozas had acquired crushing their own populace, and avoided the other moves that Castro had conducted two decades earlier—all while believing the future of the Revolution depended on keeping good relations with Washington.<sup>42</sup> Managua saw little con-

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<sup>38</sup> Lumumba’s murder was followed by the possible shutdown of Dag Hammarskjöld as the UN Secretary-General headed for Katanga. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 219-21. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 274-78. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 162.

<sup>39</sup> Kennedy had said publicly that Jagan had won honestly—and next year approved \$2 million to drive him from power. London had not seen Jagan as a “second Castro” since 1961 and even British multinationals considered him the *best* potential British Guianese leader. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 5, 8, 15. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 192,

<sup>40</sup> O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 215-16.

<sup>41</sup> Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 264.

<sup>42</sup> Even Managua’s arming of the FMLN was done to overthrow a regime openly condemned by the Carter White House and too embarrassing to Reagan to support openly until it was “reformed” by the 1982 and 1984 elections.

tradition in overthrowing the hated genocidal Salvadoran armed forces after every branch of the U.S. Federal government had condemned them.<sup>43</sup>

“We had only minimal understanding of the history, culture, and politics of the people ... Our strategic interests were superimposed onto a region where our president had decided to ‘draw the line’ ”<sup>44</sup>

—Dick Holm, Directorate of Operations officer, on Laos

“I’m no linguist, but I’ve been told that in the Russian language there isn’t even a word for freedom.”<sup>45</sup>

—Ronald Reagan, 1985

“I thought the Iraqis were Muslims.”

—George W. Bush, after staffers attempted to explain Sunnis and Shi’ites (attributed), 2003

## 1: The Ignorant Armies

The planners of covert warfare relied on only superficial local knowledge—history, society, religion, government: the key criterion for intelligence was not accuracy or novelty, but whether it would serve the goal of doing *something* to intervene in a state once it had been designated as a target. The CIA favored action over analysis since 1953—leading to a fatal and permanent inability to properly identify and evaluate goals, allies, and enemies. They had no *strategy*, but were able to forge onwards even knowing if the operation was doomed (below, “3: “The

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Robert E. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 56.

<sup>43</sup> Nicaragua’s FSLN and El Salvador’s FMLN–FDR were markedly more U.S.-friendly than the Argentinean, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Contra officers of the 1979-83 wave of the Central American counterrevolution. Washington unsuccessfully sought non-Communist, non-dictator “third forces” in China and South Vietnam. By 1979 there was talk of “*somocismo* without Somoza” to avert Sandinista victory. Except for perhaps Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo, there was no civil ally who supported U.S. strategic and economic needs in Nicaragua, who would be able to provide the Reagan Administration with the hegemony it would require. Sandinista *Comandante* Edén Pastora was jettisoned in 1984 for his criticism of the CIA and his cocaine trafficking; the viable opposition candidate Arturo Cruz, Sr., was paid to withdraw from the 1984 presidential election against his own will so that Reagan could condemn it as a rigged farce; Violeta Chamorro only won in 1990, after Reagan’s departure. In El Salvador, José Napoleón Duarte remained in office only due to U.S. backing, and his Christian Democratic Party died with him. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 167-68. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 52, 54, 156. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 205, 211. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 60.

<sup>44</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 347. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 213.

<sup>45</sup> The word is *svoboda*. “Interview with Brian Widlake of the British Broadcasting Corporation,” Oct. 29, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/interview-brian-widlake-british-broadcasting-corporation>.

Specter of Failure”).<sup>46</sup> After all, was it not better to do anything, rather than nothing, however shaky the premises?

The CIA was unable to recruit even mid-level sources in Moscow and Beijing.<sup>47</sup> Allen Dulles discovered there *was* no CIA department to turn to when he wanted information on the Soviet Union. Attempts to remedy this, however, caused the deaths of thousands of loyal CIA recruits. The NKVD and other secret police agencies quickly captured the Latvians, Poles, or Albanians who had parachuted in to start or meet with guerrilla armies, executing or “turning” them and having them radio their handlers to send more guns, more money, more men: the CIA was enthused at their success.<sup>48</sup> The Seoul Station sent 2,000 men into North Korea—either

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<sup>46</sup> Ignorance (and “lobbying” by local Station officials and military attachés) meant decisions were biased from the start by a rapid set of identifications—a target state’s actors and factions split among “cowboys and Indians,” Hitlers and Chamberlains. But even absolute lack of understanding does not prevent *action*, backed by millions in cash and weapons. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 195.

<sup>47</sup> Between 1947 and 1991 the CIA devoted more than half of its personnel and 70% of overall resources to the Soviet Union: it could accurately decipher satellite data but missed every major political turn. In four decades the CIA only had three Soviet-Bloc agents of any intelligence value—all arrested and executed. Defectors such as Maj. Anatoly Golitsyn (1961), Col. Oleg Gordievsky (1974), or the Romanian Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa (1978) told U.S. hardliners what they wanted to hear. The only significant Iron-Curtain sources are Maj. Pyotr Popov (1953), Cols. Oleg Penkovsky (1960) and Ryszard Kuklinski (1972), and Adolf Tolkachev (1978), un-recruited “walk-ins” motivated by avoiding World War III by giving the opposing side the best knowledge about Soviet strategic weaponry. At least twelve CIA sources in the Soviet Union were executed one by one 1985-86 after being compromised by Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen, but Deputy Director Robert Gates covered up Ames’s betrayal and he was not arrested until 1994 (as for Hanssen, FBI headquarters put him in charge of finding the Soviet mole in the Bureau). New Director William H. Webster fell asleep at his first security briefing, where Ames was named. Vitaly Yurchenko (1985) exposed Ronald Pelton and Edward Lee Howard, but was either a double agent or simply frustrated, and embarrassingly *un*-defected at a restaurant. Rather than admit they had lost their most important sources, Gates knowingly approved reports full of KGB-planted disinformation for seven years. See below, “7: Counterproductive Consequences,” n199. Anne Cahn, *Killing Detente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998): 1. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 7, 35-36, 110-11, 291, 305, 341. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 461-70. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 195-97, 200-01, 232, 234-35, 416-17, 432-33, 448-50.

<sup>48</sup> It turned out that the new Agency had literally directly paid the NKVD millions in hard cash through the fictitious resistance movements the Soviets fabricated: the CIA would have been cut to pieces if that truth came out, but Sen. Joe McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) contented himself with false accusations the CIA was riddled with Soviet spies and sympathizers. Frank Wisner insisted “We’ll get it right next time!” so often it became his motto. Top spy-hunter James Jesus Angleton was convinced that all these “blown” operations meant that the KGB had penetrated the Agency at all levels: meanwhile he drank and discussed operations like the drop zones for Albania every week with his tutor and oldest confidant—the Soviet mole Kim Philby, and over two hundred Albanian paramilitaries were killed or lost. Instead, Angleton launched a mole hunt that tore apart all intelligence on the Soviet Union for a decade, shutting down operations against actual Soviet targets, sabotaging Station chiefs, and stonewalling true intelligence. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 156. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 56-57, 62, 64, 74-75. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 45-47, 67, 105, 107, 232, 234-35, 276-77.

killed or double agents. None of the 200 assets sent to the People’s Republic of China or the 500 sent to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam made it out alive.<sup>49</sup>

Top CIA officials confidentially admitted that they were going into Guatemala completely “blind” 1950-54—no spies in the capital, no knowledge of the army’s loyalty.<sup>50</sup> The 1960-61 Bay of Pigs planners in Miami had no clue what the Cuban people wanted, just the promises of a mass uprising fed to them by the exiles. They insisted cancellation would risk letting Castro survive and expose U.S. involvement (which happened anyway). David Atlee Phillips recollected that they had always never thought *why* they were subverting a particular country, only *how* to accomplish it quickly and deniably.<sup>51</sup>

Vietnam was subjected to a full air and ground war—with zero military intelligence. Directors Richard Helms and John McCone admitted the Agency knew it did not know a hint “of Vietnamese history, society, and language.” The idea that peasants would cooperate with “the Communists” was inexplicable to analysts in 1960s Asia, who interpreted events in Vietnam solely in terms of collaborationists with the Nazi Germans or Imperial Japanese in the 30s and 40s. The Saigon Station simply assumed the Vietcong were a mere handful with nothing to offer other than the threat of lead.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> In 1951 the CIA’s “China desk” convinced themselves there were up to a million Kuomintang guerrillas awaiting Washington’s support, never considering whether this phantom army was simply fabricated in Hong Kong or Taipei and by their own wishful thinking. The Vietnamese spies were followed by 650 commandos (partly because the program’s deputy director was literally an agent for Hanoi). A 1959 internal memo grumbled that “we might as well shoot them ourselves.” Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 146-49, 153. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 101, 171. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 132-36, 340. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 54-62, 213-14.

<sup>50</sup> Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 104. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 93.

<sup>51</sup> Casey’s CIA knew nothing about rebel leader Hissène Habré in 1982, only that he promised them that he would use Chad to fight Libya. His dictatorship was given half a billion dollars in eight years, against the stated policy of peaceful national resolution of Chad’s civil war. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 54. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 114-16, 261. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 383.

<sup>52</sup> By contrast, a chief Saigon asset was even invited to use a CIA safehouse “to pursue his personal activities as a practicing sadist, dumping bodies into a canal at dawn.” Stockwell’s superior made it clear to him that the actions of officials of sovereign South Vietnam were their own business, and that if he did not have the stomach to work with them he was welcome to ask for transfer (Saigon Station quickly learned not to tell Stockwell anything more, letting

The practices of secrecy meant that Langley could not recognize even its own fictions: news stories planted by CIA agents were *unwittingly* incorporated as intelligence and believed as true by the middle managers.<sup>53</sup> John Stockwell wrote a melodrama for the southern African press about the capture of (nonexistent) Soviet advisers, Cuban soldiers raping and pillaging, and then captured and executed by an all-woman UNITA firing squad. He was dismayed to find the press taking it as genuine, over fifty U.S. and European journalists following up on the false story; he found Langley officers were excited by *his* hoax.<sup>54</sup>

One remarkable common factor in covert-war history is the CIA's unfamiliarity with even the *language* of the country (let alone history or current politics).<sup>55</sup> Only a handful of agents spoke Russian; Seoul had 200 officers in the 1950s—not one speaking Korean, allowing the fabrication of almost all Korean intelligence. The CIA's one Hungarian-speaker in 1956 was rele-

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him continue to operate with distance—and a clear conscience). U.S. forces never suspected that there were 6 million in the National Liberation Front until 1975—ten or a hundred times more than either Langley or the Pentagon estimated. See above, “0: Premises,” n13. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 100, 103, 107, 125, 142-45, 184. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 305, 387. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 218, 244

<sup>53</sup> “Blowback” originally meant the unwitting treatment of disinformation planted years earlier as genuine intelligence, such as Dr. Tom Dooley III’s CIA-supervised and -distributed stories about the Vietminh disemboweling a thousand pregnant women and jamming chopsticks into children’s ears to keep them from hearing the Gospel. Although it was propaganda from the cruder era of the 1950s, the CIA’s own recruitment had been boosted by U.S. citizens desiring to fight these vile invaders of the South. The falsehood of the Dooley legends had been uncovered by the Catholic Church’s Devil’s Advocate during the failed candidacy for his sainthood. “Blowback” in the 80s was expanded to refer to the side-effects of coups or alliances with terrorists and cartels (which would arrive decades later). McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 132, 140.

<sup>54</sup> Jonas Savimbi was forced to admit that UNITA had no Cuban or Russian prisoners: not only did Stockwell’s planted stories draw the CIA into an unwinnable covert war, the details he had fabricated backfired, drawing too much need for *verification*. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 120. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 448.

<sup>55</sup> This is not altogether culpable: the CIA was a brand-new intelligence agency and with the war’s end it had to know and gather German, Albanian, Korean, Chinese, Russian, Thai, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, deal with the histories and politics of 80 countries, half of them newly-independent from jealous colonial old Powers. But the CIA also gratuitously ignored publications on China and Vietnam available in French and English, scholars and State Department reports, and even the works of Mao or Ho themselves—which would force readers to reject “all of the pet theories floating around in the think-tanks.” The lack of even basic language skills is as much a deliberate choice as ignoring the death tolls of hundreds of their own agents for years, or allowing a mole hunt to tear apart the agency for decades. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 186.

gated to mailing letters,<sup>56</sup> and the Tehran Station had only one operative who knew Farsi 1979.<sup>57</sup> Only three analysts in the 90s spoke Arabic.<sup>58</sup> Casey put Rome's Station chief Dewey Clarridge in charge of operations in Latin America: he knew neither Spanish *nor* Italian. Casey, El Aguacate base chief Ray Doty, and ambassador to Nicaragua Anthony Quainton also spoke no Spanish: Félix Rodríguez was the only Spanish-speaker in the 1984-86 phase of operations against Nicaragua.<sup>59</sup>

By 1978 any signals—doubts about Shah Reza Pahlavi's durability or longevity or recommendations that the opposition be brought into the Iranian government—had been both missed and dismissed.<sup>60</sup> Nobody went “off the script” to warn the Stations in Bangkok or Tehran that the state was losing the support of its own people. The lone analyst who did venture into the streets of Tehran itself had his report suppressed as too pessimistic, directly contradicting decades of promises by the Shah and his military that Langley had lent its warrant to.<sup>61</sup> Case officers were forbidden from going out in Taipei or Bangkok, let alone the countryside. Agents cultivat-

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<sup>56</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 47, 57, 129, 259.

<sup>57</sup> Tim Weiner even describes the *offense* of the revolutionaries: “it was beyond insult for that officer not to speak the language or know the customs, culture, and history of their country.” David M. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005): 61. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 99. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 372.

<sup>58</sup> Even after the September 11 attacks the CIA denied employment to Arab-Americans seeking to become translators if they had any relatives in Mideast. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 349. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 453, 471-72, 510.

<sup>59</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 265-66, 417, 479. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 509, 514, 555. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 291. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 380. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 135, 391.

<sup>60</sup> In spite of a total relationship with the Shah's military and secret police, and with radio-interception posts across the country. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 101-03.

<sup>61</sup> Deputy Chief of Station Victor L. Tomseth even smiled pityingly at visiting U.S. academics warning in 1978 of surging opposition to the Shah and his backers; in 1979-81 he would be among those held hostage for 800 days. The lack of any understanding—of historical background, social cause, factions, culture, and religion—allowed the frame or narrative of a mindless “mad dog” that simply *appeared* one day and took over a place like Uganda or Cambodia, fulfilling the most hawkish fears that any country could “turn” at any time. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 92. Karen S. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 177. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 165. McPherson, “U.S. Government Responses to Anti-Americanism at the Periphery,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 88. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 368.



ing working-class contacts were even mocked openly at Anglophone local elites' *soirées* for having "gone native."<sup>62</sup>

Many CIA Stations—Athens, Bangkok, and Tehran—were so dependent on their host governments that the term "clientitis" was coined for the relationship.<sup>63</sup> Throwing *un-covert* galas for the local notables became such an important function of CIA Stations that photos of Bangkok's Station chiefs regularly appeared in the Thai press, and the house of Athens's Station chief was pointed out on sightseeing tours.<sup>64</sup> This dependency on partner regimes reached such heights that in 1954 Col. Albert Haney countermanded direct orders from Dulles himself to not fire on the British cargo ship *Springford*: "If you use my airfields, you take my orders!" Anastasio Somoza García demanded.<sup>65</sup>

Officers violated orders against direct involvement—one agent assigned to the chief of the Royal Lao Army "almost unilaterally changed U.S. policy" in Indochina, backing his 1960 overthrow of the neutralist government elected in 1958.<sup>66</sup> Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., had encouraged the 1963 South Vietnamese coup against Ngo Dinh Diem without Kennedy's

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<sup>62</sup> McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 51-52, 166.

<sup>63</sup> As early as 1956 Amb. David K.E. Bruce had warned that CIA agents were easily swayed by their local contacts, since they were often young and knew next to nothing about their host country. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 253. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 134-35, 331.

<sup>64</sup> The Bangkok Chief of Station eventually split his employee parties, some for those under light cover and the others for those under deep cover. Station chief Richard Welch's 1975 assassination by a Greek left-wing guerrilla splinter was used to blame whistleblower Philip Agee and pass the 1982 Intelligence Identities Protection Act forbidding revealing the name of agents or assets with covert relationship with an American intelligence organization. Langley had repeatedly warned Athens Station to move to a new residence, but officials concealed those warnings to blame Agee, manipulating information to generate a backlash against legitimate criticism and investigation. David S. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2018): 35, 49. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 168.

<sup>65</sup> Even the "rogue agency" narrative actually served to smooth things over with London after the incident—it was Nicaragua's autocrat, not anybody in Washington, responsible. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 81. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 116, 121, 148.

<sup>66</sup> Another agent was so enraged that the CIA had not prevented the 1958 election of the neutralist government that he cabled "Is HQ still in friendly hands?!" since it had made no move to overthrow the U.S.-friendly neutralist government and replace it with a more unconditional one that refused mere *neutrality*. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 137, 252. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 634.

approval.<sup>67</sup> Usually the Ambassadors were not even told about the *actual* foreign policy conducted by the CIA Station in their own Embassy. The Ambassador to Chile was reprimanded by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger for threatening to expel the Station chief over the 1970 plans for a coup. The consul-general in Luanda knew nothing of the arriving weapons to overthrow the same government that he was representing Washington to.<sup>68</sup> Superiors had to remind the officers that they represented *Washington*, not the local military or paramilitary they were supervising at the time.<sup>69</sup>

Covert warfare requires “staging areas,” “partner states,” and “third parties” to keep U.S. personnel out a warzone, avoid Congressional oversight, allow U.S. forces to stay out of combat—and fewer legal, political, and humanitarian restrictions. This means a level of dependency for bases, arms, intelligence, military support—and maintaining the processes of U.S. state secrecy. Maintaining covertness required deniability and distancing—and that gave an element of leverage and influence to U.S. partner states such as Honduras, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Zaire, even the People’s Republic of China.<sup>70</sup> The third-party allies fed Langley its best in-

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<sup>67</sup> The suggestions to put combat troops into South Vietnam had been to protect the projects in *Laos*. Eisenhower discussed Laos at length with his successor, but never mentioned *Vietnam*: even in 1964 Vietnam was an unknown issue in Washington. The Department of State, Pentagon, and the CIA’s Operations Directorate all fought Kennedy’s policy of neutralizing South Vietnam: the White House was not in final charge of foreign policy here. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 184-85. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 161. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 338.

<sup>68</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 273-74. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 170. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 134-35, 311.

<sup>69</sup> Some agents could indeed be considered “rogue”: Bill Harvey was fired for authorizing CIA personnel to accompany exile landings, which would have been catastrophic if they were killed or captured on Cuba. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 248. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 634.

<sup>70</sup> By Krishnan’s reckoning, these partner powers (either 1. Western European or 2. regional) are Britain (1940s Albania and Ukraine, Iran 1953); Taiwan (50s Burma); Honduras and Nicaragua (Guatemala 1954); Thailand (50s and 60s Laos, 80s Cambodia); Britain, Australia, and the Philippines (Indonesia 1957-58); Belgium and secessionist Katanga (Congo 1960); Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Cuba 1961); India (60s Tibet); Britain, Israel, and imperial Iran (directly against the Iraqi government 1963 and in support of the Kurds in the 70s); France (Biafra 1967-70); Zaire (formerly Congo) and South Africa (Angola 1975-76); China, Britain, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia (Afghanistan 1980s); Britain, France, and Qatar against Libya 2011; Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey against Syria 2010s. For the target country of 80s Nicaragua, Argentina and Israel provided strategic support, Honduras the ground bases) and El Salvador and Panama the airfields. Krishnan notes that these are generally *not* against prior rival states, but against the weakest of states: the choice of target is usually up to Washington, more than the partner

telligence, keeping the CIA under the (tacit or deliberate) influence of those states' agendas: avowed allies such as Israel, Ngo Dinh Diem, or Saddam Hussein prevented Langley from recruiting in their countries; Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence refused to let the CIA even cross the Afghan border.<sup>71</sup>

Truman was already criticized for setting precedent that any would-be dictator could cry threat from reformists and obtain U.S. cash and guns, inveigling Washington further and further into escalation by crying Red at any popular movement.<sup>72</sup> Covert-war historians warn against framing these states as “proxies” or “puppet regimes,” since that simply assents to the narrative that Moscow was controlling guerrillas as pawns on a chessboard (and justifying the U.S. intervention). The foreign-policy view that the world was a shadow chessboard between two Superpowers—“as if the United States and the USSR were the only two nations in the world,” each

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state (though if there was a previous rivalry, the partner state now might have U.S. backing to pursue its own feuds). But arguably the partner states' cooperation was a more significant factor than Washington's choice of which regional neighbor would be the “target state.” Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 55-59. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 20.

<sup>71</sup> To simply *dismiss* the CIA as a naïve newcomer does not analyze it as a historical subject—no less than insisting it was a puppet master behind every world event. Mossad could twist the arm of its new “protector,” but had to contend with a separate “Arab street” within the CIA—partner countries could continue their fights with one another in Langley itself. Kabul Station itself was small and restricted to monitoring Soviet radio frequencies while Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence ran the mujahedeen; in one incident CIA agents who did go to Afghanistan were almost executed on the spot as foreign infidels. The loss of control in Afghanistan was greater than anything in the unaccountable and extralegal Iran-Contra “Enterprise.” Casey visited Pakistan—but these were “the visits of someone who knew what he wanted, not one who wanted to learn the truth of the matter,” the same as the officers who had filtered in and out of the Saigon Station. See below, “5: Criminality and Extremism,” n174. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 168. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 341. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 170. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 339, 384-85. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 61. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 29. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 169. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 483. Marcus G. Raskin, “Out of the Shadows,” in Marcus G. Raskin and A. Carl LeVan, *In Democracy's Shadow: The Secret World of National Security* (New York: Nation Books, 2005): 302. Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (New York: New Press, 2015): 138. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 128, 225, 277, 326, 364, 425.

<sup>72</sup> George F. Kennan complained that the Truman Doctrine created a universal policy out of a unique and contemporaneous problem. One common narrative is that a covert action “spun out of control” or was “captured” or that U.S. agents “went native” and sided with their partner state or their guerrillas, but those conditions existed before any U.S. involvement. See Chapter 4, “The Sumpul Massacre: The U.S. Embassy,” n94. Joe Bryan, “Trust Us: Nicaragua, Iran-Contra, and the Discursive Economy of Empire” in Carole MacGranahan and John F. Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018): 365. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 54. Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 61. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 525-27.

country an empty tile, “a vast, undifferentiated space”—leaves no room for local society and history, and erases the agency of even small partner states.<sup>73</sup>

The Casey Doctrine (see Chapter 2) “bought in” to the existing Argentinean and Israeli networks set up in Central America before 1982: the *narco*-regime of President Gen. Luis García Meza of Bolivia and then the kingpin Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo (protected by the Mexican government), and linking up with exile Cuban traffickers and the death squads of Central America. This was all under the umbrella of “Operation Charly,” the Argentinean junta’s effort to hunt down Montoneros who fled to Nicaragua to join the Sandinistas.<sup>74</sup> But Central America was not a “proxy war” between two continental powers (*i.e.*, Argentina vs. Cuba): the armed forces and paramilitaries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua did not need outside encouragement to murder reformers and clergy, and the FSLN and FMLN did not follow any “Cuban model.”

“Yeah, well, that’s just tough. We’re gonna protect ourselves and we’re gonna go on protecting ourselves ‘cause we end up protecting all of you. ... We’ll intervene whenever we decide it’s in our national security interest to intervene, and if you don’t like it, lump it. Get used to it, world. We’re not gonna put up with nonsense. And if our interests are threatened we’re gonna do it.”

—Dewey Clarridge, interview with John Pilger, 2015

## 2: Victory Disease

One common explanation for why covert warfare is *covert* is that it could be controversial with the public or Senate. However, this is a firmly post-Vietnam explanation: the interven-

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<sup>73</sup> To Joe Bryan, such frames as “proxy forces,” “client states,” or “dress rehearsals” only affirm imperialism’s self-presentation of its power as unilateral, external, centralized—that such language reinforces that power and perpetuates this false assessment of power by reaffirming it. This applies to “Revisionist” models of the Cold War as well as the “Orthodox.” Taking such “hyperpower” for granted offers no way to create an analysis that can contest, resist, undermine U.S. interventionism. Of course, the contrary cliché that one particular ally was “the tail wagging the dog” and controlling Washington is no more helpful either. Bryan, “Trust Us,” in MacGranahan and Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* 2018: 365. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 318. McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 19.

<sup>74</sup> Carter had cut off regimes such as Guatemala or Argentina from U.S. aid, and they cooperated with one another instead in Central America—laundering money, trafficking guns, training National Guardsmen and paramilitaries in repression, and blackmailing and murdering Argentineans hiding as far as Miami or Paris. (For more on “partner states” see above, n70.) Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 47, 100, 147, 149-52. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 193, 212-14.

tions of the Casey Doctrine were Senate-funded and Reagan even launched a public-relations campaign to boost Contra support (Chapter 3).<sup>75</sup> Covert warfare and even direct censorship were widely accepted—at least in Congress and the national press—under the WWII notions of patriotism and sparing the lives of soldiers and sailors (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare”). Carl Bernstein noted that the press remained in war mode after Vietnam—simply not *asking* about covert operations. There was no *debate* on foreign policy or interventionism after Vietnam, just a shifting of boundaries to accommodate the first visible defeat (see Chapter 3). Any debates in Langley focused not on *whether* the project was necessary, just on how the target *should* have been attacked.<sup>76</sup>

Congress and the for-profit, commercial press were both aware and supportive of the 1954 “covert” overthrow of Guatemala.<sup>77</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson’s bombing of North Vietnamese naval bases was backed by 85% of the public and his approval rating rose from 42 to 72 percent for the Presidential election.<sup>78</sup> But any popular support relied on concealing crucial factors in order to be accepted—the fabrication of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, that the invasion of the Dominican Republic (which 76% of the public approved of) was aimed against a constitutional government. Even *which* faction was being backed by the Administration sometimes had to be concealed.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> This is Austin Carson’s *hawkish* domestic audience, civilian as well as military (below, “4: De-Escalation”). The public and Congresspersons did begin to question whether U.S. foreign policy needed to assist rebels who did not seem to reflect avowed U.S. values and principles in the slightest. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 379. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 72.

<sup>76</sup> Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 187, 189. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 628. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 557.

<sup>77</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 87. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 63, 112.

<sup>78</sup> Liberal Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Arkansas) misled his colleagues on the risks of escalation, to ensure Lyndon B. Johnson would win over Goldwater two months later; Johnson even feared Robert F. Kennedy would tell everyone “that I had betrayed John Kennedy’s commitment to South Vietnam.” Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 195. O’Gorman, “The Logic and Rhetoric of Power,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 336-38. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 106, 122. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 244

<sup>79</sup> Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare,” n58.

Members of Congress chided the Reagan Administration for not doing *enough* in Afghanistan, condemning the secret negotiations to suspend *mujahedeen* aid once the Red Army withdrew and to allow a coalition government with the People's Democratic Party—making the standard comparison to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler (above, "0: Premises").<sup>80</sup> Operation Cyclone's annual budget more than doubled every year 1984-86, to \$700 million, plus \$2 billion from Riyadh and another \$1 billion in humanitarian aid. Langley and the Islamabad Station in fact struggled to handle a budget that was four times higher than what it had requested.<sup>81</sup> Ecstatic hardliners kept the arms kept flowing to the most radical factions after the last Soviet left in 1989: another billion dollars over 1990-92.<sup>82</sup> The Cubans withdrew from Angola 1990-91—but the hawks continued UNITA's funding for two more years, allowing Jonas Savimbi to restart the war after his loss in the 1992 election, perpetuating the country's agony for another decade.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Secretary of State George Shultz in fact was a stronger supporter of giving the mujahedeen Stinger surface-to-air missiles than Director Casey, who worried about the "discoverability" of weapons unique to the U.S. military flooding the region, and corner Moscow by not letting them hold up their end of plausible deniability. Gen. Zia-ul-Haq was "very, very worried about introducing at that time blatant, undeniable evidence of superpower involvement." Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 265-66, 268, 273. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 130. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 115. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 484. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 50, 68-69.

<sup>81</sup> Operation Cyclone formed 80% of the Directorate of Operations' overseas budget—all Senate-approved. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 226, 311. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 480, 490. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 384, 420.

<sup>82</sup> Unable to actually understand the civil war, Deputy Director Robert Gates's men rebuked even Rep. Charlie Wilson when he backed a settlement to prevent a radical Islamist regime, hoping to continue the bloodshed to avoid any power-sharing with the People's Democratic Party: "We want to see Najibullah strung up by a light pole," one hawk said (which indeed occurred 1996—little thought was given to what would happen after the militants won). Continuing the civil war also let Islamabad keep the most fanatical mujahedeen and ISI agents busy (the same logic the Argentinean junta adopted sending its Operation Condor officers to Nicaragua, or Middle Eastern powers sending extremists to Syria after 2011—a part of what is termed the "disposal problem" (below, "6: Abandonment")). The CIA and ISI favored the more radical factions and detested warlords, on the grounds that someone like Jalaluddin Haqqani or Gulbuddin Hekmatyar would be *more* controllable since they lacked broad support and were more dependent on Islamabad (and in turn able to extort more concessions, fighting one another, or even threaten to switch back to Kabul's side. Jack A. Blum, "Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem," in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 87. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 39-40. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 381-83. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 145, 147-50. Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative* 2012: 201-04, 207. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 78, 80-81. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 421-22.

<sup>83</sup> Since they saw all conflict as mere Superpower competition for half a century, the Cold Warriors had really believed the MPLA was merely an insensate puppet and UNITA was the equal of the U.S. Founding Fathers or French

Accurate analysis within the CIA could also be punished: an honest evaluation would often require pullout, which was unacceptable at these stages in covert warfare (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare”). Administrations could tar public dissenters as unpatriotic—as practically KGB assets (Chapter 3; Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security”)—but the vast majority of CIA and Pentagon officials who knew of ongoing disaster did not risk ending their careers in order to inform the public.<sup>84</sup> Public leakers and dissidents—Frank Snepp, Philip Agee, Ralph McGehee, John Stockwell, Melissa Boyd Mahle, David S. McCarthy, David MacMichael, Ray McGovern—faced a well-established system set up to deal with doubts and reservations about paramilitary operations and question the loyalty and patriotism of even CIA agents.<sup>85</sup>

“Word should be gotten to Nixon that if [Nguyen Van] Thieu meets the same fate as Diem, the word will go out to the nations of the world that it may be dangerous to be America’s enemy, but to be America’s friend is fatal.”<sup>86</sup>

—Henry Kissinger, 1968

### 3: The Specter of Failure

Historian John Prados writes that “there have been only two types of CIA paramilitary endeavors—those that fail and those that come close to failure.” Every covert operation had a moment when it was on the brink—the Guatemalan rebel soldiers chased off by lightly-armed policemen and dockworkers, the Shah fleeing his country, Diem facing mutinies as early as 1960, the Hmong expelled from their homeland *in toto*, the mujahedeen stalled after years of

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Resistance; Angola’s agony was the legacy of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, not Portugal. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 580. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 125-27, 143, 149-50.

<sup>84</sup> Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 245.

<sup>85</sup> Many other agents may even have agreed with their criticisms, but *breaching* secrecy and going against the greater Cold-War ideology was perceived as a betrayal of the Memorial Wall full of stars that they walked past every morning.

<sup>86</sup> Kissinger meant the quip non-sarcastically, but Hungary’s Imre Nagy found himself denounced by Radio Free Europe during the 1956 uprising (Dulles blaming him for the Soviet tanks)—Eisenhower knew that arming protesters would simply mean slaughter. The CIA was unable to take advantage of the Romania’s Peasants’ Party 1947 or the 1953 East Berlin uprising. Contrariwise, Eastern European models could not be applied to Tehran or Guatemala City, leaving the hawks unsure of what was even a signal of “Stalinism” on the march. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 45, 55-56. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 156, 627. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 18-19, 76, 130.

decimation. This produced demands for more resources, more escalation, more commitment to save the operation—just as the evidence began to emerge that the boosters’ initial confidence had been misplaced.<sup>87</sup> It was secrecy that had made sure that there was no vetting or robust critical analysis: threats were overblown and disasters covered up, so that CIA planners could keep suggesting covert warfare to their superiors.<sup>88</sup>

Iran and Guatemala can hardly be called victories for stealth, espionage, or psychological warfare, nor did they mobilize any combat force. Any successes were “despite themselves, not marched forward according to meticulous plans,” the lack of local knowledge (above, “1: The Ignorant Armies”) covered up by the crudest ideology (Introduction, “Ideology and Hegemony”; Ch. 1, “0: Premises”).<sup>89</sup> Dulles ridiculously overstated the size and significance of the threats of Guatemala or Indonesia: that they would go “Red,” followed by their neighbors, then the rest of the hemisphere.<sup>90</sup> But the interventions still “created the legend that the CIA was a silver bullet in the arsenal of democracy,” Tim Weiner writes,<sup>91</sup> turned into the cornerstone of the Agency’s reason for existence. But after Lumumba’s murder covert operations generally failed to overthrow a targeted leader, despite escalation to guerrillas or to overt, conventional invasion. January 1961 John F. Kennedy’s Intelligence Advisory Board had recommended an end to covert actions, since they always were exposed and backfired, so Dulles lied that he had told Eisenhower he had been completely certain of Guatemala in 1954 (while actually giving only 20 percent at best), and that the prospects for the Cuban exiles were even better!<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 635.

<sup>88</sup> O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 54. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 265.

<sup>89</sup> McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 94. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 122.

<sup>90</sup> Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 120. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 16. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 173. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 98.

<sup>91</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 80, 166.

<sup>92</sup> Dulles himself had been horrified in 1960 to find that Bissell had authorized U-2 reconnaissance flights via the National Reconnaissance Office directly over Moscow and Leningrad, inevitably causing a scandal large enough to cancel a summit with Nikita Khrushchev (though Eisenhower had ironically approved the U-2 program to thwart the



In 1953, Mosaddegh had fended off the original coup attempt and the Shah of Iran had already fled to Rome, Dulles literally seeing the Shah checking in at a hotel right next to him: Dulles quipped that this was the second-worst possible circumstance, after hypothetically running over the Shah with his car. Shaken, the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt, Jr., said that if the CIA was "ever going to try something like this again, we must be absolutely sure that the people and army want what we want. If not, you had better give the job to the Marines."<sup>93</sup> Dulles confessed that the Guatemalan revolt's chances had been at *zero* percent when it was launched, rising to maybe 20 percent once the CIA assembled a small air fleet. But then Jacobo Arbenz fled, leaving the CIA was *surprised* at its own success, given the puny opposition and the lack of planning, secrecy, or popular support. Armin Krishnan concludes that the 1954 coup was "a giant bluff."<sup>94</sup>

Even if the 1961 Bay of Pigs landing had been flawless, the exiles would not have been able to dislodge the Revolutionaries; but the Directorate of Operations allowed none of its agents to request any analyses that might suggest Castro could crush them.<sup>95</sup> Miami Station Chief Richard M. Bissell, Jr., knew that only the Marines could even try to hold Cuban soil, but he deceived even the Miami CIA commander, in order to ensure that it was too late for anyone to back out—

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hawks (and Kennedy's) claims of a "Missile Gap"). Eisenhower burned through his reputability to protect agents more concerned with escalating tensions than supplying him with intelligence: he said he could not afford to have it "look like the President didn't know what was going on in the government." Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider's View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004): 49. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 160, 167, 177.

<sup>93</sup> Kermit Roosevelt, Jr., wrote the Shah's proclamation swapping Mosaddegh with Gen. Fazlollah Zahedi as Prime Minister, while the Shah insisted that not so much as a private would back him against Mosaddegh. The Army stayed loyal and seized the Imperial Guardsmen trying to arrest Mossadegh, and Zahedi fled with no soldiers under his control. Only unplanned developments gave the CIA the chance for a second, successful, try. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 9. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 2-3. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 104-07. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 87-90.

<sup>94</sup> Headquarters was even concerned that *too* much overt airpower would drive the military and civilians behind Jacobo Arbenz and cause more problems that the coup was promised to prevent. Now, Guatemala was under overt blockade by the U.S. Navy: five assault ships and a battalion-level landing force of Marines were stationed offshore in Arbenz's last days. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 113-14. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 100. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 188. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 117, 120, 630. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 100-02.

<sup>95</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 41. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 94. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 122, 230. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 127.

lest the émigrés be “abandoned.” Dulles said that it was too dangerous and embarrassing to call off the plan, and later admitted that they had “consciously abetted Kennedy’s ignorance in the expectation that, when the chips were down,” his hand would be forced into a full air and sea invasion of Cuba (below, “4: Escalation and Conventionalization”). It was only when the vessels departed did one officer in Miami even ask, “Have any of you entertained the notion that this damned thing might not work?”<sup>96</sup> The entire operation relied on extorting conventional support from Kennedy, while Bissell kept insisting that there would be no need for conventional forces—knowing Castro’s air force was still ready and the landing had never been secret from the beginning. Kennedy was then enraged at the out-of-control CIA project trying to present him with a *fait accompli* and “bandwagon” him aboard.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, Bissell was only a typical CIA officer—never stopping to think what would happen if the invasion failed or succeeded, or any actual human intelligence from Cuba itself: only the task at hand.<sup>98</sup> The Bay of Pigs was not a masterful attempt against an elected President but a product of self-deceit: the agents and officers had rendered themselves unable to tell the truth from their own fantasy.<sup>99</sup>

The Directorate of Intelligence doubted even *whether* Vietnam could be won, while the clandestine service dismissed the mere *details* of local history or conditions. As early as 1965 the CIA was producing reports that North Vietnam would flatten the South even without the Vi-

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<sup>96</sup> Castro even said later that the attack was *well*-sited and -timed. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 243, 249-52, 258. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 161, 165, 174.

<sup>97</sup> Langley had not objected as Kennedy repeatedly cut the “exile” air force, so that 1. the invasion not be canceled outright by the White House but also that 2. the United States’s hand would not *officially* show. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 183, 185. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 140. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 245-46, 269-70.

<sup>98</sup> The full details of the murder plots against Castro were hidden from Director McCone—only Bissell and two others knew their full extent; the new President Johnson did not even know that the government had been trying to kill Castro since 1960. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 216. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 127. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 156, 173, 181, 226.

<sup>99</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 41.

etcong—and that 500,000 U.S. soldiers were needed even if the North did *not* invade.<sup>100</sup> But Bangkok and Saigon’s Station chiefs demanded that Langley block the distribution of such potential “bombshells,” and tracked down their authors for punishment. Ralph McGehee’s superiors told him the truth would “undo everything”—they just needed to buy a little *time*. Future CIA Director William Colby instructed him on how to write reports that Laos was salvageable with just a *little* more effort: once funding was secured by means of deception, any lag in the promises would be temporary—just a white lie that would undo itself. A veritable labyrinth of deceit was built to prevent contrary intelligence from “escaping” from the Saigon Station by any direct or backchannel. By 1966 Langley’s own estimate was telling Lyndon B. Johnson that there was no way to win.<sup>101</sup> The CIA found in 1969 that Hanoi had over 30,000 agents at all levels of the South Vietnamese military and government: had the report been made known, the war would have stopped dead.<sup>102</sup> But acknowledging all the numbers would have destroyed the entire illusion of policy-making, so instead a system was established to punish analysts for being correct. Richard Helms suppressed accurate analyses since Johnson and Nixon’s decisions had already been made (and the war meant well-padded budgets).<sup>103</sup> The consequences for U.S. allies proved

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<sup>100</sup> Much of Kennedy and Johnson’s motives were not that they believed Indochina was strategic or that Vietnam was winnable, but simply to evade domestic hawks’ charges of “another China.” Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 204. O’Gorman, “The Logic and Rhetoric of Power,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 345. Gregory A. Olson, George N. Dionisopoulos and Steven R. Goldzwig, “The Rhetorical Antecedents to Vietnam, 1945 - 1965,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 309. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 54, 179. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 265.

<sup>101</sup> McGehee was fully behind this deception (at the time). Perception management was a driving factor down to the colors used on the maps or the terminology for the Hmong units—“Hunter-Killer Teams” was judged too murderous, “Home/Self-Defense Units” too passive: “Mobile Strike Forces” struck the right balance. Such “fake it until you make it” deceptions were standard procedure when local operatives believed Congress or the White House needed to be *encouraged* to escalate the level of aid, as at the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion (technically the Miami CIA Station was neither 1. “stampeding” or “railroading” Kennedy, nor 2. acting under Dwight D. Eisenhower or Allen Dulles’s deliberate orders. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 81-84, 188, 192. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 247, 266, 268.

<sup>102</sup> The South Vietnamese state was full of Northern agents at every level—often not Marxist-Leninists but officers, trusted advisers, and Catholic lay preachers (itself increasing hardliners’ suspicions that nobody could be trusted). Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 208. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 150, 153-57.

<sup>103</sup> After 1949, State Department “China Hands” were persecuted for having “lost” the world’s most populous country, because they had accurately evaluated the Communists as having a good chance of winning the Chinese Civil War. The CIA was particularly vocal against sending troops 1963-65; the Pentagon Papers in fact showed that Lang-

lethal: by 1972 the Hmong's villages were empty and they were reduced to using child soldiers and human-wave attacks, tens of thousands expelled from Laos.<sup>104</sup>

Despite warnings that blocking Salvador Allende from winning the 1970 election was impossible and that being caught red-handed would be an international disaster, Nixon ordered the operation to go ahead even if the chances were ten or twenty to one; Gen. René Schneider's murder then only gave Allende a surge of support.<sup>105</sup> CIA reports were frank that FNLA had no chance of success in Angola 1975, regardless of the armaments they got.<sup>106</sup> UNITA, the next U.S.-supported paramilitary, was granted Stinger surface-to-air missiles in 1985 even before the mujahedeen: but even that was not enough against Cuban air superiority and only South African intervention saved them from a complete rout 1987.<sup>107</sup> Robert Gates was irate at the 1983 CIA estimate that nobody believed that the Afghan mujahedeen could militarily *defeat* the Red Army, and the stalemate continued until the 1986 arrival of the Stingers.<sup>108</sup>

Despite receiving a level of resources surpassed only by the mujahedeen, it might be remarkable how little paramilitary success the Contras had—never holding so much as a hamlet for

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ley and Foggy Bottom provided the most accurate and far-sighted evaluations, and helped turn Johnson towards a reversal in 1968. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 66-70, 73-74, 79, 120-21. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 303. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 128, 185. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 18. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 154, 268-67, 285-87.

<sup>104</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 168, 171-2. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 123. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 301.

<sup>105</sup> The Chilean government used a cybernetic management system to bypass a truckers' strike in 1972, and the Socialist and Communist Parties gained seats in the March 1973 parliamentary election. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 57. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 404-09, 411, 413.

<sup>106</sup> Supplying artillery would have been identifiable as U.S.-made: meanwhile the MPLA had Soviet RPGs, giving them miles more range than the FNLA's mortars. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 272-74. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 444-46.

<sup>107</sup> Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 34. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 138, 140, 148.

<sup>108</sup> Krishnan denies outright that the Stinger missile defeated the Soviet Air Forces: the 1989 withdrawal was political rather than tactical. Ironically it was Gorbachev's private meeting with Shultz that made the Secretary of State enthusiastic about the missiles: the new Premier had indicated he planned to withdraw, so supplying the missiles would 1. lead to a mujahedeen victory (instead of power-sharing with the People's Democratic Party) 2. without superpower escalation, the Soviets already ready to retreat past the Amu Darya. Carson notes that this situation goes against his own theories of de-escalation. Non-CIA figures such as Fred Iklé and Richard Perle were more triumphalist over the 1992 fall of Kabul. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 25, 241, 265-66, 268, 272-74, 281-82. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 37, 99, 189. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 412, 479. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 46, 140. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 384.

more than a week—not in the Segovia Mountains, not in Mosquitia. The FF.AA. warned Amb. John Negroponte that the Contras had neither military nor political prospects; Edgardo Chamorro told *The New York Times* that “Ten thousand men cannot seriously expect to overthrow the Sandinistas” 1983.<sup>109</sup> Other than the hardliners—FF.AA. Gen. Alvarez Martínez, Fred Iklé, or Dewey Clarridge—nobody believed the exiled Guardsmen could force the Sandinistas out of Managua. Instead the Contra War polarized Nicaragua, damaging the opposition and boosting the FSLN. Even the hawkish Gates concluded that only U.S. invasion could take Managua, and that would only lead to an even more intractable fight, with U.S. blood on the line (below, “4: Escalation and Conventionalization”).<sup>110</sup>

“I submit to you that the Cambodian people knew that they were being bombed; it was no secret to them. Unfortunately, there was nothing on the face of the earth that the Cambodian people could do to stop the bombing. However, the people of the United States could stop the bombing, or at least raise an effective protest of it”<sup>111</sup>

—John Stockwell

### 3: Discoverability

Covert wars were forced into more conventional warfare (below, “4: Escalation and Conventionalization”), leading to an increase in 1. contemporary news and 2. the accumulated pattern of news over the years. If the exposure of covert warfare were inevitable, then the question becomes one of *when*, not *if*. Therefore, the incremental decline of plausible deniability was “built in” to covert operations, as a consequence of the scandals around the Bay of Pigs invasion

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<sup>109</sup> Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 37. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* 2005: 42. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 515.

<sup>110</sup> The Contra War accelerated Managua’s need to shore up mass rural support and land distribution, which benefited 80,000 campesinos at the expense of medium producers (who had already opposed the Sandinistas): by 1984 Gates concluded that the land reform would make Contra support wither away. Malcolm Byrne, Peter Kornbluh, and Thomas Blanton, “The Iran-Contra Affair 20 Years On,” Electronic Briefing Book 210, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Nov. 24, 2006, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210>. William M. LeoGrande, “The United States and Nicaragua,” in Andrew C. Kimmens, ed., *Nicaragua and the United States* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1987): 57. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 92. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 34, 77, 82.

<sup>111</sup> Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 93. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 227. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 152.

and then the Vietnam War. Secrecy was not planned to be absolute, but a way to prevent trouble for the President, in order to avoid stigma and scandal at home no matter how much evidence the target state or Moscow was able to provide.<sup>112</sup> Eventually the main event in an operation that Langly anticipated was its *revelation*, rather than its *success*: flexibility and distancing increased the risk of exposure and complication.<sup>113</sup>

As the cliché goes, operations were certainly not secret from local newspapers, nor from a young doctor taking refuge in Guatemala City’s Argentinean embassy. When U.S. Navy vessels arrived to offload weapons for Indonesia’s 1958 federalist revolt against Sukarno, they “drew an impressive crowd”: support for the rebels in Sumatra and Sulawesi was secret for approximately 72 hours.<sup>114</sup> The Bay of Pigs invasion was another public “covert” actions: the exiles needed to present themselves as an *effective* force large enough to rival Castro, even boasting to the press about their Guatemalan training base and bringing photographers along. By January 1961 *The New York Times* and *Time* supplied full details of the landing, and *The Los Angeles Times* printed a map—and the Miami Station was well aware that Castro had full knowledge of the exiles.<sup>115</sup> Nixon was concerned that “Our hand doesn’t show” in Chile 1970—any exposure would mean instant disaster. But by 1972 the attempted overthrow had become a *cause célèbre* in Washington even bigger at the time than the Vietnam War, and threatening the CIA as much as the Bay of Pigs debacle.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> 70% of target states accused the CIA, and even more states that were *not* targeted did so—as early as 1963 Harry S. Truman noted that the Agency had become a watchword across three continents. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 70, 73.

<sup>113</sup> Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018.

<sup>114</sup> U.S. attachés supplied Jakarta’s loyalists with maps against the CIA-backed rebels. Eisenhower’s concern was that “Everyone must be prepared to swear that he had not heard of it,” because word *would* get out. Weapons shipments in Angola were visible in 1975—as long as they stayed out of U.S. headlines (or even the consul’s knowledge). Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 273-74. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 147-50, 157.

<sup>115</sup> Presumably they hoped Castro would be frightened in the same way that Arbenz had been seven years earlier. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 87. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 227, 231, 233, 238, 248.

<sup>116</sup> O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 52. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 421.

The Contras played up the size of their forces after the Congressional cutoffs of 1982 and 1984—partly to convince Capitol Hill to resume the funding by showing that they remained a viable force.<sup>117</sup> As early as 1983 the need for good publicity impelled Casey to 1. to launch CIA pilots and frogmen to mine harbors and bomb airports in Nicaragua (Chapter 2, “Iran and the Contras”) and 2. have a political manual written for the Contras (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”): both of these were such disasters that the second Boland Amendment was written to conclusively cut off all Federal funding. León Tinoco Ruiz showed off the *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense*’s bases and the training center at Lepaterique, Francisco Morazán, to United Press journalists in January 1984, where they reported on U.S. materiel arriving from El Aguacate. Mario Calero—believing, like Langley, that the Contras needed *more* exposure in the U.S. media—invited an NBC television crew to film the arrival of Senate-authorized “humanitarian aid” from New Orleans at Toncontín Airport in October 1985. The newsmen were ordered off the plane, which was seized by the FF.AA., and further shipments were cancelled.<sup>118</sup>

“We killed thousands of Communists, even though half of them probably didn’t even know what Communism meant”<sup>119</sup>

—1st Lt. Allen Lawrence Pope (“retired”), 2005

#### 4: Escalation and Conventionalization

Typically covert wars failed due to *escalation*, rather than press *exposure*. Without any defined goals and with doubts about victory from their CIA managers or even the guerrilla leadership itself, the fighters would need more than infantry with rifles to confront even a newly-

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<sup>117</sup> The Contra War generated two sets of contradictions for the White House: 1. between the need for publicity for the embattled counter guerrillas vs. the need to conceal continued U.S. government support for the Contras; and 2. demonstrating the FDN’s financial independence from Congress, but in order to convince Congress to *restore* the millions in military aid they actually *did* need.

<sup>118</sup> Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 28. Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 309.

<sup>119</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 151, 153.

organized postcolonial state.<sup>120</sup> As the definitions of “victory” began to slip and timelines stretched, covert warfare tended towards conventionalization on the ground and combat and support from the air. In most of the cases, the amount of fighters and the scale of armaments was forced to increase. Costs and timelines quickly multiplied (while the estimated chances of success still remained low).<sup>121</sup> Dulles did *not* innovate techniques to overthrow governments: he provided the model for covert-war advocates to sell an intervention—that even if it failed the advantages outweighed the downsides. He lied daily for eight years that a mere riot provoked by bodybuilders or some airplanes dropping empty soda bottles could provide a model for future interventions, but in secret acknowledged Iran and Guatemala as near-disasters.<sup>122</sup> The interventions soon became more ambitious, expanding to air war and amphibious landings—Indonesia 1958, Cuba 1961—which visibly failed, *increasing* the pressure to conduct new covert operations to provide a success.

Each President’s Administration was concealing its role from an international or domestic audience; the states actually involved—targets, patrons, and partners—knew, and could remain silent or selectively expose the escalation according to their own motivations, which could

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<sup>120</sup> O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 8, 53, 74.

<sup>121</sup> The Iran coup was promised to cost \$100-200,000, instead reaching \$10-20 million plus \$45 million in aid to stabilize Lt. Gen. Fazlollah Zahedi’s regime. Guatemala was estimated at \$3 million and ended up almost \$20 million. Training the Tibetans cost \$13 million; the Bay of Pigs invasion increased from the \$2,600,000 promised to \$46 million, plus ransoming and paying off the exiles, and then another \$100 million for Operation Mongoose. Billions had poured into Ngo Dinh Diem’s South Vietnam 1950-63, while it only cost \$42,000 (only due to constraints of space: \$28,000 were left behind in the Saigon Station’s safe) to remove him. Angola and Nicaragua cost hundreds of millions, Laos, Vietnam, and Afghanistan in the billions each. Swaying elections in British Guiana, Chile, and Italy cost tens of millions: the cost per Christian Democrat vote in Chile 1964 was higher than the combined spending of the Johnson and Goldwater campaigns per vote that same year. The billions spent on the Afghan mujahedeen were pennies compared to the trillions that Reagan had spent on the Navy or Strategic Air Command. Steven Emerson, *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (New York: Putnam, 1988): 9. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 8. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 78-79, 99. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 236. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 10. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 8, 191. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 400, 635. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 201-11, 218-21, 298.

<sup>122</sup> Mohammad Mosaddegh had been overthrown *despite* the failure of the CIA’s own plots at the time. Even a 1954 *Saturday Evening Post* article that revealed the details of the coup and reinforced Iranians’ views of the Shah as a U.S. puppet appears to have been planted to make the new Agency seem near-omnipotent to a U.S. audience (that is, the ones holding the purse strings). Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 69, 82-83. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 79. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 120. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: xiv, 70.



corner the White House into a public denial. Then the target state and its allies would be warranted as victims facing an outside attack, rather than being framed as disingenuously hiding their own aggression by blaming the CIA.<sup>123</sup> They had stayed off U.S. headlines and broadcasts only because it was so distant and *not* vital to security interests (above, “1: Refusal of Neutrality”), but eventually even supporting the guerillas’ bare survival could risk an end to plausible deniability as U.S. personnel and materiel flowed in.

Arbenz did not flee after a few psychological bluffs, but was besieged under a full U.S. Navy blockade of Guatemala, five assault ships and a battalion-level landing force of Marines ready to land, sailors boarding British, Dutch, and French ships, and CIA pilots attacking from the air.<sup>124</sup> The 1958 moves against Sukarno required the U.S. Navy and Air Force, and again caused Western European protest. The Cuban exiles’ sabotage of Havana-bound vessels killed French and Spanish citizens in 1960-61. The Bay of Pigs invasion involved landing ships, dozens of bomber and transport planes, and light tanks: it clearly could only be an invasion backed by Washington.<sup>125</sup>

Sustained, large-scale warfare—Indonesia, Afghanistan, or Nicaragua—is often designated as “pseudo-covert.” In these cases it was the *target* state and its superpower sponsor who supplied the deniability before the United Nations or international press, who *held off* on pressing

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<sup>123</sup> This paradox was also caused by the surprising ease of Arbenz and Mosaddegh’s ousters: every time afterwards the covert-war boosters severely underestimated the target state’s whole institutions. In 1953-54 they had simply paid off some staged protesters and officers, scared the middle classes into withdrawing their support, and bluffed the targeted leader into surrender. By the end of the 1950s Langley was aware that the practicalities meant whole guerrilla armies and air forces, a covert *war*—but their promises to each new President remained the same. Tactical secrecy was incompatible with strategic success, quickly “blowing” the operation in Indonesian, Thai, or Lebanese newspapers. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 14. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 48-49. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 335.

<sup>124</sup> This level of escalation would have caused a severe rift with Western European allies had it been continued; the Pentagon and U.S. oil companies refused participation in Arbenz’s overthrow because it would have been so easily identifiable. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 112. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 101. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 112-13, 119.

<sup>125</sup> The Miami Station even proposed adding a parachute battalion and a tank platoon, which had to be vetoed—these were supposed to be Castro’s rivals returning to the island, not D-Day. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 115. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 181, 183, 214. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 208.

the issue of U.S. support in order to limit escalation (“4: De-Escalation”). When the U.S. state role does become revealed in the press, even a low level of covertness means it does not cost the Administration any reputation<sup>126</sup>: Iran-Contra became a scandal because unlike Afghanistan nor Angola it could not fit the “freedom fighter” rhetoric.<sup>127</sup>

The escalation to air warfare produced the largest amount of public, non-deniable proof of direct U.S. involvement, which provided the Indonesian, Cuban, Soviet, or Nicaraguan governments with the means to immediately cause scandal in the international forum and in Washington itself. The 1958 “air force” rebelling against Sukarno materialized overnight and flew out of the Philippines and Okinawa. Eisenhower wanted to have only non-U.S. citizens as pilots, but the Dulles brothers lied to him while knowing that their capture would mean the end of the operation—but they were under pressure to secure any win whatsoever.

The CIA pilots killed hundreds of Indonesians and targeted British and Dutch ships and refineries. The U.S. Air Force strip-searched the “mercenaries” before takeoff, but “retired” Air Force 1st Lt. Allen Lawrence Pope was shot down with his flight log, combat reports, ID cards, CIA contract, and a card for the post exchange at Clark Field outside of Manila. The White House was caught lying immediately after claiming that the rebels they were only soldiers of fortune, and Eisenhower shut down the whole operation a month later.<sup>128</sup> The planes from Indonesia were repainted for the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, even cited by the U.S. Ambassador before

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<sup>126</sup> O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 69.

<sup>127</sup> If the mujahedeen were reframed as anti-American terrorists or the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea as Khmer Rouge survivors, the Casey Doctrine might have theoretically produced more serious scandals.

<sup>128</sup> Initially Jakarta had tried to plead its case through U.S. diplomats rather than go to the press with the considerable proof. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 123-27. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 120-21. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 114, 172, 177-79. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 150-52.

the UN as proof the U.S. was *not* complicit in the attack—followed by the revelation they had come straight from the Indonesia operation.<sup>129</sup>

The Contras would never escape their reliance on conventional support from Honduras: even the shortest raid required illicitly-built runways from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, pervasive radar coverage of land and sea, thousand-man U.S.-Honduran “joint exercises,” even larger Navy exercises, and direct support from FF.AA. planes and artillery (Chapter 3, “The Reagan Doctrine”). In 1986 Enterprise contractor Eugene Hasenfus supplied Managua with similar documentation as 1st Lt. Pope had done, letting the target state spark an international scandal at the opportune time.

“it’s just as if we suddenly began to put a major number of MRBMs in Turkey. Now that’d be goddamn dangerous!”<sup>130</sup>

—John F. Kennedy, 1962

#### 4: De-Escalation

Covert intervention is quite visible to local witnesses, so it is the proof of sponsorship that must be obfuscated.<sup>131</sup> Austin Carson has analyzed covert warfare as a way for “sponsor” powers to *limit* escalation and avoid direct conflict—almost a tacit agreement.<sup>132</sup> “Rather than assume effective concealment [Carson assumes] that the secrecy used in covert intervention is effortful, difficult, and imperfect.”<sup>133</sup> Covertiness indeed restricts certainty, effectiveness, and

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<sup>129</sup> A Cuban exile landed the CIA plane at Miami and claimed to be a defector from the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*, but the nose guns were clearly those used in the Indonesian revolt, while Cuban planes had plastic nose assemblies without guns: this embarrassment before the United Nations impelled Kennedy to cut the next round of CIA bombings. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 251.

<sup>130</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 195-97, 200-01.

<sup>131</sup> Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 324. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 88. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 54.

<sup>132</sup> Carson’s case examples are the Soviet Union and France versus Italy and Germany in Spain 1936-39, and the Soviet Union versus the United States in Korea, Indochina, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine—all cases of direct superpower confrontation, as opposed to U.S. attacks on smaller target nations not protected by the People’s Liberation Army of China or by Soviet airmen. His analyses retain a binary assumption of the Cold War—two similar Superpowers reflecting each other—with less attention to the partner states’ behavior.

<sup>133</sup> In *overt* warfare, “operational secrecy” between adversaries is of course used to hide troop locations, capabilities, vulnerabilities, and operations, surveillance technology. The basis of Carson’s theory is that covert action is de-

public support in a war, but Carson’s contribution to analysis is that concealment and non-acknowledgement can also have stabilizing, *deescalating* functions.<sup>134</sup> “Deniability” is when official non-acknowledgement continues even if concealment is implausible, to avoid perceived insult or provocation.<sup>135</sup>

Carson therefore interprets covert warfare as a way for one superpower to “signal” to the other, making secrecy into a form of *communication*. In this analysis, covertness is not just a self-interested way to hide true knowledge of involvement: covertness in warfare maintains a “backstage” with the other superpower.<sup>136</sup> Maintaining a minimum level of backchannel communications reassures the other superpower about the commitment to keeping the negotiations going—while the armed conflict continues on the “frontstage.”<sup>137</sup> Information is traditionally conceived of as a resource, strategically withheld to secure an advantage over rival states or to

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signed to violate stated international and domestic norms—but that secrecy still has unavoidable rules of its own. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 7, 27-28, 38, 49, 271, 284.

<sup>134</sup> Over the long term, covert actions also “lack wide policy discussion and vetting which can increase the risk of poor planning”—leading to both failure and exposure; they also damage democracy at home and international reputation. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 36. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 134.

<sup>135</sup> Carson’s further examples include Israel’s nuclear arsenal (and the “Samson Doctrine” targeting of the capitals of Western Europe as well as the Middle East) to “lessen the pressure on surrounding countries to respond in kind”; Soviet pilots during the wars in Republican Spain, North Korea, Egypt, Syria, North Vietnam, and Angola; Russia’s “Little Green Men” in Crimea and the Donbas. However, the strategic nuclear capability of both superpower protectors meant that conflicts as remote as Laos or Honduras could potentially cremate all life on Earth: semi-denial by both the superpowers was important because 1. the “Cold” War was in fact very hot, in dozens of countries across three continents, and 2. the two superpowers had already targeted each other for complete, mutual annihilation. Even if nobody is fooled, the “actors are reassured of one another’s commitment to the performance when they see one another ignoring exposed backstage behavior even if it is visible to the audience”—that they are not really a rogue state metaphorically smashing the stage lights and taking the theater audience hostage. Carson does not treat *overt* and *covert* as mutually-exclusive. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 3-4, 9-10, 32, 44, 55, 60-61, 223-25, 285. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 14.

<sup>136</sup> A criticism of Carson would be that he overemphasizes covertness as *deliberate* “signal,” while covert-war history shows that secret-intervention plans always had a combination of 1. overpromising their ease and secrecy and 2. an immediate increase of unintentional factors, confounding all the plans and promises. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 8, 13, 21, 35, 58, 60, 190, 284.

<sup>137</sup> Or at least a convergence of objectives around avoiding misunderstanding and superpower escalation. Goffman’s definition of “backstage” is that it is 1. mutual between the participants, 2. honest and spontaneous rather than deliberately prearranged or used for deceit among the “backstage” participants, and 3. away from the public, letting participants break rules and contradict the narratives of their usual “performance.” During the 1962 crisis Kennedy and Khrushchev believed they had agreed to a mutual removal of missiles from Turkey and Cuba simultaneously, but neither of them knew how far Castro would break the rules to maintain a nuclear deterrent for himself. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 3-4, 18, 41, 43, 56-57, 308-09.

deceive a domestic public that would definitely object (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare”).<sup>138</sup> Carson notes that the domestic audience—public, press, Congress—have been almost universally analyzed as a *dovish* counterweight to an executive bent on war and escalation.<sup>139</sup> Instead, he also stresses that covertness is aimed against domestic *hawks*, who goaded leaders as “doing nothing” about or “losing” the target country.<sup>140</sup>

As long as a certain level of plausible deniability was maintained, neither Washington nor Moscow would be pressured to respond to events in order to save face.<sup>141</sup> Acknowledging the Hmong paramilitary or Soviet pilots in Laos would have increased the domestic pressures on Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon and escalated the war further.<sup>142</sup> If Washington admitted responsibility for mujahedeen attacks on the Red Army—well-known by all the involved officials—the pressure on the Kremlin to retaliate would rise.<sup>143</sup> In return, Pakistan’s secret services felt free to provoke the Soviets given its U.S. protection, and the Kremlin had to restrain itself.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 18, 283.

<sup>139</sup> Carson produced a complicated theory of knowledge and secrecy: “hiding information can help *limit* war and that more public information can *fuel* war escalation”—as long as the adversary sponsors still collude on some tacit level. Carson distinguishes locally-observable military support (which the target state and its sponsor state know about) from covert activity that has reached the attention of the Senate or Politburo. Conventionally, secrecy is condemned as “a plague on peace that tends to lead to unnecessary war and feeds escalation. More information is better for avoiding the most costly of wars,” transparency the only cure: he hopes to show “the promise of exploring non-knowledge effects of secrecy”—context, not content. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 52, 308-10.

<sup>140</sup> Carson describes several angles that hawks could have in an escalating undeclared war—claiming that the doves disrespected the sacrifices of soldiers, or freedom fighters risking their lives; that the other superpower was already intervening in a target state that had done nothing to provoke it; that dissent during a time of war might cross the line into treason (and needs to be prosecuted by the law or persecuted through social exclusion). Erving Goffman notes that secrecy has a target—an *audience*—that influences what gets chosen for concealment and how secrecy is maintained. See Chapter 3, “The Global News War.” Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 8, 10, 21, 35, 52, 62, 73. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 208.

<sup>141</sup> Covert warfare also “lack wide policy discussion and vetting[,] which can increase the risk of poor planning”—thus failure and exposure; they also domestically damage democracy and reputation internationally. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 36. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 134.

<sup>142</sup> Everyone in Vientiane, Beijing, or Moscow could see that U.S. talk of Laotian neutrality was a mere fig leaf as it supported a whole Secret Army—but as long as none of the parties “exposed” the pretense, that would allow the relationship to continue (that is, the Johnson and Nixon Administration keeping the Laotian and Cambodian interventions secret from the U.S. public was intended to do more than fend off domestic backlash). Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 20, 22, 24, 69, 187, 191, 194, 204, 210-12.

<sup>143</sup> Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 2, 5, 20, 22, 26, 42. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 71.

<sup>144</sup> The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan likewise sponsored hijackings and car bombings, Soviet pilots bombing and strafing mujahedeen camps in Pakistan itself to force an agreement with Kabul. Islamabad in turn did not want

The militaries of Nicaragua and Honduras maintained tacit arrangements with each other, or even direct communications. The *Fuerzas Armadas* of Honduras would shell the *Ejército Popular Sandinista*, but refused to get into a “hot” war over the Nicaraguan ex-Guardsmen who perpetually remained on Honduran soil: the EPS could have easily flattened the *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense* camps in Honduras,<sup>145</sup> but covertness let Washington smooth over Tegucigalpa’s now-annual announcement that the Contras had finally departed from Honduran territory (Chapter 5). By 1983-86 the White House was insisting that the FDN was now a viable fighting force that could garner independent funding, “Vietnamize” the conflict, and avoid the threat of sending U.S. forces—if U.S. funding were resumed.<sup>146</sup>

The term “plausible deniability” was coined in the 1950s for the concealment of direct responsibility from other powers (rather than the domestic public—*i.e.*, that the U.S. government was not the ones responsible for French or British ships being shot at in Guatemala or Indonesia). Khrushchev was free to denounce a covert war, but a complaint from Paris or London was a different matter.<sup>147</sup> Later, deniability was invoked to shield the Presidents from direct responsibility for overthrows and assassinations. Presidents made sure to not inquire after news of illegal activity and deployed vague euphemisms like “national security” to leave an open-ended mandate.<sup>148</sup>

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to draw attention to its vulnerabilities and further fuel Gen. Zia-ul-Haq’s more hardline critics, or invite an attack by India. Bruce D. Berkowitz and Allan E. Goodman, “The Logic of Covert Action,” *The National Interest* 51 (Spring 1998): 40. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 264, 276-80. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 89-91.

<sup>145</sup> And the Hondurans would prove quite willing to use the EPS to weaken the FDN that they were supposedly protecting.

<sup>146</sup> Carson still analyzes secrecy as up to a “detector” target state or sponsor. The Sandinistas could make all the true accusations about the Contras that they liked—as long as the U.S. press refused them “warrant” as sources (until the 1986 Hasenfus shootdown). (See Introduction, “Epistemology and Hegemony,” n178). Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 32, 40.

<sup>147</sup> Foreign policy has low saliency in elections (except for the case of potential escalation). Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 12.

<sup>148</sup> Eisenhower is never directly recorded as ordering Lumumba or Castro poisoned or shot: but everyone was clear that all options were on the table. (See above, “1: Refusal of Neutrality,” n37.) Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 13. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 126. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 129, 179-82.

“Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he’s *our* son of a bitch.”<sup>149</sup>

—Franklin D. Roosevelt (attributed), 1939

“There have been charges that it is morally wrong for the U.S. to aid undemocratic regimes to strengthen their security systems, [but] the U.S. cannot afford the moral luxury of helping only those regimes in the free world that meet our ideals of self-government. Eliminate all the absolute monarchies, dictatorships and juntas ... and it should be readily apparent that the U.S. would be well on its way to isolation.”<sup>150</sup>

—Col. Albert Haney

## 5: Criminality and Extremism

Covert warfare quickly involved the CIA and Pentagon in assassinations, drug trafficking, car and airplane bombings, illegal clandestine prisons, and efforts to overthrow recognized states. Ever since the mafia and yakuza contacts set up by the Office of Strategic Services in France and Japan, agents needed to know locals who could get around the rules—for smuggling or “wet work.” In the words of a 1972 Vientiane Station report, U.S. agencies are “not necessarily dealing with the angels of the world.”<sup>151</sup> Covert warfare meant subversion, violence against civilians, paramilitary operations unauthorized by a declaration of war, and routine violation of partner states’ law.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 328.

<sup>150</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 279.

<sup>151</sup> On top of its “black budget” exempt from any inspection, the CIA’s officers are deeply involved in tax havens and money launderers such as BCCI, Nugan Hand, or Bishop Rewald. The prototypical Nugan Hand Bank had generals and admirals on the board and clients such as Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, Thomas G. Clines, and kingpin Rafael Caro Quintero. The financial infrastructure needed for covert action, espionage, or covert support of foreign parties also provided more than enough independence to covert-war managers to let them set agendas of their own. By 1996 the House Intelligence Committee reported that “Hundreds of employees on a daily basis are directed to break extremely serious laws in the countries around the world”—several hundred times a day—“easily 100,000 times a year”—and that each violation was an immediate risk to international relations. Blum, “Covert Operations,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 82, 88. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 88. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 35-36. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 109. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 17, 387, 400-02, 406-09. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 75-76, 215. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 178. Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, “Reagan and the Evil Empire,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 423. Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991): 92. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 12.

<sup>152</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 105. Fernando López, *The Feathers of Condor: Transnational State Terrorism, Exiles and Civilian Anticommunism in South America* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016): 207. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 53.

When Washington promoted or protected a coup by the regular armed forces, it was the officers willing to overthrow their legal leader and attack their own civil society who were rewarded with 1. impunity and successful control of the state and 2. a pipeline of U.S. arms and cash.<sup>153</sup> Covert interventions meant support for dictators over elected leaders—or even officials who were more anti-U.S. than those who were forced out (above, “1: Refusal of Neutrality” and “1: The Ignorant Armies”).<sup>154</sup> By 1979 the neoconservatives openly endorsed the policy of backing dictatorship against the alternative brought by revolution (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives”).

U.S. intervention left the Caribbean and Central America with several lasting dictatorships—Rafael Trujillo (1930-61) in the Dominican Republic, Anastasio, Sr. (1937-56), Luis (1956-67), and Anastasio, Jr. (1967-79) Somoza in Nicaragua, and Fulgencio Batista (1940-44, 1952-59) in Cuba.<sup>155</sup> These dictators were vocally condemned and cut loose by several Administrations—but only after their growing embarrassment outweighed any continued usefulness, after decades of funding and protection. The CIA was crucial to Trujillo’s 1961 assassination—in order to prevent “another Cuba” once he was inevitably overthrown.<sup>156</sup> The interventions also

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<sup>153</sup> Lindsey A. O’Rourke insists that it is false that intervening powers alter target regimes to replicate their *own* system of government. He concludes democracy in fact has better incentives to install authoritarians instead, since supporting U.S. security and strategic goals required a regime willing to ignore significant popular policies: 70% of all U.S. interventions during the Cold War was in favor of authoritarians. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 7, 28, 30, 44.

<sup>154</sup> This is separate from regime changes that cause terrorism and anti-U.S. movements decades later. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 47

<sup>155</sup> The interventions ended under Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy, which favored the status quo and froze the Caribbean “protectorate cycle” where each intervention against a leader targeted for being an autocrat led to a new autocrat down the road. Trujillo’s torture chambers (and even an alleged human slaughterhouse by a coastal cliff frequented by sharks) were tolerated in the name of anticommunism until Jesús Galíndez was kidnapped from New York City in 1956 and flown south by a U.S. citizen, and then Galíndez’s own supposed abductor was found hanged in his cell. Trujillo also attempted to assassinate the U.S.-allied Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela 1960. By 1961 only Trujillo, Luis Somoza, and Paraguay’s Alfredo Stroessner remained as dictators on the continent. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 199, 202. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 112-13.

<sup>156</sup> After preparing for a coup against Brazil’s João Goulart, Kennedy authorized François Duvalier’s overthrow in 1962 for using U.S. military aid to murder his opponents. Eisenhower suggested a double coup to Kennedy, to remove Castro and Trujillo to balance them out and frame Washington as opposing “extremists of the far right as well as the left” equally. These dictators, however, had made sure that there would *be* no non-revolutionary opposition



avored leaders who did not feel any need to satisfy domestic or U.S. constituencies: rather than owing a “debt” to Washington, they took full advantage of their position.

In Guatemala, Col. Carlos Castillo Armas disenfranchised two-thirds of the population and murdered thousands; his assassination by rivals launched a cycle of instability and genocide in the isthmus that Langley and the Pentagon were deeply involved in.<sup>157</sup> Ngo Dinh Diem felt free to go against U.S. interests as long as he could insist that his regime was keeping the Reds out—fatally believing he could ignore any criticism from the Embassy.<sup>158</sup> Cheddi Jagan was replaced with Forbes Burnham in British Guiana—and he instituted ethnic discrimination, proclaimed a socialist state, and constantly blamed the CIA in his speeches.<sup>159</sup> Safely under Washington’s unconditional protection, Maj. Gen. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu banned political parties, nationalized Zaire’s mines, built no infrastructure, banned European names and clothing, and appealed to Beijing as leverage against Washington.<sup>160</sup> Angolan intervention put Washington on the side of Zaire and apartheid South Africa—highly visible in Africa and bringing in the Cubans 1975. UNITA’s Jonas Savimbi condemned U.S. imperialism, cultivated ties to Hanoi, Beijing, and Pyongyang, and praised the Black Panthers—while indulging in dismemberment, murder of

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that Washington could support. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 223. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 194, 201, 204. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 171-72, 190, 273.

<sup>157</sup> Col. Castillo Armas hunted down any supporter of electoral democracy, introducing practices far more brutal than the regimes of Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-85), Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), or Jorge Ubico (1931-44). Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 192-93. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 115.

<sup>158</sup> Diem was able to make the choices for Eisenhower: he reasoned that the Administration could not be unable to cut off aid lest his anticommunist state collapse. *The New Republic* quipped that Washington was letting Saigon make it into Saigon’s client regime. Kennedy was then left with no choice but to recognize the same generals who had murdered the handpicked Diem. Diem had left the NLF as the only outlet for dissent or even personal survival: Saigon was well-infiltrated by Southern Vietcong and the Phoenix Program’s death lists had to be carefully weeded of CIA double agents. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 134. O’Gorman, “The Logic and Rhetoric of Power,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 328. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 71, 169, 192. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 144.

<sup>159</sup> As often happened, the Directorate of Intelligence had concluded that Burnham was a foe of U.S. interests and that Jagan was not a Soviet tool—but that flew in the face of the existing operation to overthrow Jagan. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 12, 18.

<sup>160</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 234, 268. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 189, 192-93.

aid workers, and enslavement of diamond miners.<sup>161</sup> Despite Nixon ordering direct CIA support for the assassins of “constitutionalist” Chilean generals, some at Langley were so aghast at Gen. Augusto Pinochet’s (public) violence that they wanted to turn the same tools used against Salvador Allende against his successor. But he was still permitted to blackmail the Nixon Administration by threatening to tell the world about the CIA’s 1970-73 role.<sup>162</sup> Iraq’s Saddam Hussein and the *mujahideen* Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani were targeted for assassination—after receiving millions in U.S. assistance.<sup>163</sup>

The more violent or ideologically-extreme forces prove to be the most militant ones—in the Ukrainian S.S.R., Angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, or Syria. Cuban bankers or Nicaraguan Coca-Cola executives arrived in Miami, but with few armed followers. The paramilitaries are rebranded as “freedom fighters” or “moderate rebels” in White House rhetoric.<sup>164</sup> The requirements of deniability and distance put considerable initiative in the hands of partner regimes, and their armed forces and secret police had closer ties to the militants than the CIA agents themselves.<sup>165</sup> Paramilitary warfare gives irregular forces a range of opportunities to deliberately provoke the target state into a seeming aggression; the most ruthless paramilitaries can unleash terror tactics against civilian “soft targets,” which could be blamed on the target state in the news,

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<sup>161</sup> The White House and CIA understood few of the differences between Angola’s factions, other than which Superpower patron they ended up with. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 179-83. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 55. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 276, 280. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 279. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 113, 134, 219.

<sup>162</sup> The 1970-73 intervention in Chile was a turning point like Iran and Guatemala 1953-54: the Santiago Station was instructed to seek out generals in the target state who would murder their fellow generals, in a democracy with full recognition from Washington. This was different from previous military subversions, where they were “offered” a coup to support, as in Brazil 1964 and Indonesia 1965. By 1972 Ted Shackley had ordered the CIA Station to cut contact with the Chilean military to *avoid* the U.S. being linked to the upcoming coup: this proved unsuccessful and Chile became a major scandal for Nixon (see above, “3. Discoverability”). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 34. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 244-47, 313-14. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 419, 423-24. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 310, 315-16.

<sup>163</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 34.

<sup>164</sup> (See Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare,” n62.) Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 95. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 41.

<sup>165</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 359.

and escalate the sponsor power's support against the target.<sup>166</sup> The CIA advised or established secret police and death squads in a dozen states.<sup>167</sup> In Italy, Greece, and Turkey, "Operation Gladio" fostered a "dual state" where anticommunist officers and far-right organizations could build up independent networks of arms and funding strong enough to repeatedly threaten elected governments.<sup>168</sup> Vietnam's 1978 invasion to overthrow the genocidal Khmer Rouge was vocally condemned by the Carter White House, which backed the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, whose leader Son Sann promised to target "the main Soviet proxy in Southeast Asia" and give Hanoi a "Vietnam" of its own. But the largest armed force of this government-in-exile was the Party of Democratic Kampuchea—better known as the Khmer Rouge. U.S. and British support and training were sent by way of China and Thailand under Reagan, and by 1987 there were public accusations that Washington was knowingly "laundering" aid to the Khmer Rouge.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> The practice of "looping" could be easily exploited by the sponsored paramilitaries. If they made a covert sneak attack against a target state, the war crime was depicted in the U.S. media as needing to be "answered," and the Administration could easily escalate the war it favored. Externally-supported fighters did not need to follow basic irregular-warfare principles—to treat the local population with respect rather than as a shooting gallery. The Contras plotted to murder U.S. journalists and citizens so that the U.S. press would demand retaliation against Managua. Witness for Peace had to curtail its operations knowing that the Contras could murder them and the EPS would be 1. blamed and 2. accused of even further perfidy by blaming the Contra freedom fighters. (Chapter 3, "Debunked by Being Right.") Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 145, 147-50, 162, 173, 184.

<sup>167</sup> The Overseas Internal Security Program—under the CIA and the Departments of State and Defense—trained 771,000 military and policemen from 25 nations, separately from those trained by the School of the Americas or the Office of Public Safety. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 279.

<sup>168</sup> And Gladio's connections extended as far as the French and Argentinean states. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 20-25.

<sup>169</sup> China's leader Deng Xiaoping urged bleeding the Vietnamese in Cambodia "because that way they will suffer more and more and will not be able to extend their hand to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore," and under Reagan Washington moved noticeably closer to Beijing against Moscow. Casey did not care if the Khmer Rouge got U.S. arms since they were fighting a member of the Soviet Bloc; Shultz was explicitly hawkish on supporting the Coalition Government. Margaret Thatcher was open that "Some of the Khmer Rouge of course are very different ... The Khmer Rouge were the people who took a very prominent part in fighting the Vietnamese. I think there are probably two parts to the Khmer Rouge, there are those who supported Pol Pot and then there is a much more reasonable grouping within that title 'Khmer Rouge.' ... the first thing you know is to get the Vietnamese out," she told Britain's top children's show for Christmas. (See above, "0: Premises," n16.) Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. to Support Pol Pot Regime for U.N. Seat," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 16, 1980. "Reagan is Urged to End U.N. Support of Pol Pot," *The New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1981. Charles R. Babcock and Bob Woodward, "CIA Covertly Aiding Pro-West Cambodians," *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1985. "TV Interview for BBC1 *Blue Peter*," Dec. 16, 1988, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107131>. Mary McGrory, "Pol Pot and the President," *The Washington*

The term “blowback” was initially coined to refer to CIA-planted stories being reported as true by U.S. media, or even unwittingly accepted by Langley and encouraging further escalation. Diplomats warned that Washington would inevitably be making “policy on the basis of our own propaganda” (above, “1: The Ignorant Armies”).<sup>170</sup> But eventually the term came to mean unintended consequences—of decades-old coups, of support for traffickers and terrorists. Often the paramilitaries are just unceremoniously dumped by a new President (“8: After the End”). Drugs and terrorism are highly salient and public issues for politicians—but they are treated as surprises or crises by the planners in Langley as well as the media. The 1980 seizure of the Tehran Embassy was a long-term consequence of 1953—but the coup was hardly in public memory, except for some academics.<sup>171</sup> The Iranian Revolution and the al-Qaeda attack of September 11, 2001, led in turn to further interventionism in Afghanistan and Iraq, Libya and Syria, and then further disaster.

The most well-examined cause of direct blowback is the use of known terrorists against the target states.<sup>172</sup> As early as 1957 Eisenhower told his Cabinet “We should do everything pos-

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*Post*, Aug. 11, 1991. Robert Scheer, “In the Dock with Pol Pot: Uncle Sam,” *The Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1997. John Pilger, “The Friends of Pol Pot,” *The Nation*, May 11, 1998. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 189, 191. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 70. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 28. Lawrence Freedman, *Atlas of Global Strategy: War and Peace in the Nuclear Era* (New York: Facts on File, 1985): 150-51. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 155-56. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 287, 296. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 213, 281, 290. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 504. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 84-85, 88, 92-94, 97, 99, 101, 106, 108. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 420, 655. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 216, 373.

<sup>170</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 421. Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan’s Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 256. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 205. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: xiii.

<sup>171</sup> Such as how the CIA Station chief “smiled pityingly” at the actual Farsi-speaking experts (above, “1: The Ignorant Armies,” n61).

<sup>172</sup> Christopher Andrew notes that “Western intelligence agencies at the end of the Cold War suffered, though they did not realize it, from a serious lack of theologians. During the Second World War and Cold War, they had been well versed in Nazi and Communist ideology” but were paralyzed by the 1979 Iranian Revolution—proverbially unable to tell Sunni from Shi’ite. Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018): 701-03. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 17. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 84, 86, 136-37.

sible to stress the ‘holy war’ aspect” against any Soviet moves in the Muslim world, and Indonesia’s 1965-66 political genocide was well-monitored by U.S. agents.<sup>173</sup> The Saudi and Pakistani regimes saw Reagan’s partnership as an opportunity to spread cultural, political, and theological revivalism, and to project cash and hard power from Afghanistan to Algeria.<sup>174</sup> Most all of Operation Cyclone’s aid went to groups known to be fundamentalists and/or heroin producers. Tens of thousands of militants were trained in assassination and truck bombings by U.S., British, and Pakistani special forces. The U.S. Agency for International Development helped mujahedeen teach Afghan children to count with illustrated textbooks—one automatic rifle, two grenades, three handguns, nine bullets, and so on.<sup>175</sup> The ISI and CIA supplied *plastique* explosives, then Stinger missiles and even captured Soviet tanks to make the fighters both stronger and more beholden to them (regardless of deniability).<sup>176</sup> The ISI channeled cash and materiel to the most radical mujahedeen seeking martyrdom against the godless Reds—and who U.S. officials would

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<sup>173</sup> Indonesia was subjected to some of the worst political massacres of the Cold War: however anti-Communist, its Army was not inclined to massacres, so Gen. Suharto sent out paramilitary teams adhering to “political Islam” or Catholicism to conduct the mass killings (like with Gen. Pinochet’s 1973 Caravan of Death murdering those who had surrendered to the regular military). Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington’s Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program That Shaped Our World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2020). McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 57. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 252.

<sup>174</sup> Islamabad’s attitude towards the CIA was similar to that of San Salvador: the United States would provide cash, ammunition, and aerial photographs—and ask few questions. The ISI made sure that the CIA actually had nearly no direct contact with the mujahedeen they. John Prados insists that this Cold-War intersection of state interests *created* modern fundamentalist terrorism. It was not that the CIA “invented” contemporary Sunni terrorism (it even found itself a junior partner to the Pakistani state during Operation Cyclone, see also Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine,” n86) but U.S. consular officials voiced their worries that they were stamping the visas of known anti-U.S. terrorists on watch lists: and eventually several perpetrators of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing were allowed in (such as Omar Abdel-Rahman, who made seven entry applications, six of which were approved). Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 170-71. Goodman, “Espionage and Covert Action,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 30. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 171. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 335, 379, 381-85. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 77, 142-44, 206, 208. Alfred W. McCoy, “Mission Myopia: Narcotics as Fallout from the CIA’s Covert Wars,” in Lidberg and Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security* 2018: 129. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 482, 633. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 49. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 443-44.

<sup>175</sup> Joe Stephens and David B. Ottaway, “From U.S., the ABC’s of Jihad,” *The Washington Post*, Mar. 23, 2002. Ishaan Tharoor, “The Taliban Indoctrinates Kids with Jihadist Textbooks Paid for by the U.S.,” *The Washington Post*, Dec. 8, 2014. Craig Davis, “‘A’ is for Allah, ‘J’ is for Jihad,” *World Policy Journal* 19:1 (Spring 2002): 90-94.

<sup>176</sup> Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 262. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 174-73. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 340, 380-83. Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative* 2012: 205.

then target “the West.”<sup>177</sup> A generation of trained combatants began launching attacks against all of their original sponsors: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United States. The 2012-17 Timber Sycamore program which had trained groups against the Syrian regime while knowing that they were façades for al-Qaeda and Islamic State produced the most recent round of atrocities as its “blowback.”<sup>178</sup>

State-shielded trafficking of heroin or cocaine also provided paramilitaries with plentiful cash. The global drug trade was not *directed* from Langley, but the CIA rarely avoided any opportunity, regularly intervening to make sure certain kingpins were not jailed for too long: reports of Contra cocaine appeared in the U.S. press since 1985 (Chapter 3, “A War on News”).<sup>179</sup> CIA-paid Laotian princes and Thai generals invested in the Hmong “Secret Army” shipping heroin to U.S. forces in South Vietnam, by means of CIA-built airfields and secretly-owned “pro-

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<sup>177</sup> Secular, royalist, leftist, and even rival PDPA factions were abandoned to be picked off by the Red Army, or by the fundamentalists themselves. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 378-79. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 385.

<sup>178</sup> Langley switched to Saudi Arabia as the favored partner state after Gen. Zia-ul-Haq’s 1988 assassination. While the “Arab Afghan” Abdullah Azzam was invited to fundraise by the State Department, *Maktab al-Khidamat* reaching over fifty recruiting and fundraising centers in the United States, Osama bin Laden (Azzam’s successor by assassination) was not himself aided by the CIA itself. Efforts to 1. separate al-Qaeda fighters from bin Laden’s leadership converged with 2. projects to remove Muammar Qaddafi and Bashir al-Assad in 2011, leading to “Timber Sycamore” and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. One trainer said, “What? We’re going to arm some foreigners, with their own hates and axes to grind, and send them to kidnap people they are hostile to, in a foreign country, beyond the control of any CIA officer?!” Another trainer complained that “Everyone on the ground knows they are jihadis. No one on the ground believes in this mission or this effort, and they know they are just training the next generation of jihadis, so they are sabotaging it by saying, ‘F\_\_\_k it, who cares?’” Support for Sunni terrorism in the 1980s and 2010s—and its consequences—provides a good example of the importance of *history* (Conclusion, “Final Considerations”): the September 11 attack was a consequence of a by-then forgotten intervention, but exploited to condemn those who sought historical explanation as contemptibly anti-patriotic (and pushing the narrative that terrorism was inherent and universal to all Islam), and attacking Iraq—a former U.S. ally and long-time enemy of Riyadh (a sponsor of Sunni terrorism). Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “Nazi Symbols on Ukraine’s Front Lines Highlight Thorny Issues of History,” *The New York Times*, June 5, 2023. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 44. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 172. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 377, 379, 426. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: v, 142-44, 194-95. Rotter, “Narratives of Core and Periphery,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 70. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 208-09. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 421-22.

<sup>179</sup> Armin Krishnan points out that the drug- and arms-trafficking organizations outlast the conflicts that created them by decades, state-connected criminal networks with more than enough cash and protection to endure; of course some kingpins could become liabilities—Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, Juan Ramón Matta Ballesteros, Pablo Escobar—who had all sent cocaine profits to the Contras (Chaper 8, “A Right-Wing Student Riot”). Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 17, 219, 221. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 634.

proprietary” airlines. Officers were even disciplined when they destroyed heroin labs.<sup>180</sup> The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in Pakistan identified forty mujahedeen heroin syndicates: the officers quickly asked to be relocated after being blocked by the CIA and Islamabad at every turn.<sup>181</sup> Miami became a hive of Cuban exile airline bombers and cocaine traffickers, though after 1965 the CIA and FBI were redirected towards forcing them to take their business elsewhere—increasing their (still-shielded) presence across the Caribbean.<sup>182</sup> CIA payoffs to narco-officers and officials in Honduras, Grenada, Panama, Haiti, and Guatemala had to be covered up later. The press and White House had given maximum saliency to the topics of drugs and terrorism since the 1970s—meaning maximum risk for the Agency now publicly associated with such state crime.<sup>183</sup>

Death-squad leader Maj. Roberto “Blowtorch Bob” D’Aubuisson was the most telegenic architect of the 1980 political slaughter of 10,000 Salvadorans (even directly commanding the

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<sup>180</sup> The Bangkok Embassy had been complaining about the officials’ trafficking since 1952. The Republican Chinese forces fleeing Yunnan, backed by Washington, attacked Burma’s forces, leading Rangoon to invite in the People’s Liberation Army and sever diplomatic ties with Washington. By the 1970s Nugan Hand Bank had a branch office in Chiang Mai and shared a suite and receptionist with the Drug Enforcement Administration office there, working with Laotian kingpins and arms dealers. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 38. Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration’s Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987): 103-04. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 74, 139, 400-02, 406-09. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 166, 218-20. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987). Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade: Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, Colombia* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003). McCoy, “Mission Myopia,” in Lidberg and Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security* 2018. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 358-59. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 236, 257, 553-54.

<sup>181</sup> Some of the heroin was deliberately sold to the Red Army in Afghanistan, to reduce their combat readiness, a French-inspired plan which Reagan himself approved of. McCoy, “Mission Myopia,” in Lidberg and Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security* 2018. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 384-85. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 220.

<sup>182</sup> Bissell figured that hiring Cuban criminals would allow the Bay of Pigs invasion to be denied as revenge for expelling the casino owners. The CIA pulled support from the criminal exiles 1964, but private funding let them set up more independent operations in Central America and Venezuela. 70% of those arrested by the counternarcotics Operation Eagle in 1970 were Bay of Pigs recruits. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 34, 74. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 178, 193, 199. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 207. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 219.

<sup>183</sup> Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 73. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 392, 445.

murder of Archbishop Óscar Romero at the altar). He expressed contempt for the United States and denounced a Jewish plot to control the world, but was still brought past immigration controls by the staff of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) to fundraise.<sup>184</sup> The Administration took credit for D'Aubuisson's electoral loss in 1984, presenting the vote as a repudiation of far left and far right and as a sign of El Salvador's independence from Washington—and kept billions of dollars flowing to the most extremist officers, under cover of reforming the regular Army against the paramilitaries.<sup>185</sup> The Atlacatl Battalion was created, trained, and funded by U.S. forces with the specific intent of taking the Salvadoran counterrevolution away from the paramilitaries, who had little concern for the new Reagan White House's need to avoid stigma and controversy. But instead the Brigade murdered nearly a thousand inhabitants of one village in the span of 48 hours, requiring a cover-up that drew substantial risk for the new Reagan White House (Chapter 3, “El Mozote”).

Reagan's first-term Administration had explicitly campaigned in favor of authoritarians and autocrats, death squads, religious extremists, drug traffickers, and mass murderers (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives”).<sup>186</sup> The beneficiaries of U.S. sponsorship in Chile, Uruguay, El Salvador, and Costa Rica all plotted to murder U.S. ambassadors, often openly threatening their

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<sup>184</sup> Jude Wanniski, a key figure in Reagan's direct-mail campaigning and an author of Reaganomics and the “two Santa Claus theory,” backed Pinochet and D'Aubuisson, calling news stories of his ties to death squads “one of the most successful hoaxes of the decade” and “a McCarthyist tactic, pure and simple.” Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 289. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 260.

<sup>185</sup> See Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: The Pivot to Nicaragua,” n15. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 140-42. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 108.

<sup>186</sup> Even in the late 1970s the Cold Warriors had to deal with problems of global *reaction* as well as revolution—the states of Israel, Argentina, South Africa, El Salvador emboldened to openly attack U.S. material interests from under its proverbial superpower umbrella. Partly on Casey's own incentive, Reagan's second term reversed course against “friendly” dictatorships like the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos and Chile's Gen. Augusto Pinochet, boosting economically-liberal parties in states that were beginning their democratic transition—a genuine reversal from the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, at least in a sense. U.S. foreign policy had also turned against Rafael Trujillo in 1961, Anastasio Somoza 1978, or the Shah 1979—years after the revolutions that overthrew them had already begun (see above, “1: Refusal of Neutrality”). Giovanni Arrighi, “The Three Hegemonies of Historical Capitalism,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 180. Augelli and Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations,” in *ibid.*: 140. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 7, 25, 66.



lives. The Iran-Contra scandal piled up felonies and the Administration openly rejected the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice for the first time in history.<sup>187</sup> Honduras was made into the site of some of the most grueling criminal acts, each of which threatened to create a scandal large enough to threaten Reagan himself: bayoneting of refugees' infants (Chapter 4), political murder (Chapters 6 and 7), and corruption by continent-wide cartels (Chapter 8, "A Right-Wing Student Riot").

Potential news of crime and extremism posed the highest risk when a covert war reached this stage. This threw the Reagan Administration onto the horns of a dilemma: 1a. the spread and confirmation of a disastrous story, 1b. forcing the Administration to expend considerable effort to *avoid* having to fight or deny a story, by making sure that it never stayed in the headlines or started to be investigated (Chapter 3). 2. Because of the saliency of trafficking and terrorism as news topics, intercepting the stories redoubles the potential risk: if the story "breaks," the Administration would face not only exposure of its impeachable behavior, but also the record of its extensive cover-up attempt. However, the shutdown of Eugene Hasenfus remained the only incident that led to what was defined as a "scandal" before January 1989: the stories of cocaine and car bombings were then left up to the historians to piece together.

"We do sell some of your weapons. We are doing it for the day when your country decides to abandon us, just as you abandoned Vietnam and everyone else you deal with"<sup>188</sup>

—Afghan *muhajid* to John N. McMahon, 1983

"The soil is wonderfully fertile, but every four or eight years the river changes course, and you may find yourself alone in a desert"<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Classic "cover-ups" (stonewalling, firings, claiming national security, as opposed to the media "management" more central to this dissertation) produce a paradox: those enforcing it either 1. *know* what is being covered up or 2. genuinely believe there is nothing *to* cover up and that their task is fighting foreign enemy propaganda. Either way the censors are not even aware of what they are supposed to look for, allowing for accidental revelation of state-supported extremists' violence (which is often documented and thus "discoverable" in international media, though not with the same warrant of "mainstream" U.S. coverage). Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 324. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 129-30, 205-07. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 256, 260. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 421, 647.

<sup>188</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 313.

## 6: Abandonment

Sponsoring guerrilla groups from ethnic minorities in the target state poses substantial danger to them, sharpens tensions within the country, and increases the damage to U.S. reputation. As exposure increases, the paramilitary operation is either expanded and becomes conventionalized (“4: Escalation and Conventionalization”)—or the Administration dumps the friendly forces. This scenario was so common that it has its own term, the “disposal problem”—especially for paramilitaries experienced in arms and drug trafficking and unrestrained violence against civilian “soft targets.”<sup>190</sup>

After the failure of the 1961 invasion, hardline officers repeatedly told the Cuban *brigadistas*’ families and survivors that they had “been screwed by Kennedy” and the President might as well have personally signed their death warrants.<sup>191</sup> Vietnamese Montagnards, Laotian Hmong, Iraqi Kurds, and Nicaraguan Contras all found themselves unceremoniously dumped and the undeclared war dropped from the headlines after thousands of combat deaths.<sup>192</sup> Kissin-

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Trafficking also reduces the costs of the Superpower and third-party sponsors, and allows the war to be pursued even if funding does get cut; Truman was unconcerned about the Kuomintang trafficking opium, and cocaine kept Buenos Aires’s allies going in Bolivia and Central America—the Contras surviving the fall of the junta in 1983. The Cuban exiles, Afghan mujahedeen, Contras, UNITA, and Khmer Rouge, in particular. Buenos Aires or Islamabad wanted the wildest death-squad leaders or terrorists in any country except for theirs. Goodman, “Espionage and Covert Action,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 32. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 15, 165. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 56-55. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 631, 646.

<sup>191</sup> The exiles genuinely believed they had a chance against Castro, misleading their CIA associates, who in turn misled one another, their superiors, and the White House. After its failure the exiles and the hardline CIA agents close to them believed Kennedy had “in some sense already committed treason in allowing a communist regime to take full power” next door. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 186-89. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 217.

<sup>192</sup> The passage of time allows policy to become “history,” and thus no longer an issue of scandal (and accountability), producing only more public cynicism rather than change. The Gulf of Tonkin was revealed as fabricated in 2005, and Timber Sycamore passed without scandal, showing even the most explosive secret (at the time) can be revealed once it is too late. Bryan, “Trust Us,” in MacGranahan and Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* 2018. Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989): 4. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 42. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 168. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 33. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 193. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 634. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 343-45.

ger declared 1975 that “covert action should not be confused with missionary work” and condemned any scruple at their abandonment as “self-flagellation”<sup>193</sup>: the superpower had no obligation to guarantee any protection or provide any aid to the ethnic minority after exhorting and funding it to fight the conventional military. Agents leading guerrilla groups were now determined to not let *their* fighters be abandoned like all the rest before had been.<sup>194</sup>

After a U.S. election, whole countries can be discarded as a foreign-policy issue altogether—the Kurds, Nicaragua after 1990, or Afghanistan, Cambodia, and El Salvador in 1992. The tasks of refugee and humanitarian aid, minesweeping, truth and reconciliation commissions, peacekeeping, setting up coalition governments are dumped onto organizations like the United Nations. In 2018, Armin Krishnan even ventured that “In a few years the project of ‘regime change’ in Syria might be entirely forgotten” in favor of a different target country (while the blowback continued).<sup>195</sup>

“it would be a serious matter if any country such as Laos went Communist by the legal vote of its people”<sup>196</sup>

—Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958

“I don’t see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves.”<sup>197</sup>

—Henry Kissinger, 1970

“What our opponents called destabilization was in fact an effort to help the institutions of civil democratic society survive Allende’s pressures to destroy them.”<sup>198</sup>

—Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1999

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<sup>193</sup> Nixon and Kissinger had not wanted the Kurds to *prevail* in their 1972-75 war, just continue a certain level of hostilities to sap Baghdad and force a negotiation. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 33. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 391-95.

<sup>194</sup> See above, “0: Premises,” n10.

<sup>195</sup> This could almost serve as the definition of a Power—its decision-makers can ignore a country for a century, behave like the proverbial elephant seeing a mouse and engage in a war causing a million deaths, then return to ignoring the former target state, while the electorate remained either unaware or artificially mobilized to support the war. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: v.

<sup>196</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 597.

<sup>197</sup> Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 95.

<sup>198</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 415.

## 7: Counterproductive Consequences

Historians of covert warfare have analyzed over forty interventions during and after the Cold War. Allen Dulles promised a world full of adversaries transformed into allies—but instead the record since 1949, whether over the short or long term, has been almost unremittingly catastrophic.<sup>199</sup> No covert regime change worked out as planned, whether judged 1. by the criteria of the historians or 2. on the planners' own terms—not even by the most basic conceptions of national self-interest.<sup>200</sup> Melvin A. Goodman concludes that “U.S. interest would've been far better served if Arbenz, Mosaddegh, and Allende remained in power”: these three overthrows alone

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<sup>199</sup> Lindsey O'Rourke finds that 92% of the offensive missions made by the United States after 1776 have occurred after 1945: and 96% of those were preemptive against a state known to *not* be a threat—few interventions actually were launched against the Soviet Bloc (since nonaligned or friendly target states allowed more aggressive actions without threat of direct confrontation). U.S. covert operations have an overall 60% failure rate. They were always exposed to the target state, souring relations and leading to accusations of domestic interference before the UN. “U.S. policymakers found themselves in the awkward position of having to do business with foreign leaders who knew that Washington was actively trying to remove them from office.” By O'Rourke's count, regime change only had a 10% success rate against the Soviet Union's allies—but 43% for Nonaligned states and 70% for U.S. *allies*. A democratic state eager to maintain relations with Washington was simply easier to crush. His conclusion is that Washington was not concerned with Soviet encroachment—superpower conflict, that is—but in maintaining the hierarchy of nations. U.S. conventional invasions were also against those countries that had no Soviet military presence—Lebanon 1958 and 1983, South Vietnam 1964, the Dominican Republic 1965, Grenada 1983, the bombing of Libya 1986. Most *successes* were more prosaic spycraft. Perhaps the only real intelligence coup was publicizing of Khrushchev's 1956 Secret Speech, which led to the overthrow of every Stalinist regime in the Warsaw Pact: but this had been obtained by Israeli military intelligence and fed to Angleton. The Directorate of Intelligence's actual estimates of Soviet nuclear forces were accurate enough to allow Presidents to pursue informed détente and arms limitation, and resist hawkish pressure in the Senate or the Strategic Air Command: the CIA debunked the “Bomber” and “Missile” and “Throw-Weight Gaps” and discovered the missiles in Cuba. The Agency's best work came in the warnings that South Vietnam was a lost cause and no amount of strategic bombing could not stop reunification—but eventually Saigon, Arlington, and Langley learned to not allow any negative news cross the Potomac. CIA analysts also anticipated the Sino-Soviet Split, giving Nixon and Kissinger their opening to Beijing. The Phoenix Program was quickly turned to mass murder, but still managed to create the picture of a complex insurgency. The Hmong Secret Army was compared to the exploits of the OSS or British Special Operations Executive, even if defeated by 1969. The CIA cooperated with Tehran in 1983 to crush the Tudeh Party after a Soviet defection, opening the door to more negotiation with Iran (which almost ousted Reagan). The mujahedeen were considered highly successful at the time, and rarely connected to terrorism “downstream.” (See above, “Introduction.”) Goodman, “Espionage and Covert Action,” in Eisendraith, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 28. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 20, 37-38, 63-65, 81, 148-49. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 107-24, 306. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 2, 11, 13, 61, 66, 73, 75, 80-81, 96, 111, 113, 226-27. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 234-36, 244-46, 249-50, 301. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: xv, 185-203, 348, 350, 357, 500, 504. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 419, 641.

<sup>200</sup> Even Chomsky acknowledges that interventions harmed U.S. reputation, business, or petrodollar dominance (see Conclusion, “Future Possibilities,” n20). But covert-war history provides the alternative explanation: that those making the decisions are coordinated in action and have secret knowledge, while instead it was ignorant officials eroding the level of democracy as it stood 1945. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 10.

had pernicious effects measured in terms of decades.<sup>201</sup> Often the operations ended in exactly the sort of intractable conventional fight that covert interventionism promised to avoid; or else successful overthrows decreased the state's friendliness to Washington in objective terms.

Lindsey O'Rourke concludes that although covert intervention "may persuade a state to change its behavior temporarily, none of these efforts will change that state's underlying interests," which "have deeper roots than the beliefs of any individual leader."<sup>202</sup> U.S.-installed leaders faced the same political and economic pressures that had resulted in policies that Washington interpreted as being against its interests. Leaders who persisted in pursuing U.S. interests were easily derided as puppets, increasing domestic tension: over half of the leaders successfully installed by U.S. covert action were overthrown later by coup or by revolution.<sup>203</sup>

O'Rourke concludes that "covert regime changes tended to succeed where they were needed the least—overthrowing weak governments of little geostrategic value": actual ties to Moscow would have risked escalation.<sup>204</sup> Being a U.S. ally was statistically *more* significant for regime-change success than actually being a Soviet ally. The more democratic the target state,

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<sup>201</sup> Based on the cases of North Vietnam and Cuba, Chomsky specifically argues that turning a friendly state into an enemy, or simply obligating it to reach out to Moscow, is *itself* an unstated goal of U.S. intervention, no matter what stated motives it contradicts. The agents seeking to overthrow Salvador Allende hoped to push him to use force against the plotters, and thereby discredit him. In 1981 the State Department boasted that it would "turn Nicaragua into the Albania of Central America"—poor, isolated, radical—which would retroactively justify the Reagan Administration's attack (and reframe Managua's 1979-81 outreach to Washington as just another example of Red deceit). Though this Revisionist theory opposes more "Realist" theories that Cold-War interventions properly managed to identify enemy states and reward friendly proxies, Chomsky gives a rational (though hidden) motive for decades of seemingly-counterproductive behavior that drives a target country further and further towards a Soviet alignment. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 33. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 27. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* 2005: 43. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 42, 202. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 204-05. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 16. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 13. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 310.

<sup>202</sup> In other words, Washington demanded the target state give up a degree of sovereignty or independence, to abandon its most popular positions, to jeopardizing continued rule. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 5-6, 225.

<sup>203</sup> After a regime change, succeeding regimes were less democratic, and even failed overthrows multiplied the chances of coups, civil wars, and mass killings. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 12, 75, 84, 95.

<sup>204</sup> Using a third party hands operational control over to the partner state or to the guerrillas. The goal in covert intervention becomes nothing more than destabilizing the target state and praying for a positive outcome: Geraint Hughes calls such covert action "anti-strategic." Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: vi. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 10, 15-16, 73, 82. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 224.

the easier it was to overthrow: they had little experience “coup-proofing” the state. Successful regime change decreased the odds of democratization by about 30 percent, and no regime change anywhere secured democracy in the target state.<sup>205</sup>

The planners of covert wars acknowledged that the states targeted were exactly the ones *not* posing any real threat to the United States. However heated the public rhetoric of domino theories or Soviet bomber bases, none of the planners of Guatemala’s 1954 overthrow privately believed their target posed a security threat, sponsored insurgencies, or had direct links to the Soviet Union. British Guiana and Chile were also never seen as threats to the United States by those overthrowing them.<sup>206</sup> Even if the leaders of Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Congo, Cuba, Chile, or Nicaragua had started out with the belief that Washington had expressed support for their efforts at decolonization and nonalignment (above, “1: Refusal of Neutrality,” “The Ignorant Armies”), they had unknowingly been made into figures of U.S. *domestic* politics, subjected to criteria far distant from the actual histories of their countries.

Covertness of intervention was aimed at maintaining a sufficiently-benign image for the other Powers (“0: Premises”).<sup>207</sup> But by 1958 the interventions in Iran, Guatemala, Indonesia,

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<sup>205</sup> Coups were more successful compared to fostering guerrillas or rebels: elected leaders had nobody to fight their *own* military with, after all. However much coup planners claimed to be rescuing a country from imminent totalitarianism, the coups trashed the concepts of self-determination, democratic participation, and international law. Covert-ness, however, let Washington publicly pretend to conform with the democratic norms it used to justify the overthrow attempt (that is, the power to determine which votes were and were *not* “democratic,” since by self-definition it was the most democratic regime). At the same time, the close calls of Iran, Guatemala, and Chile, and the failures of Indonesia and Cuba show that even new states can take counter-coup measures—packing critical positions with loyalists, mobilizing the intelligence and security agencies, monitoring their rebel officers, setting patrols. Few coups after Iran 1953 and Guatemala 1954 actually succeeded: the last arguable success was Chile 1973, while the entire force of CIA paramilitaries a global network of anticommunist regimes and far-right shadow organizations (Chapter 2, “A ‘Black International’”) could not topple a Central American “banana republic” in the 1980s. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 5. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 229. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 10, 15-16, 26-27, 56, 74, 77, 83, 90-91.

<sup>206</sup> The Chilean intervention was notorious even before the 1973 coup, though Kissinger reportedly called the country a “dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica” at first. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 340. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 78. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 16. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 5, 8, 58, 119. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 19.

<sup>207</sup> As opposed to Western Europe’s colonialists or the “Soviet Empire” (see above, “0: Premises,” n6). O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 61.

Lebanon, and Venezuela had permanently poisoned relationships across the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America—even long after the operation was half-forgotten by Washington’s decision-making classes. CIA planners were acutely aware of “the special sensitivity of Latin America to United States ‘intervention’ ” such as sponsorship of the Cuban exiles. The State Department warned that each intervention was eroding its reputation in regards to decolonization, nonintervention, and self-determination—and even sarcastically described overthrowing a country with a military hundreds of times smaller as “the elephant shaking with alarm before the mouse.”<sup>208</sup> Even Kissinger warned of *practical* consequences to Washington flouting principles that it was publicly supporting.<sup>209</sup>

In the 1980s, Reagan’s murderous Chilean, Argentinean, and Central American allies had damaged diplomacy and public approval among Western Europeans even more than the Vietnam War had. The Reagan Administration could simply not understand that even friendly Latin Americans did not perceive *Moscow* as having occupied or overthrown any of the countries in the hemisphere.<sup>210</sup> Meanwhile the Soviets were free to sign treaties of technical, trade, and military aid with neutral and nonaligned postcolonial states—no demands for political and military commitment, no conditions that vital resources stay in foreign hands.<sup>211</sup> *Moscow had* no regimes

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<sup>208</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 81. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 149.

<sup>209</sup> Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 116, 324. McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 30. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 118. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 8, 632. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 192.

<sup>210</sup> The international morality established with World War II was why covert warfare proved to be so discrediting: it was not accepted that even a hyperpower was entitled to commit any crime it wished in public. The 2002-04 campaign to attack Iraq produced concerted opposition to U.S. behavior after a surge of sympathy and goodwill from September 11: the neoconservatives interpreted this as blind hatred, rather than a warning of an imminent bad decision. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 108. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 323. McPherson, “U.S. Government Responses to Anti-Americanism at the Periphery,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 90. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 642. Rowland and Jones, “Reagan and the Evil Empire,” in Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War* 2018: 432.

<sup>211</sup> McMahon, “How the Periphery Became the Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 27.

to topple in revolutionary, postcolonial Asia and Africa, whereas Washington targeted states for populism, agrarian reform, or nationalization of resources (above, “1: Refusal of Neutrality”).<sup>212</sup>

“we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do”<sup>213</sup>

—White House official (probably Karl Rove) to Ron Suskind, 2002

## 8: After the End—a Return to the Beginning

CIA analyst and whistleblower Melvin Goodman notes that some “failure of intelligence” is inevitable: the complex developments in Soviet or Iranian society surprised those countries’ own leaders. He concludes that the real problem is the lack of *accountability*.<sup>214</sup> As an institution, the CIA made little effort to learn from its failures (or even successes). However much the Agency accumulated classified knowledge, it never allowed the proper *context* to make it usable to serve even basic national self-interest. It would be left up to specialist historians to actually

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<sup>212</sup> No country was allowed to take an independent route—not in the Philippines, Guatemala, or Indochina, not Indonesia or Chile, Cuba or Nicaragua (though the Cold Warriors could foster Belgrade and Beijing—if it was against Moscow). The Soviet Union likewise lost its war-won reputation, on the left wing and internationally: the Secret Speech denouncing Stalin and the invasions of allied and Marxist-Leninist Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, and Afghanistan 1979 wrecked its image as an ally of workers’ self-liberation. Langley was enthused by the ability to point to small nations bravely standing up to Soviet tanks, rather than the United States bombing villages or supporting *caudillos*. Unlike the United States, however, sending fighter pilots to Vietnam or Syria did not damage Moscow’s reputation. By 1980 Langley knew there were far fewer Communists in the world allied with Moscow or under its influence than in 1950: it had lost influence to China and Cuba, and the Communist Parties of Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and Spain all had developed a marked opposition to Moscow (see above, “0: Premises,” n16, and “1: Refusal of Neutrality,” n26.) Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 4, 86, 88-91, 325. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 325. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 102. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 128

<sup>213</sup> Gramscians also hold that the “real” motives of the dominant coalition are left to historians to unmask only later—when it’s too late to have influence. Ultimately the neoconservatives (Karl Rove here, presumably) hoped to make Orwell’s greatest warning into practice, without hint of irony; the public’s *trust* was not necessary if they could win dominance in the press 2002. And Joe Bryan warns that to take such a quote “at face value risked complicity with the imperial project invoked”—that all the neoconservatives had had to do was seize office and single-handedly change the world, that doubt and opposition to the invasion of Iraq really *was* inconsequential and had no chance of creating a counterhegemony. Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 128. Bryan, “Trust Us,” in MacGranahan and Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* 2018: 354. Ron Suskind, “Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2004.

<sup>214</sup> “The point here is not to compile a litany of the CIA’s failures. After all, the Agency was not alone in getting it wrong,” but that as an institution it still tries “to convince itself and the public that its analysts were right all along”: it was set up to avoid future “Pearl Harbors” and instead missed 1991 and 2001. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 13, 63-65, 92, 97-99, 112, 114, 170.



evaluate any of the consequences.<sup>215</sup> Each new intervention can therefore “begin afresh, unburdened by any understanding of the nature of American society or the documentary and historical record,” in Noam Chomsky’s words.<sup>216</sup>

Covert action was risky was not only because of potential failure in the present, but because it relied on obscuring the record of the past, letting the cycle restart with each new target country—with inevitable ignorance, near-inevitable escalation, and then withdrawal.<sup>217</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon could insist that South Vietnam was a sovereign, independent state being threatened by an expansionist neighbor and which needed defending as a treaty ally only because the tremendous war in Laos and Thailand was being kept secret. Secrecy leaves the U.S. public surprised by seemingly-unexplainable foreign events, even if they were directly caused by past interventions. Ronald Reagan and Dick Cheney offered false answers to the consequences of “blowback”: the public sought an explanation for drugs and revolution, for hostage-taking and hijacking, but they only offered more interventionism based on inadequate knowledge, ideological presumptions, or outright falsehoods. Almost nobody connected the 1979 Iranian Revolution to the overthrow of Mohammad Mosaddegh a quarter century earlier, nor did the details of mujahedeen support predominate the 2002-04 reaction to the September 11 attack.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 91, 175. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 98. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 386. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 635. Raskin, “Out of the Shadows,” in Raskin and LeVan: 299. Raskin and LeVan, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*: xxv.

<sup>216</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 17-18, 117.

<sup>217</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 639, 645.

<sup>218</sup> The 1979 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II treaty was undercut “simply due to a memory lapse”: the “discovery” of a Soviet brigade that had been on the island since 1962. In the absence of basic “object permanence,” events such as the Iranian Revolution, Saddam Hussein, Manuel Noriega, al-Qaeda, mass migration, or ISIS can simply be interpreted by the media and political classes as inexcusable sneak attacks against a guiltless “open society” (see above, “5: Criminality and Extremism,” n171, and Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine,” n86). Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed., 2002: 35. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 115. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 98. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 386. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 15. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 374

Every U.S. President during the Cold War (excluding Ford and Carter) entered office as a hawk, anticipating a course of *action*—even if there was no real goal or real knowledge about the *target* of the action. The top officials (or at least the more hawkish ones) held out the promise of new sorts of “low-intensity conflict” and proxy war, assuring the Chief Executive that that they had learned all their lessons from previous defeats, that *this* time secret warfare would be different. Each President was plied with promises of intervention: past failures were not considered too troubling given the relatively low cost in U.S. blood and treasure (compared to conventional invasion or formal Congressional declaration of war). Every time, the theorists insisted they had learned their lessons *this* time.<sup>219</sup> And each President came to realize that he had to seek some measure of détente with Moscow and Beijing.<sup>220</sup> The Presidents would always choose to bend the sequence of covert warfare back and back—until it swallows its own tail and the intervention cycle begins once more. Then Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan all put themselves on record as regretting their covert wars, which threatened even their Presidencies.<sup>221</sup>

Since no Administration could be monolithic, the hawkish agents, officers, and lobbyists then found themselves at odds with their President’s new course. The hawks pointed to previous pessimistic assessments of intervention as having been wrong and reframed abandonment (above, #6) as a thwarted triumph instead (above, #2): Daniel Ortega and Mohammad Najibullah were driven from power, Cambodia and Angola forced into divided regimes. If any “lesson” was to be learned it was to never “abandon” the good fight—otherwise the courageous deaths of thousands of U.S. soldiers or local men and women would be in vain. To the more revanchist

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<sup>219</sup> Piero Gleijeses concludes that even exposure matters little to the hyperpower, since Washington will be accused of meddling anyhow. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 13.

<sup>220</sup> See above, “0: Premises,” n14.

<sup>221</sup> See Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare,” n36, and Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine,” n76.

Cold Warriors, the media had “lost” Cuba or Vietnam, and leakers and academics spread disloyal concepts such as “blame America first”—that foreign violence was caused by U.S. interventionism.<sup>222</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter is not intended as an effort to create some grand unifying theory for U.S. covert intervention between 1949 and 2023.<sup>223</sup> Covert war has to be treated empirically, rather than just making generalizations (even if true ones). The “intervention cycle” is not an inevitability: that would be to simply judge history only by its outcomes, and overlook alternative explanations. The processes that keep intervention secret are not the inherent product of the Cold-War ideologies in Washington, or an imperial need to maintain U.S. political and financial dominance over other potential powers or against rival systems—nor some abstract tendency of history to innately repeat itself. Each stage in the sequence of—beginning again with a new target state—is always driven by identifiable motives and decisions by specific officials.

Secrecy in undeclared war is not a blanket or umbrella that is naturally provided by the state’s involvement, but an active process that relies on constant involvement by partner states to keep several possible stories out of the U.S. press at the same time. Taking apart the covert anatomy of covert warfare—of the deceit aimed against the public and elected officials—helps find the full range of the potential “weak points”—how they were probed, defended, or exploited in the 1980s. The wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua would not have been possible without decades spent developing or renewing the various elements of covert warfare: anticommunism in the U.S.

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<sup>222</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 237.

<sup>223</sup> That is, all of the stages and “modes of failure” in this chapter appear in all the covert-war surveys used in this dissertation, but they have not yet been extracted and arranged in order. Most interventions have been recorded going through most of the stages: notable exceptions like Iran 1953 and Guatemalan 1954 lacked the “abandonment” stage (#6) only because the coups were over in a month.

press and “pressure groups” (becoming Reagan’s New Right), *narco* connections, and mercenary pilots. The Contra War was not a unique criminal act, but one in a cycle of covert wars, sharing similar methods of concealment to a dozen such interventions.

Since the secrecy of Iran-Contra was not inevitable, there were several points where disaster could have been averted. Although nobody completed a prison term for Iran-Contra and the top officials would return two Administrations later for the launch of another pre-planned war, covert warfare is not unstoppable. That would be to relegate contemporary journalists and the public to flying blind, helpless in the face of the state’s secret actors and its media control, unable to do anything until the investigations drop off the headlines and the issue is picked up by the historians decades later. This dissertation uses epistemology to make a more detailed examination of how covertness operates—ignorance by the planners as well as the public, how the Reagan White House was constrained by domestic considerations and how it avoided them. Because covert warfare is a contingent process (rather than a series of inevitabilities), that means there are many “points of entry” that can derail the intervention cycle.

## Chapter 2

### Iran-Contra: Preparations

#### Introduction

The 1979-90 Contra War against Nicaragua has an extensive political, criminal, and historical literature. This chapter will examine existing analyses of “Iran-Contra” to provide context to the Honduran role in the counterrevolutionary war—to give a *place* to the country between Washington and Buenos Aires. Some of the analyses emphasize U.S. sources, while the others point out that Latin American forces took the lead after deciding Washington was not sufficiently dedicated to the cause of anticommunist repression. The U.S. involvement in the attack against the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran Revolutions has already been analyzed as a “Presidential scandal” or as an inevitable result of post-WWII imperialism. But to leave the analysis at that would be to shortchange the complete picture of how counterrevolutionary warfare was started and conducted. The Contra War has to be situated in terms of time and space: it was one of several simultaneous wars coordinated upon Reagan’s 1980 election, to “roll back” the potential Soviet allies that had won victories in the late 1970s, and the operation was part of the same single structure as those in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, and Laos.

Jimmy Carter was elected 1976 on the promise of taking a new approach to the Cold War: Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, and Israel found themselves withdrawn from the previous level of unconditionality or impunity that they had enjoyed as Cold-War allies—no longer able to cite anticommunism to get U.S. backing for their regional fights (Chapter 1, “1: The Ignorant Armies”). Hundreds of older and more hardline CIA officers were also fired under Carter, many taking their expertise and connections—and grudges—abroad. The World Anti-Communist League was an umbrella for several Latin American and international far-right networks that supported the Nicaraguan National Guard since 1977. The

main components of “Iran-Contra” were all in place years before Reagan was elected: the Contras were gathered together by a Argentinean junta that was extending its reach beyond even the Americas, Guatemalan and Salvadoran death squads, and funded by cartels from Bolivia to Mexico.<sup>1</sup> The League itself was led by U.S. Maj. Gen. John Singlaub and involved Iran-Contra figures such as Ted Shackley and Lt. Col. Oliver North, years before William Casey set up the “Enterprise” to sidestep even the Agency he had been assigned to direct.

For Iran-Contra, Casey tapped into a network of murderers of priests and children, kidnapers, planners of genocide, open admirers of Adolf Hitler, and cocaine kingpins from Bolivia to Mexico. The term “deep state” was coined for the self-perpetuating *stratum* of officers in the “intelligence community” who worked with the most vicious state-protected criminals that the continent had to offer; but other writers emphasize the ignorance, amateurishness, short-sightedness, and contingency of the elements of the Casey Doctrine. Casey himself had no intelligence experience: he himself did not understand Spanish (or the languages of any of the other countries that he targeted).

Without a White House with high popularity ratings constantly running interference with the press (or signing the “end-user” certificates for the Contras’ weapons), the CIA Director’s elaborate semi-private scheme to support the Contras in Honduras (separate from the CIA itself) would not have been possible. The FF.AA. was put in charge of the spread of important stories—but that let it get Reagan into trouble with the Senate (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”). Cartels and death squads had no intrinsic reason to brag about U.S. backing (especially if bragging would threaten the flow of cash and state protection); but the Contra War was built atop a network of criminal “partners,” and that meant numerous potential incidents of exposure—

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1, “1: The Ignorant Armies”; Chapter 8, “A Right-Wing Student Riot”; and Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context,” n31.

instances that even top planners, such as Casey or Lt. Col. North, were not even aware of beforehand. Fighting the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran Revolutions required that Washington support massacres, trafficking, terrorism, and state lawlessness—which all went against the rhetoric Reagan used to justify the war. So his White House had to scramble and take sometimes risky measures to cover up stories and punish journalists (Chapter 3).

“We live in an imperfect world. Most people are badly governed, and always have been ... Therefore, sometimes we are going to have to support and associate with governments who do not meet our standards”<sup>2</sup>  
—Jeane Kirkpatrick, 1982

“Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business.”  
—Michael Ledeen

### The Neoconservatives

The groundwork for the broader “Casey Doctrine” (below) was laid even before the 1973 withdrawal from South Vietnam or the 1975 fall of Saigon and exposures of CIA crimes.<sup>3</sup> The 1974-76 Congressional investigations of regime change and CIA spycraft did force a reassessment of Constitutional law after an era of undeclared conventional warfare and covert paramilitarism sanctioned by the narratives of a “Cold War.”<sup>4</sup> The world saw a wave of postcolonial revolutions between 1969 and 1975: Angola, Benin, Cape Verde, Congo-Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Laos, Libya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Portugal (temporarily), São Tomé and Príncipe, the Seychelles, Somalia, and Sudan, now under governments that declared themselves socialist or Marxist-Leninist. Saigon and Phnom Penh were both taken in the same month (April

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<sup>2</sup> Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 107.

<sup>3</sup> David S. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2018): 3. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 329.

<sup>4</sup> Nixon browbeat Langley, he and Carter fired hundreds of agents, and Reagan and Cheney demanded stovepipes—cutting the CIA’s autonomy from the civilian Administration, but feeding the most belligerent factions. Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (New York: New Press, 2015): 179-81.

1975).<sup>5</sup> Many U.S. experts simply interpreted this as a Soviet “winning streak.” National liberation movements not dependent on Moscow or Beijing appeared across Africa and Latin America, culminating in the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional and Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional. This new left wing was more doctrinally flexible and explicitly engaged with the middle classes and Washington: Salvador Allende of Chile had already been suspected *because* he would step down at the appointed end of his term, endangering the Cold Warriors’ narrative that any socialist presence in the state led straight to eternal Stalinism.<sup>6</sup> These states were the rationale of the Casey Doctrine and its the primary targets—Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Nicaragua.

The next wave of revolutions, in 1978 and 1979, was even more shocking for the foreign-policy planners in Carter White House.<sup>7</sup> A fitful attempt to preserve “*somocismo* without *Somoza*” failed to prevent the Nicaraguan Revolution, then followed by the overthrow of the Salvadoran President by junior officers 1979. The year concluded with the seizure of 52 Tehran Embassy and Station staff for 444 days—literally caught by surprise because they were so depend-

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<sup>5</sup> Anne Cahn, *Killing Detente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998): 52, 54. Willard C. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 288.

<sup>6</sup> That is, Hanoi, Havana, and Managua (but not Belgrade or Beijing) had to be fought harder than Moscow itself.. 1970 Kissinger warned that “a Titoist government in Latin America would be far more dangerous to us than it is in Europe, precisely because it can move against our policies and interests more easily and ambiguously and because its ‘model’ effect can be insidious”—the proverbial “threat of a good example.” From Portugal to Greece and Italy, democratic socialist “Eurocommunism” on Allende’s model separated the Western European parties from the dogmas of the Soviet Bloc. (See Conclusion, “Future Possibilities,” n20.) Peter Kornbluh, “Kissinger and Chile: The Declassified Record,” Electronic Briefing Book 437, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Sept. 11, 2013, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB437>. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1988): 149.

<sup>7</sup> The Kremlin never refused recognition from anticolonial national liberation movements—while U.S. hawks interpreted revolution as an expansion of Soviet air and sea outposts (while Moscow was reluctant to take on additional client states and their expenses). The Kremlin did not bring Lumumba or Castro to power, or support Cuba’s expeditionary forces in the 1970s. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 57. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 183, 242. David Ryan, “The Peripheral Center: Nicaragua in U.S. Policy and the U.S. Imagination at the End of the Cold War,” in Bevan Sewell and Maria Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery: The Shifting Margins of U.S. International Relations Since World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 289. James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 17, 219.



ent on the Shah's regime (Chapter 1, "The Ignorant Armies"). Direct elections gave (permanent) victory to Zimbabwe's African National Union in 1980.<sup>8</sup> By 1980 52,000 Cuban soldiers were in Angola fighting the South Africans and another 16,000 had been sent to Ethiopia against Somalia, Libya and Chad were in open war, and the Red Army was in Afghanistan. Even Vietnam's 1978-79 invasion of Cambodia to oust Pol Pot was interpreted as an aggression that required sponsorship of the exiled regime.<sup>9</sup> This was interpreted as the next step beyond the "Domino Theory" (which was merely regional): even relative "doves" in the political class imagining a Soviet noose extending from Cuba to Grenada and Nicaragua, Afghanistan to Cambodia, plus ultra-left, Palestinian, Iranian, and Libyan terrorism.<sup>10</sup> Casey said in 1981 that "I want to see one place on this globe, one spot where we can checkmate them and roll them back. We've got to make the Communists feel the heat. ... They've pushed their way into Afghanistan, South Yemen, Egypt. They're surrounding the oil. They're putting themselves in a position to shut off sixty percent of the world's petroleum sources."<sup>11</sup> The neoconservative vision was simply an expansion on the late-70s hegemony "inside the Beltway."

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. officials were physically attacked in El Salvador, Pakistan, Libya, Turkey, and Afghanistan 1978-79—five ambassadors killed 1968-79.

<sup>9</sup> The Angolan Civil War—where the Cuban forces played a conventional, rather than a counter/guerrilla, role—is detailed in Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Until the actual December 1979 invasion, the Politburo had openly refused the new Afghan state a Red Army garrison—since that would be perceived as a diplomatic rupture, ending the already-deteriorating Détente! Secretary-General Leonid Brezhnev was allegedly not told until after the invasion, after a close vote by only some of the Politburo. Austin Carson, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018): 249, 251-52, 254, 257-60. Steven Emerson, *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (New York: Putnam, 1988): 35. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America's Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 334. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 283. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 16.

<sup>10</sup> Carter described the Afghan invasion as the Soviets moving "within a aircraft striking range of the vital oil resources of the Persian Gulf" and Pakistan, though the State Department had doubted that the 1978 revolution had been aimed at the Persian Gulf—a global scheme, not a local response to events on its own border. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 43.

<sup>11</sup> David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012): 49-50. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare*

As early as 1972 ex-radicals and self-proclaimed “Kennedy Democrats”—Irving Kristol, Paul H. Nitze, Marty Peretz, Richard Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Walt Rostow—formed the “neo-conservative” movement, pushing a hard line on Vietnam and elsewhere around the world, that the United States had a duty to these countries to not abandon them out of Realist self-interest.<sup>12</sup> The neoconservatives saw their mission as making sure that the United States remembered its *responsibility*, its duty to wield power to fight for a secure and democratic world as it had in World War II. Nixon and Kissinger were called the new Neville Chamberlains of the world, aiding “the most determined and ferocious and barbarous enemies of liberty ever to have appeared on the earth.”<sup>13</sup>

Media theorists Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon remark that “disproved anti-communist tales never die, they merely fade into the dimmer background of popular mythology,” to be revived when the stars are right.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1970s, the Cold Warriors that would ride Ronald Reagan’s coattails had short-circuited the concept of evidence itself—if something was imaginable, it was therefore already halfway to being proven, and lack of evidence was itself taken as confirmation.<sup>15</sup> This hardline new ideology openly disregarded “local factors” and instead interpreted any change as deviation from the U.S. sphere (Chapter 1, “1: Refusal of Neu-

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2014: 334. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 291. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 217, 225.

<sup>12</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 174

<sup>13</sup> The neoconservatives had decades-old ties to the anti-Stalinist Left and to the Democratic Party, giving their rhetoric far wider reach when they joined Reagan’s 1976 and 1980 campaigns. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 15-16, 26-27, 30-32. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 391-92.

<sup>14</sup> Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 278.

<sup>15</sup> The “Team B” analysis of Soviet nuclear capabilities—all outsiders to the CIA, all neoconservatives—was not just a “competitive analysis” but both 1. stacked the deck to maximize Soviet power while 2. not just encouraging the Arms Race but insisting that that the United States could build up to win any final confrontation (that is, World War III). When the CIA could not find a non-acoustic submarine-detection system, the neoconservatives’ 1976 counter-report concluded that absence of evidence was itself evidence: “the Soviets have, in fact, deployed some operational nonacoustic systems and will deploy more.” Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 167. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 4, 314. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010): 41.

trality”). The neoconservatives were given state power by Reagan’s 1980 victory, but that meant chances to be contradicted by reality: by 1985 Reagan was departing from the hard line, at least towards Moscow itself. The “intervention cycle” has several elements that : therefore, the Cold Warriors were always able to return (see Chapter 1, especially “8: After the End”): most of the figures who planned the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its public campaign were Iran-Contra operatives, returning for the 21st century.

The 1980 “Reagan Coalition”<sup>16</sup> comprised the 1. neoconservatives, so named for being former “JFK Democrats” or anti-Soviet Trotskyites<sup>17</sup> who joined the Republican party; 2. the new fundamentalist Evangelical movement of the 1970s<sup>18</sup>; 3. right-libertarians, large corpora-

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<sup>16</sup> Even the notion of a natural “conservative swing” caused by the mid-1970s “excesses” of Women’s Liberation, ethnic and sexual activism, and criticism of the White House, Pentagon, and CIA is a false narrative: the New Right was carefully-funded and -orchestrated. Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 141. Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989): 87.

<sup>17</sup> The “neocons” are characterized as 1. Cold-War hawks believing the Soviet Union had infiltrated any given country across the globe, 2. Democrats and former leftists (drawing criticism from Russell Kirk or Christopher Lasch as Trotskyist “entryists”), and 3. magazine editors with no military experience or academic expertise (Kirkpatrick was the only one with an academic career—one marked by general derision). These conditions were set by the anti-Stalinist left of the 1940s and 50s: it may be unsurprising that the writers of *The New Masses*, *Commentary*, and *The Partisan Review* would be even rabidly anti-Soviet after two decades promising that only the Soviet model would bring an end to exploitation and a true uplift of the human spirit. The important factor was that U.S. foreign policy *reverted* to Red-Scare premises about the world with each setback, as though Stalin had never even died in 1953: outside of Albania, there were no Stalinist regimes left by Eisenhower’s second term. The ideology was solidified at exactly the wrong time. *The New Republic* endorsed Contra funding 1984-85 in the name of free elections and protecting the Miskito against dictatorship. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 160-61, 164. Stephen Gill, “Epistemology, Ontology, and the ‘Italian School,’” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 31. Jim Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004). Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston: South End Press, 1983). Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 61. Charles Tyroler II, ed., *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1984). Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> By means of the televangelists who came to prominence in the 1970s: James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, Ralph Reed, Pat Robertson, Paul Weyrich. The surprise political involvement of splintering non-mainline reversed the any notion of inevitable “secularization” from industrialization and atomization. This outcome was not historically inevitable, however: strong Evangelical support gave the born-again Carter his 1976 win, and the Southern Baptists had a strong liberal wing until a 1979 conservative “coup.” Margaret E. Crahan, “Religion, Revolution, and Counterrevolution: The Role of the Religious Right in Central America,” in Douglas A. Chalmers, Maria do Carmo Campello de

tions, and advocates of supply-side economics<sup>19</sup>; 4. and older Cold-War hawks in the military, who believed that the U.S. press, public, and even Nixon and Kissinger had been the ones who had “lost” the Vietnam War, whether through supposedly one-sided coverage or by abdicating their responsibility to both an ally country and to their own nation.<sup>20</sup>

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Souza, and Atilio Borón, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Praeger, 1992): 163-79. Ana María Ezcurra, *The Neoconservative Offensive: U.S. Churches and the Ideological Struggle for Latin America*, trans. and ed. Elice Higginbotham and Linda Unger (New York: Circus, 1983). Jerry Faught, *The Resurgence of Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention: A History from 1960 to 1979* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013). Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 270, 273. David N. Gibbs, “Evangelical Christianity, Big Business, and the Resurgence of American Conservatism During the 1970s,” in Leerom Medovoi and Elizabeth Bentley, eds., *Religion, Secularism, and Political Belonging* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021): 207-22. Michael Löwy, *The War of Gods: Religion and Politics in Latin America* (London and New York: Verso, 1996): 67. Daniel K. Williams, “Reagan’s Religious Right: The Unlikely Alliance Between Southern Evangelicals and a California Conservative,” in Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies, eds., *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 135-49. Neil J. Young, “‘Worse Than Cancer and Worse Than Snakes’: Jimmy Carter’s Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election,” *The Journal of Policy History* 26:4 (October 2014): 479-508.

<sup>19</sup> James McGill Buchanan, Jr., and the Chicago School’s recommendations of slashing safety nets and social spending for a “shock” effect could only be implemented in real life after Chile and then Argentina’s coups, followed by the 1983 Caribbean Basin Initiative (but see Chapter 10, “*Curanderismo* and *Medicalismo*,” n67). The 1970s produced a “bumper crop” of think tanks, endowments, and foundations to not only wage war of maneuver (the usual lobbying), but specifically geared to changing political attitudes among the public itself in a war of position. The American Council on Science and Health, American Enterprise Institute, American Legislative Exchange Council, American Security Council, Cato Institute, Center for Consumer Freedom, Committee on the Present Danger, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Coors Foundation, Federalist Society, Free Congress Foundation, Heartland Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution, Institute for Humane Studies, Manhattan Institute (founded by William Casey himself), Mises Institute, Reason Foundation, Young Americans for Freedom, and the Bradley, Coors, Heritage, Koch, John M. Olin, and Scaife Foundations were key components of Reagan’s campaign and governing as well as sources for premade policy. A staffer had to be on a think tank’s approved list to be hired by the new White House. The petrochemical, logging, mining, and ranching interests went beyond simply “research for hire” to re-making the public’s view of economics and scientific conclusions and processes. William Greider, “The Education of David Stockman,” *The Atlantic* 248:6 (December 1981): 27-54. Mikael Karlsson, “Chemicals Denial—A Challenge to Science and Policy.” *Sustainability* 11:17, Sept. 2, 2019, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335573377\\_Chemicals\\_Denial-A\\_Challenge\\_to\\_Science\\_and\\_Policy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335573377_Chemicals_Denial-A_Challenge_to_Science_and_Policy). Bill Moyers, “How Wall Street Occupied America,” *The Nation*, Nov. 2, 2011. Lewis F. Powell, Jr., Aug. 23, 1971, “The Powell Memorandum: Attack on American Free Enterprise System,” Scholarly Commons, Washington and Lee University School of Law, <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/powellmemo>. The Center for Media and Democracy, SourceWatch, <https://sourcewatch.org>. James Arnt Aune, *Selling the Free Market: The Rhetoric of Economic Correctness* (New York and London: Guilford, 2002). Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety* 2012: 59. Allyson Brantley, *Brewing a Boycott: How a Grassroots Coalition Fought Coors & Remade American Consumer Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021). David Helvarg, *The War Against the Greens* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994). Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 9-10, 135. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009). James Morton Turner, “‘The Specter of Environmentalism’: Wilderness, Environmental Politics, and the Evolution of the New Right,” *The Journal of American History* 96:1 (June 2009): 123-48.

<sup>20</sup> The hawks were disgusted at Nixon’s Détente and compromise: instead of trying to win the Cold War he was just settling for making it permanent, leaving the globe painted half Red. The hawks were especially characterized by a belief that the public and Congress had broken with the unspoken understanding reached in two world wars: that

The Pentagon hawks and the civilian neoconservatives believed that it was the doves, not the hawks, that had “robbed” 58,000 U.S. servicepersons of victory despite their deaths—a downright “stab in the back” by the short-sighted civilians of the United States who had given up after a mere seven years of combat, a loss of will rather than a defeat in the field. To the ideologues who entered office in 1981, the previous decade had been characterized by what Norman Podhoretz called “sickly inhibitions” against interventionism. Only “peace through strength” would let democracy and economic freedom hold out, would ensure U.S. safety and security at home and in the world.<sup>21</sup>

Candidate Reagan called the Vietnam War “a noble cause. A small country newly free from colonial rule sought our help in establishing self-rule and the means of self-defense against a totalitarian neighbor bent on conquest. We dishonor the memory of 50,000 young Americans who died in that cause when we give way to feelings of guilt as if we were doing something

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they would support the military and the President until the righteous war was won. By contrast, the neoconservatives were not military figures wishing to keep the good fight going, but decidedly civilians with little knowledge of even Russian literature. Cynthia Amson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 277. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 196-97. Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001): 118-19. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 193-94. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007): 176. H. Bruce Franklin, *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Brandon High, “The Recent Historiography of American Neoconservatism,” *The Historical Journal* 52:2 (June 2009): 482-83. Jeffrey P. Kimball, “The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War,” *Armed Forces & Society* 14:3 (Spring 1988): 433-58. Kimball, “The Enduring Paradigm of the ‘Lost Cause’: Defeat in Vietnam, the Stab-in-the-Back Legend, and the Construction of a Myth,” in Jenny Macleod, ed., *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 233-50. David Paul Kuhn, *The Hardhat Riot: Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). Sandra Scanlon, *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War* 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 189-92. Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 70. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 28, 33, 109-10, 323-24. Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984): 155-56. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 169-70, 184, 236, 244, 261, 286-88, 292-93, 296. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 82-111. Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 241. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 216, 373.

shameful.”<sup>22</sup> It was unquestioned in the new Administration (or at least its ideologues) that wars were won or lost on the metaphorical field of U.S. public opinion, rather than just in the target country.<sup>23</sup> Reagan’s speeches presented narratives of the “Third World” as a space of danger and “anti-Americanism,” that the world’s hyperpower was in fact the innocent victim of irrational, inexplicable, and aggressive foreign attacks that simply *happened* to U.S. citizens—standing alone in an ungrateful world, pushed around by the “Third World” and enduring backbiting and second-guessing from the public and from its supposed allies in “Old Europe.”<sup>24</sup>

Reagan’s campaign explicitly promised to undo the surprise humiliations of the previous decade—protests, oil shortages, kidnappings, hijackings, military defeats.<sup>25</sup> Candidate Reagan denounced “the vast and expanding colonial empire of the Soviet Union” and declared that “there will be no more abandonment of friends by the U.S.” “The Soviet Union underlies all the

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<sup>22</sup> Reagan, “Address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Chicago,” Aug. 18, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-veterans-foreign-wars-convention-chicago>. James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988): 47. Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop* 2007: 67, 93. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 184. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 83. Joseph Andrew Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War: A ‘Neat Idea’ and the Reagan Doctrine,” M.A. thesis (Tufts University, Medford and Somerville, Mass., 2016): 13-14. Rachel Sieder, *Elecciones y democratización en Honduras desde 1980* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1998): 27. Philip E. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base* (Washington: Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action Task Force, 1982): 49.

<sup>23</sup> Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 105.

<sup>24</sup> Reagan explicitly campaigned on projecting force around the globe (as opposed to the continental or regional scale)—but still sought moral suasion, his rhetoric constantly insisting on being an *example* for the rest of the world, that (unfairly or not) Washington had lost its previous place in other countries’ hearts as the “Arsenal of Democracy.” The rhetoric of the United States as a unique, selfless moral force for all humanity collided particularly hard with the actual skullduggery around Iran-Contra. E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987): 120-23, 134. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 53-55, 57. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 71. Karen S. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 176. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 34-35. Joan Pedro-Carañana, Daniel Broudy, and Jeffery Klaehn, eds., “Conclusion,” *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness* (London: University of Westminster Press, 2018): 279. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 238. Walter C. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality: The Caribbean Basin, 1953-1992* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2001): 286. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 179-80. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 334. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 264.

<sup>25</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions* 2002 and *Visions of Freedom* 2013. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 323. Sewell and Ryan, “Introduction,” Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 5.

unrest that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hot spots" or terrorism, he insisted 1980: the local, historical details were simply not important.<sup>26</sup> He declared that to do anything other than supporting his foreign policy was false equivalence, to "remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil."<sup>27</sup> He even praised Argentina's "counterterror" as a successful model, saying that the junta nearly eliminated the threat of terrorism, though "a small number were caught in the crossfire, among them a few innocents."<sup>28</sup>

Reagan insisted that opponents of his foreign policy were basing their criticism on the premise that anyone could prefer dictatorship over democracy.<sup>29</sup> As new Secretary of State, Gen. Al Haig (ret.) declared that the Administration now opposed the Realist idea of a world "divided into distinct strategic zones" or spheres of influence—that no country could tell their neighbor what to do. Ironically echoing Carter's human-rights emphasis, the Administration insisted it was fighting for universal values and for other countries' sovereignty from outside (that is, Soviet) interventionism.<sup>30</sup> Of course, only one specific hyperpower would be the one to decide.

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<sup>26</sup> Karen Elliott House, "Reagan's World: Republican Policies Stress Arms Buildup, a Firm Line to Soviets," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 1980. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008): 300-01. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 17. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America* (New York: Free Press, 2001): 505, 507.

<sup>27</sup> Gen. Al Haig (ret.) said "Moscow is the greatest source of international insecurity today. Let us be plain about it: Soviet promotion of violence as the instrument of change constitutes the greatest danger to world peace." Michael D. Gambone, *Small Wars: Low-Intensity Threats and the American Response Since Vietnam* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013): 81-82.

<sup>28</sup> Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador's Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000): 105. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 115.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 1, "5: Criminality and Extremism," n186. Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014). John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 641. Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 50.

One ideologue who was key to the Contra War was UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick—entering the heights of power after a career of being vocally disregarded by her academic colleagues. She theorized that U.S.-supported authoritarian states—the Shah, Somoza—were qualitatively different from the totalitarian states supposedly produced by any revolution. “Authoritarians” were friendly to Washington, supported U.S. “interests and positions even when these entailed personal and political cost,” “create no refugees,” and conceivably can be forced into free elections. Therefore no price was too high to prevent revolution: and any torture or arrest of dissidents might not be justifiable, but still understandable given their “radical, violent opponents.”<sup>31</sup> Of course she was in favor of democratization, but “Decades, if not centuries, are normally required” before the masses (incapable of being actors in history) could raise their noses out of the acquisition of mere survival skills. In a nod to Realism, she concluded that U.S. standards of democracy and human rights could simply not be imposed prematurely on other countries, lest they fall to revolution thanks to liberals who “interpret insurgency as evidence of widespread popular discontent.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1980 Kirkpatrick declared, “When Marxist dictators shoot their way into power in Central America, the San Francisco Democrats don’t blame the guerrillas and their Soviet allies, they blame United States policies of one hundred years ago, but then they always blame America first.” She singled Carter out for critiquing Argentina or South Africa and for not attempting to undermine revolutionary regimes. The U.S. public had to change its attitude that “peace is a

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<sup>31</sup> She declared herself disillusioned with the “antiwar, antigrowth, antibusiness, antilabor activists” who had hijacked the Democratic Party by winning its primaries, giving McGovern the nomination 1972 and losing to Nixon. Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 79. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 13, 16. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 539. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis* 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Her “doctrine” was not simple a apologia for reactionary violence, making it more convincing rather than just a justification for the Casey Doctrine. But it explicitly urged support for dictatorship rather than constrained and U.S.-managed “demonstration elections,” and resembled the National Security Doctrine’s insistence that any restiveness had to be foreign-inspired, that professors and priests had to be persecuted to demobilize the popular classes. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 17-19.



norm and that war and violence are abnormal”<sup>33</sup>—or otherwise the squeamish civilians would simply have to be sidestepped. It was Kirkpatrick’s concept of foreign policy that candidate Reagan adopted: “Because someone didn’t meet exactly our standards of human rights, even though they were an ally of ours, instead of trying patiently to persuade them to change their ways, we have, in a number of instances, aided a revolutionary overthrow which results in complete totalitarianism, instead.”<sup>34</sup>

Kirkpatrick and Gen. Haig agreed counterrevolution in the isthmus was an ideal chance to restore the “credibility” and dominance lost since Vietnam. It would be the test case for the strategy of confrontation: “Central America is the most important place in the world for the United States today,” she said 1981.<sup>35</sup> The Heritage Foundation, Committee on the Present Danger, and the Council for Inter-American Security (one of the only neoconservative institutions to have anyone with any actual knowledge of Latin America) declared that the United States “must seize the initiative [in the Americas] or perish, for World War III is almost over”—“the very existence of the Republic in peril” from a “human wave” of millions of Central American refugees.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> While contrasting to Reagan’s idealism, this half of neoconservatism was only a cod Realism, a *post hoc* rationalization that democracy would be achieved through dictatorship. “Convention in Dallas: The Republicans: Text of Jeane J. Kirkpatrick’s Remarks at Republican Convention in Dallas,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1984. Tom Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts: The New Battlefield in Central America* (Albuquerque: Resource Center, 1986): 4. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 12.

<sup>34</sup> “1980 Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter Presidential Debate,” Oct. 28, 1980,

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/1980-ronald-reagan-and-jimmy-carter-presidential-debate>.

<sup>35</sup> Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993): 271. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 37. William Safire, “The Savings of Salvador,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1981.

<sup>36</sup> The Committee deployed rhetoric associated with the *left*, that the New World was threatened by the ideological imperialism of the Old: the Moscow line was reactionary, European, versus a progressive and dynamic pan-American vanguard that would eventually bring a “war of national liberation” to Havana itself. Ba ssano, *Two Roads to Safety* 2012: 59-61. Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop* 2007: 82. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 288, 297. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 19. Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984): 248.

The neoconservatives had been granted wide-ranging control over policy in Latin America in particular, but Reagan's foreign policy was not uniform in ideology or over time. The new President sought a quick defeat of the "Caribbean" neo-Stalinism that the hardliners believed was a threat, but Reagan also pursued a renewed focus on Europe and eventually a new détente with the Kremlin—to the extent that by 1987 the most hardline Cold Warriors were publicly calling Reagan a dupe of his new close friend Mikhail Gorbachev, inviting the Secretary-General to Washington and visiting Moscow next year—a "useful idiot" who they compared (as usual) to Neville Chamberlain.<sup>37</sup>

"You Germans are very intelligent. You realized that the Jews were responsible for the spread of communism, and you began to kill them."<sup>38</sup>

—Maj. Roberto D'Aubuisson to a German audience, 1982

"I've always felt the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help"<sup>39</sup>

—Ronald Reagan, 1986

### A "Black International"

The international state and paramilitary actions that would become the scandal of "Iran-Contra" took place in a wider underworld of 1. Operation Condor's international network of death squads, mostly Chilean and Argentinean, murdering South American generals and elected officials as far as Paris or Washington; 2. hundreds of CIA officers and assets being released by Director Rear Admiral Stansfield Turner (1977-81); and 3. a wider network of states—Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, Israel, South Africa, Taiwan—that had been cut off from military aid by the Carter Administration, believing him a prime example of how the United

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<sup>37</sup> Jacob Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 261.

<sup>38</sup> Mary McGrory, "U.S. is Learning to Love the Mean Little Major in El Salvador," *The Washington Post*, Apr. 27, 1982.

<sup>39</sup> Reagan, "The President's News Conference," Aug. 12, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/presidents-news-conference-23>.

States's elected and temporary leaders could never be relied on to hunt down subversion in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>40</sup>

Though the hardliners blamed Carter as sabotaging the Directorate of Operations, Presidential shakeups occurred under Nixon—threatening to cut the CIA by two-thirds—and would occur again under Reagan. R.Adm. Turner released hundreds of officers up to Station chiefs: they entered the late-1970s New Right and drew the attention of Maj. Gen. John Singlaub. Turner had unintentionally created a pool of highly-ideological covert warriors free of oversight, embittered. The Saudi and French intelligence services created the “Safari Club” in 1976 to fight revolution in Africa with or without Washington and were joined by several of these fired CIA agents.<sup>41</sup>

The World Anti-Communist League, first organized by East Asian military states but dominated by Latin American and Mediterranean paramilitaries and death squads by the 1970s, would be a notable component in the counterrevolutionary warfare waged across Central America in the 80s. The WACL's Latin American elements set up an international network of murderers explicitly to take over from the United States: Condor allowed officers to coordinate strategy and share theory and ideology. One of their earlier precedents was the Cuban exiles: Nixon deployed the FBI and Coast Guard against them, netting several convictions but also distancing the militants from Washington, turning to Somoza and then Gen. Pinochet. Sen. Jesse Helms praised their 1975 meeting at Rio de Janeiro: it was “encouraging that the people themselves, when faced

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<sup>40</sup> Kyle Burke avoids more sensationalistic accounts of WACL, but still details Argentinean and Chilean torturers met with Italian neo-fascists who had just openly carried out a string of bombings, John Birch Society representatives left uneasy by the likes of Willis Carto and William Luther Pierce. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 3, 62-65, 69, 73, 77.

<sup>41</sup> They were often from the OSS “old guard” favoring secret paramilitary warfare, not espionage and analysis. By the 1980s the covert-warfare infrastructure of the 60s “had developed into a social and business network, linking individuals with their own agendas—both financial and political” (see Chapter 1, “5: Criminality and Extremism,” n151) Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 85-86, 90. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 400-02. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 313.

directly with Communism as a life-or-death threat, have the power of rousing themselves to save their nation” and that U.S. citizens needed to follow that same path separate for their government.<sup>42</sup>

Maj. Gen. Singlaub and his networks hoped to launch guerrilla warfare against the states created by Marxist-Leninist guerrillas—the frame of giving Moscow or Hanoi “its own Vietnam,” to beat it at its own game. Gunrunning and paramilitarism would fight back if Realist and humanitarian Presidents would not: ordinary farmers picking up arms would free their nations and defeat the global leftist conspiracy. They were certain they could do better than Langley.<sup>43</sup> The WACL and Casey agreed that civilians with small arms could chase out the world’s greatest superpower, as they had at Lexington and Concord 1775, in Vietnam two hundred years later, and would no doubt do so again in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. Station chief Ted Shackley thought the solution was simple—“give the right weapons to the right people and then get out of the way,” in Kyle Burke’s words. Wealthy backers (or, in the 1980s, foreign states; see below, “Iran and the Contras”) would avoid the struggles of elected government or popular debate.<sup>44</sup> Convinced that real action could come from only outside the state, these Cold Warriors

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<sup>42</sup> Top figures included Argentina’s Gen. Carlos Guillermo Suárez Mason, Col. José Osvaldo “Balita” Riveiro (the Contras’ first foreign advisor), Mario Sandoval Alarcón of Guatemala, and Maj. Roberto D’Aubisson of El Salvador (Chapter 6); other officers in the security apparatus stayed loyal to these figures over their own *de jure* superiors. Even drug trafficking and plane bombings by Cuban exiles in Miami caused less controversy in the U.S. press than even the more cartoonish assassination attempts—since they had been planned by state agencies. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 3, 71-72, 75, 77. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 196-98.

<sup>43</sup> Maj. Gen. Singlaub had paramilitary experience in France, Manchuria, and Vietnam (ironically training the Vietminh), and now wanted to bring his experience and his ties to foreign government officials, military leaders, guerrilla commanders, and arms traffickers *out* from under the U.S. state. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 1, 3, 8-9, 27, 56, 60, 92, 97, 124, 156.

<sup>44</sup> Shackley claimed he was not made CIA Director only because of his connection to Ed Wilson’s operation to sell 22 tons of C-4 explosive and assassination contracts to a client who turned out to be Muammar Qaddafi (though depicted as another rogue CIA agent, it appears to have been an attempt to establish a backchannel with Tripoli). Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 103, 165. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 368.

matched the Reagan Coalition’s ideologies of counterrevolution, privatization, no government oversight—and profit.<sup>45</sup>

The U.S.-centered network of private and official covert warriors and would-be mercenaries, of Cuban exiles and Israeli arms, would outlast the Argentines’ pullout from Honduras after their 1982 defeat by the British. WACL headliners include Guatemalan death-squad godfather Mario Sandoval Alarcón and Maj. Roberto D’Aubuisson of El Salvador (who had Archbishop Óscar Romero murdered at the altar in March 1980) and Operation Condor cofounder Col. José Osvaldo “Balita” Riveiro. Maj. Gen. Singlaub did not create or command the global networks at the base of Iran-Contra’s efforts to arm guerrillas; its goals and actions were in the hands of people outside the United States. The WACL network and the Casey Doctrine (below) converged completely by 1985, Singlaub taking the stage at Dallas with Afghan, Angolan, Cambodian, Contra, Ethiopian, Hmong, and Montagnard paramilitaries, proclaiming a citizens’ rebellion against tyranny, a simultaneous, spontaneous rise of insurgencies on three confinements, calling it the most significant event since the defeat of Hitler.<sup>46</sup> The Argentinean junta used Central America to extend the Dirty War beyond South America along a network of anticommunists,

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<sup>45</sup> “It is tempting to see this anticommunist underground as simply an outgrowth of U.S. covert actions in the Cold War,” or the ascendance of a more activist wave of billionaires assailing labor unions and purchasing legislation through think tanks: instead it fed the Cold War, renewed it under an initially-hardliner President. The New Cold Warriors brought cash and arms to the Contras and mujahedeen through gun shows, magazines such as *Soldier of Fortune*—even coffee-can collection jars in Alabama for Nicaragua and Afghanistan. This parastate network hoped to do a better job for less money than a state military—to conduct warfare extralegally. Singlaub was led by a vision of global self-liberation, ordinary persons changing the course of 6,000 years of statist authoritarianism by picking up arms. Wayne LaPierre’s sales pitch was that “The twentieth century provides *no example* of a determined populace with access to small arms having been defeated by a modern army”—the Chinese Civil War, Vietnam, Afghanistan, the defeats of Batista and Somoza (LaPierre ironically was succeeded by Lt. Col. North himself). Casey drew his Doctrine from his enthusiasm for the U.S. Revolutionary War—not even 10,000 men spontaneously organizing to defeat the world’s only superpower, and repeated in Ireland 1916, Eastern Europe against the Nazis, Vietnam and Afghanistan against the superpowers, conventional force projection defeated by guerrilla warfare. But their simplified view of revolution is strictly tactical, not strategic, ignoring ideological motivation or overwhelming state involvement. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 1, 4, 8, 10, 119, 212, 214. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 167.

<sup>46</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 1, 87, 160, 204.

arms, drugs, money laundering, and shared knowledge—which would persist even after the demise of the Buenos Aires regime.<sup>47</sup>

“You don’t look like a secretary of state. You don’t talk like a secretary of state. You only think like one.”<sup>48</sup>  
—Richard V. Allen to William Casey, 1980

### Casey’s New Langley

After 1980, the Contra War unfolded under Reagan’s new Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, until his 1987 death. The neoconservatives who entered office at Langley and Foggy Bottom in 1981 believed they faced two problems: 1. a wave of revolution, spread across three continents but directed by one central command, 2. weak and non-action-oriented institutions—Congress, the State Department, even the CIA itself, and 3. a more doubtful and inquisitive domestic press—and also leading back to the Kremlin by invisible threads. Casey put Rome’s Station chief Dewey Clarridge in charge of Operations for Latin America as the most aggressive anticommunist in the Agency, despite thinking him brash and flashy. John Negropon-  
te—serving as CIA “point man” as Ambassador in Latin America’s third-largest Embassy—  
“suave, subtle, a skilled infighter, he had never worked a day in the world of intelligence.”<sup>49</sup> Casey also appointed Constantine Menges for Latin America, who twisted intelligence to warn that if Nicaragua fell Mexico was next. Casey insisted that “Destabilizing Mexico is a fundamental objective of the Soviet Union” and, when asked for proof, insisted “The hardest thing to prove is something that’s self-evident.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Daniela Spenser, “Standing Conventional Cold War History on its Head,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 385.

<sup>48</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 301.

<sup>49</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 265-66. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 504.

<sup>50</sup> In fact Casey had only heard a rumor from a U.S. citizen who ran an executive-search firm in Mexico—“The guy’s flooded with résumés from Mexicans. They all want to get out. They want to get their money out. That tells you what’s coming.” “You’re not talking to the right people,” the Director snapped when told that bar talk was not *intelligence*. Menges himself favored “democracy promotion” over a perpetual revolving door of right-wing generals. Former Station Chief John R. Horton intercepted the first National Intelligence Estimate draft, which insisted

Casey had no intelligence background after his Office of Strategic Services experience in France 1945. He sought the post of Secretary of State, losing out to George Shultz and never having the same level of access to Reagan. But he would use his position over the foreign policy conducted in Reagan's name to not just interpret the world, but to *change it*.<sup>51</sup> He was Dulles's greatest successor in promising an agency that could be deployed anywhere, in any situation, and start at least *some* action—and the criminal networks and ultimate impunity that were retroactively termed “Iran-Contra” are arguably more influential in the 21st century than the precedents of the 1950s-70s. Shultz condemned him as a one-man foreign policy—meddling in Central America and Iran, undercutting even Reagan in southern Africa, Iran, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> His style was intelligence that was cheap and quick (and thus “cost-effective”) and operations that had the wildest chances for success.

Casey nearly doubled the CIA's size in six years, 6,000 in the Directorate of Operations across the planet. But this came at the expense of tearing up even the most basic analysis from the ground up, maximizing both action and ignorance in tandem. Casey only wanted to hear how

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Mexico was on the brink of Iran-style revolution. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 84. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 318, 386-87.

<sup>51</sup> From the start, the CIA had inherited a legend about the OSS—promising it could land in any theater by air or sea, and raise a guerrilla (without necessarily knowing about the target country or the tribe they were recruiting). It had blown up bridges, rescued pilots, worked with left-wing partisans in Eastern and Western Europe—even with Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh. A few hundred OSS men helped the British train and command thousands of Burmese Kachin and Indian Chindit guerrillas against the Japanese. Other commanders were less enthusiastic about the OSS's track record—that it had led hundreds of East Asian, French, and Italian allies to their deaths. Their new incarnation pursued the most unconventional LSD, diseases spread by insects, bombs carried by bats or pigeons, paying off soothsayers, spreading rumors of vampirism and exsanguinating killed guerrillas, airdropping magnum condoms labeled “medium” to embarrass Soviet males, poisoned cigars and exploding clamshells, supporting abstract artists, social democrats, and student activists. Casey's own accomplishment was inventing the tax shelter. Perhaps not unwisely, Nancy Reagan vetoed him simply for his lack of charisma and table manners—such as using his necktie as a napkin. David M. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005): 46. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 66-70, 302. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 191. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 55-57, 85, 222, 283. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 30-31, 47, 314, 494. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 5-7, 46, 165, 291, 375-76. Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008): 146.

<sup>52</sup> Under Carter, Robert Gates—Casey's second-in-command and successor—had gotten the National Security Council behind Brzezinski's plans for anti-Soviet activities around the world: Afghanistan, El Salvador. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 320, 345.

something could be done, not that it could not: detail was only an obstacle.<sup>53</sup> Unlike the usual “stovepipe,” the hardliners’ production of worst-case scenarios was eventually aimed *against* Reagan himself, to prevent him from seeking dialogue in his second term. He thought even less of the Congressional oversight committees, publicly scorning them and telling the members he had ordered CIA agents “to tell you everything we think you ought to know.” Had the Agency not been founded to operate outside the United States—and its laws—while remaining under the legitimate orders of the Presidents?<sup>54</sup>

As Directors, Casey (1981-87) and Robert Gates (1986-87, 1991-93) were key officers concealing intelligence on the Soviet Union, to keep Reagan as hawkish as he had been on the 1980 campaign trail. Casey’s biographer Joseph E. Persico defined him as “a quintessential representative of the breed who, of well over a generation, stood in the wings of American foreign policy determining how far the actors in that drama dared veer to stage left before they were yanked right” by wielding the power of the documents they wrote and classified.<sup>55</sup> Even Reagan

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<sup>53</sup> Likewise “Wild” Bill Donovan “was not the sort of man who liked to hear what could not be done. He wanted to hear how it could be done anyway.” Even under Carter some *White House* figures had been irritated by Langley’s lack of enthusiasm for covert action—it was the President’s covert arm, after all. 800 of those let go under Nixon and Carter were brought back under Casey, mostly as contractors. Casey also wished to get the old blood out of Operations—initially proposing literal used-car salesman Max Hugel as director. He knew nothing about the CIA and arrived for his first day in a toupee, and a lavender tracksuit unzipped to display his chest hair and gold chains. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 126, 302. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 313. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 63, 234-36, 244-46, 249-50. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 495. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 378-79.

<sup>54</sup> Casey did not see concealing covert operations from Congress as undemocratic—even the Declaration of Independence relied on intelligence smuggled from London to Philadelphia that the Hessians were being marshalled from the Continent; Benjamin Franklin concealed news of France’s agreement to provide covert arms and money from Congress—a precedent that, to Casey, existed before the *United States* even did. The new White House also promptly lifted the ban on the CIA bugging and wiretapping persons inside the United States, opening mail and conducting clandestine searches without the Attorney Generals’ approval, to infiltrate domestic organizations and surveil citizens abroad: Deputy Director Adm. Bobby Ray Inman was horrified if any of this was revealed—which it was. Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider’s View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004): 18. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 223-24, 334, 363, 474-75.

<sup>55</sup> Reagan went through a record six National Security Advisers in eight years—whereas Casey remained from the Inauguration until his own death: he had personal protection from Reagan, unlike Directors Dulles, Helms, and Gates, who were all dismissed by their Presidents. Persico cautions against depicting Casey as a singular sinister covert mastermind whose actions exceeded the wildest conspiracy theories: to individualize these crimes is to miss how the entire Cold War had always operated from the beginning. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 338. Persico, *Casey* 1990: ix, xi. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 377.



was no exception, going from hawkish to dovish over the course of his term, like every President since Truman had (Chapter 1, “8: After the End”).<sup>56</sup> And many Directors or Station Chiefs had made sure to interdict anything that might undermine the President’s *commitment* to Cuba, Indochina, Angola, or Afghanistan.

Whistleblowers and analysts say that ultimately Casey left the CIA far weaker than he found it—its intelligence subordinated to hawkish demands from the White House and to its covert-action operations, which in turn brought the FBI into the headquarters at Langley, opening the double-locked safes and taking top-secret files for obstruction and perjury charges. Casey had seen the CIA free from the Legislative and Executive alike. He would end the Agency that had existed since 1947.<sup>57</sup> Langley, at least, now could do little *besides* deliver “stovepiped” intelligence to support a White House’s agenda, following Casey’s habit of hiding outright threats—terrorism, trafficking, support for hostile forces—if they served the Reagan Doctrine. Or he wildly exaggerated threats and set agents on proverbial snipe hunts and goose chases, centralizing all decision-making through himself personally.

The effort to shield Reagan himself from the Iran-Contra scandal contradicted the usual practice of secrecy and greatly increased the CIA’s exposure—and even before then he had taken the unusual step of making a *public* case for a *covert* war, any deniability evaporating with Hasenfus’s shutdown. Even Langley hawks were appalled that Reagan’s efforts to publicly justify Iran-Contra breached the very practice of denial and covertness: Presidents were supposed to protect their useful tool, not cause trials, damage control, personal accountability, but Reagan

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<sup>56</sup> The only exception seems to be Carter, whose policy under Secretary of State Zbigniew Brzezinski became more Cold-Warrior in El Salvador, Afghanistan, Iran, and South Korea than he had been 1976-78.

<sup>57</sup> Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 18. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 412-14.

had neither 1. preserved clandestinity for Central America nor 2. been able to win public and long-term Senate support, digging the hole of illegality deeper and deeper.<sup>58</sup>

Goodman characterizes Casey as believing his job was to only allow “information that would support the president’s view of the Soviet threat and a strategy of confrontation with Moscow” and rejected dialogue—eventually working to thwart Reagan’s own personal détente with Gorbachev.<sup>59</sup> Goodman describes his right-hand man Gates as not just wrong, but that “he made sure that the CIA was wrong, as well.” Casey and Gates blocked intelligence on Gorbachev’s reforms and willingness to work with Reagan, on Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Angola, or Indochina—any seeming weakness, drawdown, or budget cut. Casey had overseen billions in Afghanistan, and would not tolerate mere *intelligence* that the Red Army was war-weary: “He wanted intelligence that supported a continued U.S. covert involvement in the Third World.” National Security Council member James Baker had to repeatedly personally intervene with Reagan to stop Gates from undermining the White House’s own policy.<sup>60</sup> The hardliners dismissed the

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<sup>58</sup> Eisenhower had been forced to damage his own domestic and international reputation to cover up the 1960 U-2 incident over the Soviet Union in order to protect the greater principle of covertness. Kennedy had to take on the blame for the 1961 Bay of Pigs failure, telling Richard M. Bissell, Jr., that if the United States had had a parliamentary system the head of government would have to resign, but given the Presidential system Bissell would have to go instead. Reagan *had* lied to protect secrecy from investigation, but now nobody could believe the Administration was uninvolved in everything the Contras had done. But operating off of a “Watergate” frame or paradigm, the question in 1986 was limited to “what did the President know and when did he know it?”—limiting it to the strict issue of whether he personally approved of using Tehran’s money for the Contras. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 83. Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 71. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 271. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 408.

<sup>59</sup> Ronald Reagan came into his second term after the near-disaster of Able Archer 83—and inspired by the ABC special *The Day After* (1983), plus Russian expert Suzanne Massie (and even Nancy Reagan’s astrologer Joan Quigley)—but blocked on strategic disarmament by his staff in the White House, Pentagon, Casey, and his own rhetoric: even Shultz was surprised by his willingness to visit Moscow in person. Robert Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 2012): 193.

<sup>60</sup> As hardliners the neoconservatives sought to turn public opinion against détente itself, to assure them that nuclear war might be winnable, that the Soviet Union was stronger than the United States, that it sought a first strike, that it was behind all the revolutions and hijackings and hostage-takings. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan noted that the United States would not have doubled military spending in the 1980s—a 600-Ship Navy, \$100 billion spent on a Strategic Defense Initiative that could not work—if the CIA had provided an honest estimation of the Soviet Union. Anne Cahn writes that trillions in military deficit spending to beggar the Soviet Union “neglected our schools and cities, our health-care system, our roads and bridges and parks. Once the world’s greatest creditor nation, we became

1961 Sino-Soviet Split and even the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union itself as ruses to get the U.S. guard down.<sup>61</sup>

UN Under-Secretary-General Diego Cordovez was close to mediating a conditional Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan 1983, but Casey wanted to *bleed* the Red Army. Gates made sure to block 1985-86 estimates of Soviet pullout to keep increasing Pentagon and CIA funding to the mujahedeen. Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker's negotiations in Angola since 1984 were ended when UNITA received its first missiles 1986—Jonas Savimbi now had guaranteed aid from the CIA past 1989, with Gates pretending the aid was to keep pressure on Luanda to come to an agreement!<sup>62</sup> Since 1986 the CIA officers authoring the reports to the President knew that the sources were controlled by the KGB and FSB—knowingly passing on intelligence manipulated by Moscow and deliberately concealing that fact. They knowingly provided tainted intelligence to three Presidents rather than acknowledge they had lost their most important spies

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the greatest debtor.” (But if the Senate and press never objected and Reagan's followers claimed victory—does it even matter whether or not the public was or was not convinced?) Gates insisted that Gorbachev's reforms were “just another Soviet attempt to deceive us,” that détente and arms control were just clever ways for it to go about destroying the Western alliance—and worked to make sure the decision-makers did not have the opportunity to think otherwise. Gates even secretly restricted his own superior Director William H. Webster's access to President Bush, and Webster was forced to resign August 1991 after the Pentagon became irate that he testified that the Warsaw Pact's collapse was irreversible. The neoconservatives sealed the CIA's inability to come to correct interpretations, Gates rendering the CIA incapable of detecting Soviet retreat abroad or disintegration at home, knowingly incorporating years of KGB disinformation from compromised sources into its reporting. Cahn, *Killing Detente* 1998: 1, 168, 191. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 14, 87, 96, 113, 126, 128-29, 132, 146, 153-54, 158, 168, 307, 310. Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative* 2012: 199. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 575. Marcus G. Raskin and A. Carl LeVan, “Introduction,” *In Democracy's Shadow: The Secret World of National Security* (New York: Nation Books, 2005): xxvi. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 134.

<sup>61</sup> Gates dismissed *perestroika* as a ruse and all signals of Soviet weakness as just secret feints showing that the Kremlin intended to strike harder than ever around the globe in the 1990s (see above, n55). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 129. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983): 183. Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative* 2012: 200. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 594. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 131. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 275.

<sup>62</sup> Under one interpretation, Persico writes, Afghanistan was a success: under another, it was “the greatest miscalculation of the second half of the twentieth century.” Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 126. Persico, *Casey* 1990: xii. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 481, 503.

in the Soviet Union and were recruiting only double agents, twisting the White House's perceptions to prevent embarrassment.<sup>63</sup>

Casey's attitude towards intelligence "product" was similar that of Dulles—who was rumored to assess briefings by their weight—hefting them in his hand without actually opening them.<sup>64</sup> Whenever a report opposed his hardline views Casey "immediately moved to kill the product and punish its authors" until only pliant careerists remained. CIA senior Soviet analysts were demoted as sympathizers and apologists for the Kremlin, while those who went beyond even Casey's exaggerations were promoted while Gates knew better. Other officers had baldly lied to Presidents in the 1950s and 60s (Chapter 1), but historians of intelligence-gathering find that Casey and Gates were the first to permanently systematize internal deceit in the CIA, cooking the books to keep covert wars going in Central America, the Middle East, and Africa. Casey was completely willing to pass his personal opinions off as those of the Intelligence Community: his reign breached every rule of analysis, and he rewarded analysts who created false assessments with bonuses, honors, and advancement.<sup>65</sup>

Journalists Michael Ledeen and Claire Sterling were personally influential with Haig and Casey, sharing their complaints how U.S. hawks faced an uphill fight against a hostile world press—that Sterling's theory that the Kremlin directed all the bombings, hijackings, kidnappings, and assassinations in Western Europe and the Americas could barely be heard over Moscow's

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<sup>63</sup> Melvin A. Goodman, "Espionage and Covert Action," in Craig Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity: U.S. Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 26. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 227. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 448-50.

<sup>64</sup> Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 122, 379.

<sup>65</sup> The CIA *softened* Tehran's connections with terrorism in the 1985 reports to justify the backdoor outreach and negotiations for surface-to-air missiles (which would become the scandal the next year). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 93, 125, 139, 176, 184, 302. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 18. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 341. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA* 2018: 79. Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative* 2012: 199-200. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 287.

domination of the international media.<sup>66</sup> She claimed that the KGB directly operated the Irish Republican Army, the Italian Red Brigades, the German Red Army Faction, the Japanese Red Army, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hezbollah, the Abu Nidal mafia, Carlos the Jackal—even the 1980 far-right bombing in Bologna.<sup>67</sup>

Casey took Claire Sterling's journalistic book *The Terror Network* (1981) as gospel, while the analysts met with him to note that much of her "evidence" was "black propaganda," planted by Langley itself in the West European press; the Directorate of Operations was annoyed since the sources included their own false document the CIA had planted to trip up 1968 defector Jan Sejna, who "recognized" it. Casey contemptuously told the analysts it had only cost \$13.95 and "told me more than you bastards whom I pay \$50,000 a year." Casey always saw himself as a lateral thinker: "There are terrific sources outside this shop," corporations and universities.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ledeen complained the U.S. "media believe Qaddafi more readily than the U.S. government" and covered Guatemala and Chile while ignoring Cambodia or Poland. In reality their theories had been allowed to monopolize the discourse, the number-one news expert on terrorism—for a very brief time; their narrative *part* of pressure that made press shut out their critics. Sterling's books adhered to the usual Cold Warrior standard of "proof": if there was no hard evidence, it was because the KGB was professional enough to hide all trace. Her logic was that terrorism only struck democracies, not the Soviet Bloc, and thus had to be Kremlin-directed. Eventually the KGB was blamed for Ledeen and Sterling's campaign blaming the KGB for John Paul II's near-assassination—but because of the episodic nature of press coverage, such a flat self-contradiction was not given much attention: only media analysts or historians keeping track of the story would compare the coverage between one day, one year, and the next. (See Chapter 6, "Doctrines of National Security," n106. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 124. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 68. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 139. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 144-45, 147, 159-61, 301. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 277-78. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 73, 211-14. Chapman Pincher, *The Secret Offensive: Active Measures: A Saga of Deception, Disinformation, Subversion, Terrorism, Sabotage and Assassination* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985): 242-43.

<sup>67</sup> The neoconservatives fatally misrepresented the nature of terrorism—obsessed with proving that all Mideastern violence since 1970 had been directed by the Kremlin. This was not solely on Sterling: *The Washington Post* insisted the Eastern Bloc was "the principal source of terror in the world" while CIA ex-Director William Colby and FBI head Webster categorically denied such Soviet-sponsored terrorism. The Bologna bombing was conducted by a far-right network that had suborned Italy's Masonic lodges, military, secret services, press, judiciary, and political parties, letting the initial blame be put on the left wing. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 125. Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* 1982: 47. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 163-64. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 277-78. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 12. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 388.

<sup>68</sup> One team was dedicated to doing nothing but investigate *The Terror Network* page by page, line by line. This was classic epistemic "blowback"—fooling oneself, literally basing decisions on the CIA's own propaganda (Chapter 1, "5: Criminality and Extremism"). Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 68. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 177-79, 182. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 159. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 218-19, 221, 286-88.

By April 1981 Casey was irate on the terrorism experts' "refusal" to find anything to confirm Sterling: all "the analysts seemed to believe that their mission was to prove Al Haig wrong." The final draft bypassed all the usual internal CIA channels, and then quietly shelved.<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps Casey's wildest abuse of the intelligence process was twisting more reports to fit Ledeen and Sterling's accusation that the KGB had directed the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II—even citing *another* book by Sterling. Casey even let Sterling attack him and the Reagan Administration, snapping that "Your people aren't pursuing this thing because half of them are leftist sympathizers." The CIA's analysts could only conclude in 1983-85 that there was no evidence of Bulgarian or Soviet involvement: even the three analysts writing the *corrupt* report did not believe they were involved!<sup>70</sup> The most convoluted accusation of Soviet "active measures" came in 1986, when the case imploded and the same journalists insisted that the blame on Bulgaria had *itself* been a Soviet plant. The neoconservatives' own initial accusation was reframed as a clever Soviet double-feint to lure Washington into blaming the KGB, promoted only in to be debunked, to preemptively discredit the entire concept of Soviet-planted active measures.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> And numerous reports made it clear the Soviets had even warned their Eastern European counterparts against involvement with terrorist organizations as counterproductive and potentially scandalous, cutting aid to the PLO's Wadie Haddad. "The intelligence record demonstrated the Soviets were not playing a mighty Wurlitzer organ of terrorism and that the Soviets had in fact tried to discourage acts of terrorism," the original report read. One final draft was condemned by senior CIA and State Department managers and even by Sen. Goldwater. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 77-78, 92, 125, 138-39, 151, 176, 179, 302. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 324. Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative* 2012: 194. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 220-21. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 649-50.

<sup>70</sup> Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* 1982: 47. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 125, 139, 141, 177-78, 181-83. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 146-49, 158-59.

<sup>71</sup> Such a flat self-contradiction—that the Soviets were to blame for U.S. blame against the Soviets—was far less evident due to the episodic nature of press coverage: only media analysts or historians keeping track of the story would compare the coverage between one day, one year, and another. (See Chapter 6, "Doctrines of National Security," n106.) Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 68. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 139. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 144-66, 301, 315-19. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 277-78. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 73, 211-14. Pincher, *The Secret Offensive* 1985: 242-43.

The counterrevolutionary war against Nicaragua was not Casey's brainchild, but he was the mastermind of the elaborate funding networks to private mercenaries and third-party countries, personally supervised by him as NSC member but technically set up to contain zero CIA agents—and it was this network in El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica that would nearly topple Reagan himself. Casey also anticipated that the support to groups in Angola or Nicaragua to be “blown” in the media. He even made an art out of deliberate leaks over the traditional cover-up.<sup>72</sup> Reagan would also adopt the “overt covert,” pressed to defend his policy in El Salvador and Nicaragua—an impossible task—while all the other elements of the Casey Doctrine were not just uncontroversial but actively supported by the Senate.

“you'd be surprised, yes, because, you know, they're all individual countries [down in Latin America]”<sup>73</sup>  
—Ronald Reagan, 1982

“there are going to be a lot of people who are fairly fainthearted ... the purpose of our aid is to permit people who are fighting on our side to use more violence ... They don't need a lot of countries behind them. They need us behind them, and that's all they need. Victory in Nicaragua will come from American support, or it will not come.”<sup>74</sup>

—Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, 1985

### The Casey Doctrine

Within the Pentagon, the loss of Vietnam gave popularity to a new doctrine of conventional, but still “low-intensity conflict.” Like covert warfare (regime change or mobilizing large-scale paramilitaries) were offered by their developers as solutions to a double problem: 1. the

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<sup>72</sup> Despite quickly unleashing the proverbial hounds against Daniel Ellsberg, Nixon reacted to the 1971 Pentagon Papers with glee—since they embarrassed Kennedy and Johnson—and even condemned the process of classification as allowing the bureaucrats hiding their mistakes. But the office of the Presidency was threatened by the revelations, and Nixon swung around to destroy Ellsberg. Ellsberg himself noted that the newspapers were “suddenly in widespread revolt” after decades of happily reprinting government declarations: he recalled how one *The Washington Post* reporter stunned a closed-doors committee session in Congress pulling out the Gulf of Tonkin radio transcripts, which had been declassified years before by the Senate itself. But fake leaks proliferate as rapidly as real scandals, using the same channels, authenticating mechanisms, “economies of trust.” Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 26. Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 288-90. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 155. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 270, 519. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 140, 157-59.

<sup>73</sup> Reagan, “Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters on the President's Trip to Latin America,” Dec. 4, 1982, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/question-and-answer-session-reporters-presidents-trip-latin-america>.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Pear, “Push the Russians, Intellectuals Say,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1985.

Cold-War demand for global counterrevolution and 2. “a paralysis of power of our own making”: sending in ground forces could now start an escalation ending in World War III.<sup>75</sup> Counterinsurgency promised intervention 1. supervised by the Pentagon (rather than caught perpetually between Langley and Capitol Hill), 2. deployable anywhere—unlike the 1950s’ *ad-hoc* coups and dependence on France and Britain—and 3. avoiding the conventionalized quagmire of South Vietnam via the doctrine of “low-intensity conflict.”<sup>76</sup> If there was a “lesson” to Vietnam, it was to avoid using conventional surface forces—and the iconic flag-draped coffins. Public opinion and press coverage would have to be better *managed* the next time.<sup>77</sup> Theorists were also concerned with the heavy firepower and casualties that only drove peasants towards the Communists and literally damaged the land itself.<sup>78</sup> Ted Shackley was certain of the success of his combination of an infantry of mountain tribesmen—Hmong, Montagnards—with U.S. bombers would revolutionize irregular warfare: it was no longer a mere *guerrilla* war or counterinsurgency sweep.<sup>79</sup> The turn to local fighters, to even private funding for state-supervised warfare: historians note that public response after Vietnam did have real effects on state action—to simulate a

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<sup>75</sup> Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 330.

<sup>76</sup> Eisenhower had famously wanted to cut off the “military-industrial complex” that he famously decried in 1960, but instead fostered a lasting “paramilitary-intelligence complex.” Eisenhower’s reliance on covert action was a complement to his emphasis on the Strategic Air Command over budget-busting carrier fleets and fighter wings (contrasting to Reagan’s “600-ship Navy” and high-tech aerospace-focused buildup). Kennedy patronized Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor’s “flexible response” and Brig. Gen. William P. Yarborough’s Green Berets, drawing on counterinsurgencies in Indochina, Iran, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, and Venezuela. These doctrines in fact were not dominant in the immediate aftermath of Vietnam; it was Reagan and Casey who would reintroduce it to the Army only after 1980. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 75. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 237-38. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 56. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 4, 57. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 284. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 192.

<sup>77</sup> Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984): 166.

<sup>78</sup> Several new analysts believed that honest analysis would have better understood the nationalist and anti-colonialist roots of the NLF—even its pro-U.S. rhetoric—and that Beijing and Moscow were not commanding Hanoi’s effort to reunify a country that existed before the 1862-85 French conquest. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 76.

<sup>79</sup> Real air warfare was only available against Nicaragua: CIA was limited to supplying the mujahedeen and UNITA with anti-air. Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop* 2007: 93. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 257.



local, domestic conflict, to curb press coverage and shape public perception.<sup>80</sup> But secrecy meant that the supposed low-profile, low-cost action authorized by the President relied on ignorance and deceit against even the President himself. A decision not taken on a sound foundation could quickly produce a potential impeachment for practically every Chief Executive.

Casey arrived at Langley with a preplanned system of covert action for three continents to undo a decade of revolutions. The neoconservatives were certain that the wave of revolutions of the 1970s had been the doing of an international network of guerrillas and terrorists set up by Moscow—so they would have to do the same. Three decades of “containment” would now be replaced by “rollback.” They were certain they had calculated the “classic formula” for Communist takeover, so there would be a matching counter-equation. March 1981 Casey listed Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, El Salvador, Grenada, Iran, Laos, Libya, Mozambique, and Nicaragua as his targets for new or local guerrillas.<sup>81</sup>

Carter had emphasized human rights, but also 1. increased reliance on third-party countries to support covert actions and 2. rejected states such as Chile or Guatemala for mass murder, leading to their leaders regarding Washington as no longer as dependable and seeking their support with one other instead. Reagan restarted “constructive engagement” with the military dictatorships of Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey, rejected by Carter and building an anticommunist network independent of any resources that Washington had provided.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 2.

<sup>81</sup> Over 1980-90 the CIA, USAID, and other agencies sent US\$2.76 billion to Afghanistan, \$170 million to the Contras, \$165 million to UNITA, \$95 million in nonlethal aid to the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 125. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 495. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 34-35.

<sup>82</sup> Conclusion, “Future Possibilities.” Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 78, 89.

The directors of the 80s' New Cold War were also explicitly aware of a new media landscape—one that would have to be managed and tamed, even threatened. Reagan ordered a domestic propaganda effort against Managua 1984-86 (Chapter 3), combining negative denial with positive disinformation. The sponsored wars of the 1980s were preplanned and simultaneous; they were only semi-covert, their deniability mostly a deliberate means of managing escalation. They were even popular with both houses of Congress, without the need for a real press campaign—with the exception of one theater of war: Central America. Bipartisan Congressional support for foreign action under the Doctrine was actually unrivaled in political history, the CIA hardly able to handle appropriations for Afghanistan (Chapter 1, “Victory Disease”).<sup>83</sup> No President *lost* domestic prestige over Guatemala, Indonesia, Congo, the Dominican Republic or Afghanistan: only when things went wrong in Indochina or Central America did Congress and the public turn against the Administration.<sup>84</sup>

Casey was certain that the Kremlin had overthrown these countries via risk-free, low-cost proxies—Hanoi, Havana. The new CIA Director outlined his view of the promise of covert warfare and proinsurgency: “It is much easier and much less expensive to support an insurgency than it is for us and our friends to resist one. It takes relatively few people and little support to disrupt the internal peace and economic stability of a small country.” The Doctrine was shaped by events that had been turned into symbols: “no more Munichs, no more Cubas, no more Vietnams.”<sup>85</sup> The “Reagan Doctrine” was explicitly geared at preventing the public from coming to

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<sup>83</sup> Pragmatists—less confident than the hardliners that the counterrevolutionary guerrillas could overthrow regimes—still saw the Casey Doctrine’s full-court press approach as able to force peace settlements, remove Soviet and Cuban troops, allow elections and participatory elections (*i.e.*, involving the insurgents). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 249. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 37, 235. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 237. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 44. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 15, 28.

<sup>84</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 42, 240-41.

<sup>85</sup> This was a step *backward* from the doctrines of “low-intensity conflict” or “civic-military action”: the covert warriors’ (initial) promises were to just set up a column of fighters and the capital lay open; this strongly reflects Dul-

terms with Vietnam and its horrors. Reagan came to office with the promise of avoiding the symbolism of “Iran”—U.S. impotence and humiliation, unprovoked “mad dogs” and fanatics—meaning that overt diplomacy with Tehran was tightly constrained, and when the negotiations were exposed, the reaction was explosive because of precisely the same narratives that Reagan had campaigned on six years earlier.<sup>86</sup>

William F. Buckley, Jr., and Marvin Liebman had hoped in the late 1970s that the WACL would serve as an “Anticommunist International,” fueling democratic insurgencies in every country “lost” against an overextended Soviet Bloc, to pay back Guevara’s promise of “two, three or many Vietnams” and reverse any revolutionary mystique. Liebman deployed anti-colonialist discourse to justify violence against Soviet “imperialism,” the *true* revolutionaries restoring nations’ freedom and independence by forcing the doubtless Kremlin masterminds to fight multiple unwinnable wars across three continents. Reagan associates Laurence W. Beilenson, Constantine Menges, and Fred Iklé also theorized using guerrilla warfare against the Soviets. The frame of Russian aggression against democratizing governments backed by the United States was completely at odds with Central American history and culture—but resonated with the U.S. media public.<sup>87</sup>

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les’s overselling of Iran and Guatemala—that any given regime needed only a slight push (Chapter 1, “4: Escalation and Conventionalization”). Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 296. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 172. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 195.

<sup>86</sup> The first U.S. deaths actually tied to Iran occurred under Reagan—over 300 Marines in Beirut 1983 and Station chief William Francis Buckley 1985. But this produced nowhere near the same outcry as the 1980 hostage crisis: Reagan’s pullout and further hostage-takings were not turned into media events—not made into defining incidents traumatizing the U.S. psyche, not added to Robert M. Entman’s “stock of symbols and myths that inform Americans’ historical self-understanding.” Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens* 1989: 69, 176. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 177.

<sup>87</sup> The new U.S. support for guerrillas and terrorists was framed as just desserts, Moscow’s support for national liberation movements coming full circle. However in Central America this had a critical flaw—the inability to demonstrate Soviet or Cuban interference. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 2, 5, 9, 26. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 304. Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War” 2016: 17-18. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 76. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 168. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 19-20, 217. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 239-40. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 297.

Casey was enthused by the notion of *pro*-insurgency: “I want to see one place on this globe, one spot where we can checkmate them and roll them back.” They were all intoxicated by the prospect of *reversing* revolutions—as long as nobody spent too much time on the potential consequences, or the histories of their “allies” (Chapter 1). Any Congressional question about whether U.S. arms and cash were going to heroin kingpins, Sunni terrorists, or simply “expending the lives of Afghan peasants and herdsman to make points for U.S. foreign policy” he simply dismissed: this was like the Resistance of World War II: Afghanistan was not a U.S. cause, it was a *moral* cause, he concluded.<sup>88</sup>

By 1985 there were fifty covert operations, five times more than under Carter and exceeding Eisenhower’s levels. The Reagan Doctrine—or, more properly, Casey Doctrine—was qualitatively different from the interventions of the 1950s-70s. From Iran to Chile the overthrows had been largely *ad-hoc* and unplanned, gradual escalations of operations always “sold” as lightweight, cheap, and posing a minimum of controversy. This was the first *doctrine*, not just reactions to real or perceived Soviet moves.<sup>89</sup>

It was Casey who first used the term “freedom fighter” for the supported guerrillas, which Reagan would adopt for his 1984-86 push (Chapter 3, “The Global News War”)—for the Contras in 1983. But the “advancement” of democracy was done through covert and extralegal paramilitarism, whose details were concealed from the U.S. public—the definition of antidemocratic. By 1985 the superlative exaggeration of their virtues was in full swing. The mujahedeen’s abiding faith in a single God, pious heads of farming households who behaved as U.S. citizens would do under situation of invasion. Savimbi was not just a democrat, but “probably one of the

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<sup>88</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 341. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 226, 425. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 483.

<sup>89</sup> Greece, Turkey, Korea, the Philippines, and Guatemala for Truman; Iran, Laos, Indonesia, and Cuba for Eisenhower; Vietnam, Cuba, Venezuela, and Colombia for Kennedy; Brazil and the Dominican Republic for Johnson; Chile and Bangladesh for Nixon. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 342.

greatest living people in the world today,” one Senator insisted. This was not imperial *interventionism*, it was the global guardian of democracy giving those “risking their lives—on every continent” what they needed “to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth. ... Support for freedom fighters is self-defense.”<sup>90</sup>

One particular characteristic of covert warfare is the presence of groups lobbying for intervention—Guatemalan oligarchs, Cuban exiles, Dominican officers, Chilean businessmen, South African film companies used as fronts for the Bureau of State Security, Salvadoran far-rightists at the proverbial elbow or ear of Senators and incoming Administration appointees. At the behest of the “Angola lobby,” Reagan announced publicly he would provide covert aid to UNITA in 1986 to free themselves from Cuban invasion—an awkward paradox that confused his staffers.<sup>91</sup>

The “Jamba Jamboree” or Democratic International in the southeast corner of Angola brought New Right fixtures together with mujahedeen, UNITA, the Mozambican National Resistance, the Contras, Son Sann’s Khmer People’s National Liberation Front, even the tiny Ethnic Liberation Organization of Laos. It was an inverse of the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Conference of revolutionaries, selling “I’m a Contra (or Mujahedeen) Too” t-shirts and featuring a Jimi Hendrix impersonator. White House-approved speakers accused the State Department of betraying their President.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union—February 1985,” Feb. 6, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-joint-session-congress-state-union-february-1985>. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 165-66. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 361. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 149, 219. Robert E. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 45.

<sup>91</sup> The White House turned cautious that same year, limiting the aid and saying the goal was negotiation, not UNITA victory: the “Angola lobby” vocally condemned Reagan as abandoning Savimbi. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 187-88. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 127. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 116. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 118.

<sup>92</sup> Attendees included the Reason Foundation and Jack Abramoff (a South African lobbyist who condemned all opponents of apartheid as Moscow’s puppets), speakers telling two dozen White House aides that anti-Soviet rebel-

The end results of the Doctrine were mixed even in the short term: only the mujahedeen retained their military force, the Contras and UNITA falling apart. The Contras, UNITA, or mujahedeen—nor the Argentinean, Zairean, South Africa, and Pakistani states, Cuban exiles, or Salvadoran death squads acting as the intermediaries—had never been under Casey’s *control*: even Maj. Gen. Singlaub had to confront the fact that “the international Right was much older, larger, and more complex than they had assumed.”<sup>93</sup> At the same time, the Casey Doctrine attacked not proxies of the Kremlin but independent left-wing and progressive parties that had established new states, simply brutalizing southern Africa or Central America until there was little alternative to the neoliberal order after 1989.

The Doctrine meant that Gates interdicted intelligence that Moscow was reducing interest and activity (even if it meant continuing knowingly feeding the Oval Office KGB disinformation<sup>94</sup>) and Casey and the other hawks undercut the Administration, targeting the negotiations in Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, and Nicaragua. Some of Casey’s wars—Nicaragua, El Salvador, Afghanistan—ended with effective victory of the U.S.-backed forces; others such as Angola or Chad dragged on inconclusively into the 21st century. No matter the level of attention

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lions were breaking out worldwide—“the most significant geopolitical development of our times.” Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 156-57, 184-85, 191-92. Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 268. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 128-29, 201.

<sup>93</sup> A Gramscian interpretation of the “Anticommunist International” would be that the New Right managed victory in a war of position—not of the literally-atherosclerotic Kremlin, but of independent revolutionary parties, of the entire concept of independence rather than submission to one Superpower or the other. Another Gramscian interpretation is that there *was* no war of position, just naked force, a flow of bullets and dollars until any challenge to a unipolar order was defeated—the Russian, Iranian, and Nicaraguan Revolutions. The Contra War is just the global last stand of the independent left wing, with only fossils such as North Korea (adopting a new official ideology) and Cuba (itself submitting to neoliberalism). Augelli and Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 134. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 205. Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 65. Stephen Gill and David Law, “Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital,” in *ibid.*: 100. James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998): 2. Andrea Oñate-Madrazo, *Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador’s Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992*, Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2016): 207-10. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 420.

<sup>94</sup> “Gates knowingly approved reports full”

they received in the 1980s, the countries of the Casey Doctrine were all promptly dropped as targets of covert warfare under President George H.W. Bush.<sup>95</sup> The Soviet Union's fall meant little serious introspection on the Cold War in the foreign-policy establishment, and the secrecy of foreign-policymaking and covert war-making was successfully reused in the 2002-03 campaign to invade Iraq—featuring most all of the hardline protagonists of the Reagan Administration (Conclusion).

The Casey Doctrine had repercussions far beyond even the relationship with ruthless Sunni terrorists (Chapter 1, “5: Criminality and Extremism”). Lt. Col. North mentioned the ever-entrepreneurial Casey's desire for an “off-the-shelf, self-sustaining, stand-alone entity” to conduct operations too controversial for even the CIA. This went beyond even private weapons sales or ties to drug traffickers, to an entire permanent, secret foreign policy group unknown to Congress and Langley alike, nominally under the President's command but created by Casey—not as CIA Director, but just as a National Security Council member. It would enact the President's orders without informing him. Its basis was the way in which North and other officers were used to operate the Contra-supply “Enterprise” under Casey's orders as an NSC member, to deceitfully claim to stick to the letter of the Boland Amendments.<sup>96</sup>

“the President didn't always know what he knew”<sup>97</sup>

—Lt. Col. Oliver North

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<sup>95</sup> Support for the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front exploded into a multimillion-dollar affair with an unknown party no less Marxist-Leninist than the ruling Workers' Party of Ethiopia, which was immediately infiltrated by Addis Ababa. Maputo was forced to open to Washington as well as Moscow, and Cuban forces left Angola. Of course there were specific lobbies irate that South Yemen or Ethiopia did not get full Casey-Doctrine funding. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 127. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 74, 84. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 3, 6, 202, 226. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 395-96

<sup>96</sup> Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 335. Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 181.

<sup>97</sup> Kyle Longley, “An Obsession: The Central American Policy of the Reagan Administration,” in Bradley Lynn Coleman and Kyle Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981-1989* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 224.

## Iran and the Contras

The Iran-Contra affair itself produced repeated stories of the Reagan Administration's direct involvement in massacring villages, terrorism, illegal paramilitaries, drug trafficking, and secret liaisons with autocrats designated as rogue states, as enemies of every U.S. citizen. There was little public support for intervention on behalf of a brutal Salvadoran military regime or murderous Nicaraguan Guardsmen.<sup>98</sup> This dissertation cannot answer whether Iran-Contra was a successful "exposure" or whether the most important elements were successfully kept secret (at least until it was too late for legal consequence): it examines how a specific story progressed or was intercepted; how previous reports were revisited once a story increased in saliency; and the effects of the increased anticommunist rhetoric and general secrecy needed to keep the war going after each exposure. As a covert war, the Contra War shares most of the characteristics of the others analyzed—unclear, shifting, politically-determined goals and motives; military escalation; preponderance of extremism and brutality (and trafficking cocaine) while more democratic figures were presented for the interviews; reliance on third parties or "partner states" (not just Honduras); and increasing risk and "discoverability."

The neoconservatives entered the top levels of the CIA and State Department in 1981 at the expense of career experts—fired, transferred, forced into retirement and replaced with the likes of Haig, Casey, Kirkpatrick, Constantine Menges, Dewey Clarridge, Fred Iklé, or Pat Buchanan, favoring militarism, ideological rigor, and against diplomacy. Haig was certain that El Salvador was where the Reds would be made to learn that "their time of unresisted adventuring in the Third World was over." More importantly, he promised Reagan "this is one you can win." Central America was an opportunity to be seized rather than a problem to be resolved, a chance

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<sup>98</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 128.



to draw the line and exorcise the ghosts of Vietnam.<sup>99</sup> Latin America was apparently the foreign-policy division dominated the longest by the hardliners, the Station chiefs there noticeably criminal and insubordinate under Casey.<sup>100</sup>

These hardliners quickly found themselves in near-war against other figures, such as the more pragmatic Secretary of State George Shultz: the hardliners and even Reagan deliberately left him in the dark on the actual policy on Central America. He was particularly distressed by Casey, calling him “a hog on ice” leading the President himself to disaster, taking the *unconventional* approach on everything. Reagan seemed to encourage advisers to compete for his attention, leaving them semiautonomous actors pursuing contradictory foreign policies.<sup>101</sup> The hawks fought as well Haig saying covert action a “contradiction in terms” but suggested blockading Cuba instead of supporting counter guerrillas.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 47. Eldon Kenworthy, “United States Policy in Central America: A Choice Denied,” *Current History* 84:500 (March 1985): 137. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 211. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 18-20, 25. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Eisesdrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 52.

<sup>100</sup> To protect its close relations with Guatemala’s death squads and embezzlers, that Station leaked the conversations of Amb. Marilyn McAfee from listening devices planted by Guatemalan intelligence, alleging through back-channels that she was having a hidden lesbian affair: the sweet talk for “Murphy” was in fact for her dog, not her secretary. 1980s Station chiefs in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, and Jamaica were accused of habitually lying to superiors, sexually harassing coworkers, embezzlement, threatening underlings at gunpoint, and running a counternarcotics operation in which a ton of cocaine wound up on the streets of Florida. “It was the only division in the clandestine service in which Station chiefs were removed from their posts for misconduct on a regular basis.” Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 39-40. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 412-14, 458-60.

<sup>101</sup> Reagan personally preferred “high diplomacy” coupled with domestic military deficit spending, supporting Solidarity in Poland, and then, in his second term, détente and disarmament with Gorbachev. Schultz insists he was the first to recognize that Reagan’s buildup and rhetoric was only part of a larger effort to build a constructive relationship with Moscow and reduce nuclear weapons, meeting with Soviet officials since 1983. This Presidential approach may even have increased pressure on the hawks for success in Nicaragua. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 304. Longley, “An Obsession,” in Coleman and Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World* 2017: 219. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 337, 339. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 227.

<sup>102</sup> U.S. counterinsurgency training and defectors who turned informant prevented the FMLN from any overwhelming success by 1981, and the White House “pivoted” to Nicaragua. Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko had insisted that “Cuba is *your* problem,” which Haig interpreted as Moscow assuring Washington it would not risk confrontation for Cuba’s sake as it had 1962: the Kremlin had always written off Latin America as a U.S. “near abroad,” not a fertile recruiting ground for Marxism-Leninism, its revolutionaries far distant from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Haig proposed a full blockade of Cuba, and any problems in Central America would be over. After Haig’s “umbilical” theory of a nautical new Ho Chi Minh Trail was discredited (see Chapter 4, “Conventional Military Deception: El Salvador,” n33), new public rationales had to be formulated to explain why 1. the FMLN was still able to fight and 2. what sounded plausible to keep support for the Contras still: they were re-

The new White House believed that it had to tighten the leash on the existing bureaucracy in order to obtain the foreign policy it had promised in the election. The State Department and the CIA Directorate of Intelligence were seen as too liberal and too leaky and their ranks of civil servants hit hard 1981-82.<sup>103</sup> Amb. Jack R. Binns was recalled in 1981 promptly after reporting Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez's plans for the "Argentine Method" to Foggy Bottom (Chapter 6), and Amb. Anthony Quainton did not know of the CIA cooperation with the Contras at all.

Salvadoran death squads and Buenos Aires had more influence in assembling and funding the former Nicaraguan National Guardsmen 1980-82 than the CIA, until the Argentinean military regime was defeated in the British Falklands. The direct U.S. involvement between 1981 and 1984 meant CIA officers, "contract" officers from the Pentagon, proprietary front companies, and eventually private "cutouts"—a full-scale war on the sole authorization of Reagan's Presidential findings.<sup>104</sup> The CIA provided funding and all the intelligence of the Contras stationed in Honduras, but unable to inspire insurrection in Nicaragua or win over significant recruitment without coercion. Unable to enter Managua or summon the U.S. Marines, there ended up being no broader operational goal—just scrambling for a win, *any* win, in Nicaragua itself. Was the war intended to restrain the Sandinistas in one country? Force them to lose an election? Negotiate and reconcile with the Contras? Topple them?<sup>105</sup>

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framed as an "interdiction" force on the Honduran border, along with U.S. forces surrounding Nicaragua north, east, and west. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 63, 89, 91. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 263. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 263.

<sup>103</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 304.

<sup>104</sup> (See Chapter 6, "The United States and Battalion 3-16," n167.) Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988: 8. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 19.

<sup>105</sup> Kissinger doubted the Contras could budge Managua with even US\$100 million in aid; Managua was certain that an invasion was imminent after the October 1983 invasion of Grenada. However, Operation "Urgent Fury" was small and quick, lacked mass casualties (except for friendly fire and a shootout with Cuban military engineers), targeted an already-toppled state, and popular with the U.S. public. The EPS were battle-hardened, heavily armed, and experienced in full guerrilla warfare, the Sandinista party had a broad support base, and ground invasion of Central America was politically impossible for Reagan. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation* (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 49. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 91. Perla, *San-*

Langley estimated that there were no circumstances for a military victory over Managua, no matter how much they were funded—they were simply unable to either convince civilians in Nicaragua or hold land militarily, and by 1985 would be defeated in detail without airplanes. Casey even assured Congress that the Contras lacked the money, arms, or discipline to really take on the EPS, so therefore it was not “another Vietnam”—they could do no more than raid into Nicaragua. Eventually the means became an end to themselves, just justification for an operation without objectives, treating Honduras or Nicaragua as mere instruments of far-off ideologies. The U.S. managers of the Contra War were more interested in image and impression, and the Contra *comandantes* did not care if their patrons were deceiving themselves into continuing an unwinnable war.<sup>106</sup>

But the shift in stated purpose from arms interdiction to an undeclared, relatively-overt war in a nearby nation never swayed Congress, leading to the December 1982 Boland Amendment, which banned aid “for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua”—and simply let the White House pass the Contras off as an “interdiction force” allowing peace and democracy to survive in El Salvador, and the Senate feared Reagan calling them “soft” on Cuba and Nicaragua.<sup>107</sup> What became the “Iran-Contra” scandal emerged from the messy material *need* to covertly deal with extremists, with the Islamic Jihad Organization or with drug cartels,

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*dinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 45, 203. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 295. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 188.

<sup>106</sup> One 1983 estimate was leaked to *The Washington Post*: it warned that treating the Contras as the only option, without diplomacy or offering incentives, would only lock in a militarized, single-party state in Nicaragua (though a Revisionist like Chomsky would say that was the *point* of a proxy force). Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 58-59. Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 156. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 362. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 544, 549. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 156

<sup>107</sup> Carter had suspended aid to Managua in 1980 for its support of FMLN against the armed forces that had launched the political genocide in El Salvador, which Carter himself had condemned. Managua then turned to Moscow for assistance—but never intended to roll into El Salvador, or seize Guanacaste Province in Costa Rica, or besiege the Panama Canal: Casey was displeased at these conclusions from Langley, so he end-ran his own analysts with a hand-picked intelligence task force to cook the books. Soviet commitment was more limited 1981-83, until the Contras escalated—the Casey Doctrine defeating itself, deepening Soviet influence (though Chomsky would say that *was* the point). Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 154, 189.

clashed with the rhetoric of fighting a “War on Drugs,” standing tall against terrorism and never *negotiating* for hostages, or “peace through strength.”<sup>108</sup>

Gates remarked that Casey was prudent, even cautious, in all the other covert actions— with one exception. John Prados says it was a showpiece for secret war, a chance to wage an unrestricted paramilitary campaign. He took in Dewey Clarridge because he was more aggressive than any other Station chief to head the Directorate of Operations’ Latin America division: he knew no Spanish, but he spoke the right language: “My plan was simple. 1. Take the war to Nicaragua. 2. Start killing Cubans.”<sup>109</sup> Casey eventually insisted that “If America challenges the Soviets at every turn and ultimately defeats them in one place, that will shatter its mythology, and it will all start to unravel. Nicaragua is that place.” He did acknowledge that any visible U.S. involvement was a disaster that would alienate every government in the hemisphere, and R. Adm. Turner worried that any hint of CIA backing would backfire, letting Moscow get fully involved like at the Bay of Pigs.<sup>110</sup> But Casey had built himself an off-ramp, a way to make an auto-

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<sup>108</sup> Sen. David Durenberger (D-Minnesota) complained “I learned about the arms deal at the same time the guy in the street did.” Reagan was personally shocked when the two conspiracies came together: he had believed he had authorized saving hostages and support for Nicaragua’s freedom fighters. The other “half” of Iran-Contra was more controversial at the time, but with fewer Constitutional dangers—a relatively simple trade for U.S. citizens held hostage by Shi’ite paramilitaries in Lebanon in exchange for missiles, tripping Reagan up when he initially described the shipment as only a “planeload.” But the public outrage was greater since Iran was a publicly-identified enemy since the 1980 Embassy hostage-taking and on the U.S. list of terrorist states. Saudi and Israeli front men extorted millions from the U.S. government overselling themselves as having inside connections in Tehran, building on Israeli ties to both Iran and the Contras until 1982—when Reagan and Casey began working with Saddam Hussein, their mutual foe. To justify the outreach the CIA intelligence estimates suddenly reported Iran’s support for terror “dropped off substantially” through 1985 (the definition of “terrorism” is quite flexible), Lt. Col. North himself cheerily reframing Iran as a decades-long U.S. ally, and the terrorism and fire-breathing ayatollahs were just a temporary phase. Joe Bryan, “Trust Us: Nicaragua, Iran-Contra, and the Discursive Economy of Empire,” in Carole MacGranahan and John F. Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018): 357. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 133. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 14. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 28. Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative* 2012: 177-78, 196. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 445-46, 451-52, 506, 524, 526. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 389-91.

<sup>109</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 265, 479. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 509.

<sup>110</sup> Casey’s personal attorney was blunt: how “could Casey be a party to so many boneheaded plays, like the so-called covert operation against Nicaragua?” there would be leaks, Congressional notification, negative press that happens only when they got caught—in other words, even a Contra success on the field would only indicate that the Administration had continued to break the law; Casey’s only response was “The other side plays rough. We have to play rough too.” Casey himself (at least at one point) believed any Soviet involvement in Central America and the

mous covert-war operation that he headed personally: it only had the disadvantage of being the most illegal action by a CIA Director in recorded history.

Casey had anticipated a Contra cutoff since the March 1981 Presidential finding that authorized the CIA, and approached officers of the regular Army and Air Force to declare arms “surplus” for the Contras—regardless of whether the top brass *knew*.<sup>111</sup> Casey had meetings with Reagan for the day when Congress shut the money off and shut the CIA out, agreeing the Contras were to be kept alive by any means. In March 1984 he anticipated the Congressional cutoff and laid out how it could be replaced with third-country alternatives or even a private U.S. foundation. The second Boland Amendment was acknowledged to be airtight: no agency involved in intelligence could aid the Contras “directly or indirectly ... by any nation, group, organization, movement or individual” by any intelligence agency of the United States—but the technicality was that the NSC did not handle *intelligence*.<sup>112</sup>

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Caribbean was a feint, to distract from the oil of the Middle East, but was sure Moscow and Havana were going to test Reagan’s mettle there. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 304. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 273, 356, 517. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 507-08.

<sup>111</sup> Casey’s first brainchild to evade the anticipated Congressional cutoff was “Yellow Fruit” under the Pentagon, followed by “Elephant Herd” and “Seaspray.” “Casey loved Elephant Herd. It distilled his wisdom of a lifetime. If you are making a deal and run up against a legal wall, you look for a crack in it,” Persico writes. Under Congressional pressure 1982 and 1984, CIA was now insulated or firewalled through casuistry: the CIA had to notify Congress and follow Presidential findings: the National Security Council did not. Army leaders did not even know that their own intelligence officers had developed a secret army within the Army; once they found out the top brass then worried about how the “crazies in the basement” would threaten Reagan when their shenanigans became public—their unbalanceable account books, the cash they had expended without written orders. The high command was mortified that they knew nothing about what their own Army was doing, launching a rampage by their Inspector-General 1983-84, tracking down each unauthorized activity, Cayman Islands accounts, or old boys’ network. The Enterprise as a “safe mode” was the CIA’s new way of behaving once forced into *de jure* restrictions such as not crossing onto Nicaraguan soil: Langley had to notify the House and Senate and follow Presidential findings—the NSC did not. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 57. Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988. Lawrence Freedman, *Atlas of Global Strategy: War and Peace in the Nuclear Era* (New York: Facts on File, 1985): 66-69. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 167. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 417. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 21. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 362, 399, 410-11. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 535, 555. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 380.

<sup>112</sup> Persico describes this as “a slim reed of law to lean on ... By the same logic, the National Park Service or the National Endowment for the Arts could have run the contra operation”—but the only concern was keeping the Contras going until Congress could be wowed and won over again (as it would be 1985-86—and then Hasenfus was shot down). Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 357. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 398, 433.

Early scandals such as the 1983-84 CIA bombing of Nicaragua’s Atlantic and Pacific ports under Clarridge (intended to show that the Contras were now independent of the CIA) and the 1984 exposure of the “murder manual” (intended to reform and reroute the Contras, Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”) produced enough opposition to already make the Contra War scandalous. An even worse disaster was barely averted when Casey asked Sens. Gary Hart and William Cohen to visit Managua and see things for themselves—and they barely missed being killed by a bomb at Sandino International Airport dropped by a CIA plane.<sup>113</sup> These operations were known by their planners to be undeniable, destroying the fig leaf of “collective defense”: this all led to the second Boland Amendment May 1984, blocking the CIA from all involvement in the Nicaraguan war. Sen. Barry Goldwater was outraged at the White House trying to restore public and Senate ignorance of foreign policy. Casey gradually ended even the most routine reporting, and Goldwater had been deliberately cut out because Casey feared he would try to talk Reagan out of the mining. Losing Reagan’s own mentor was an early warning sign the Cold Warriors did not heed.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> That bombings were “an act of war was evident to anyone not in a coma.” Persico, *Casey* 1990: 373, 378.

<sup>114</sup> Indeed this covert-war tension is rooted in the terms of the U.S. Constitution: foreign policy is entirely in the hands of the President, but only Congress can declare war. Casey expressed shock at the Senate’s response to the CIA mining of Nicaraguan harbors, insisting incorrectly that the intelligence committees had been notified. His allies such as Bill Safire started a whisper campaign against a “befuddled” Goldwater as a tool of the liberal press, while the Senator recalled he had gone to the mat for Casey during his 1981 confirmation hearing—and then several times after that. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont) found himself amused by his aide’s outage: of course it was an “act of war,” but the Senate had been signing off on millions of dollars for an undeclared, quasi-secret war against Nicaragua since 1980. Bob Woodward hyperbolized the mining of Nicaraguan harbors—“ a moral boundary had been crossed and some loathsome fragment of sin exacerbated”: it was sneaky, un-American, Communist to Woodward. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 51. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 97. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 111. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 3. Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002): 9. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 267. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 2018: 159. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 351. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 303. Peter Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987): 31. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 96. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 231, 256, 278-79, 362, 374-77. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 497, 523, 530-33, 537. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 191-92. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 169. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 45, 148, 225-26, 239-40, 320-21, 324-26, 334, 389.

The bombings also spurred the *Nicaragua v. United States* lawsuit at the Hague’s International Court of Justice. The White House announced after the fact it would refuse the verdict—the first time since 1946, the State Department admitting it was a concession that they *were* violating international law while claiming supporting the Contras was “collective defense” of allied El Salvador against foreign intervention.<sup>115</sup>

After the 1984 ban, Casey turned to the network already assisting the Contras to set up the “Enterprise” under the National Security Council (rather than the CIA). Reagan made personal communication with several of the contributing heads of state, which Shultz warned would be impeachable: “we’ll all be hanging by our thumbs in front of the White House” if such face-to-face fundraising were discovered. Saudi Arabia contributed over US\$31 million and Brunei and Taiwan \$10 million each, plus \$3 million from public donations large and small in the United States, and \$3.8 million diverted from the secret arms sales to Iran, the arms saving the FDN from annihilation.<sup>116</sup> Another crucial component was Maj. Gen. Singlaub (above, “A ‘Black International’ ”), whose connections were even stronger than Casey’s himself, and served as Reagan’s liaison to the Enterprise: the President involved himself in the “private” fundraising

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<sup>115</sup> For the first time in 78 years, the American Society for International Law voted to condemn an action of the U.S. government. To contemporary critics of the Cold War, this lawlessness was taken as evidence by its planners that the United States was again victimized by foreigners jealous of U.S. freedom (and not just a cynical means to attack “Communist” revolutions). The neoconservatives would return with the 2002 American Service-Members’ Protection Act if any were detained for trial at the International Criminal Court, nicknamed “the Hague Invasion Act.” Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 137. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 55. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 265.

<sup>116</sup> The donation network (itself fitting Reagan’s doctrines of privatization and outsourcing) was a cover for the real income from third-party governments, just as the flights of the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office after 1985 were loaded with arms and ammunition by the Enterprise. U.S. lethal aid was laundered through partner countries: Saudi Arabia receiving \$8.5 billion in military aid, and Riyadh gave the mujahedeen received \$2 billion total in cash, and the Contras \$1 million a month 1984-86. “Joint exercises” between the U.S. Army and the FF.AA. dumped half a billion dollars’ worth of weapons, logistics, and equipment on Honduran soil for the Contras (without any handover of legal title to the Hondurans), and the Army Corps of Engineers built several airstrips and facilities for Contra supply and support by the FF.AA., CIA, and Enterprise. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 176. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 163-65. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 40, 354-55, 362, 364. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 74. Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative* 2012: 83-133, 147, 150. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 379, 438, 514. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 536, 547, 558. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 37.

campaign. Mercenaries were recruited to fly the airplanes and train the infantry, already leading to a shutdown and scandal in September 1984. The Enterprise was staffed by people with acquisitions, logistics, and paramilitary experience—but with the requirement that none of them to be active-duty military or CIA.<sup>117</sup>

Some described the Contras (briefly) as becoming more effective without the CIA, more assertive in the field (or simply more desperate); but the FDN also lost operational control, secrecy, and financial accountability.<sup>118</sup> By April 1985 the Senate Intelligence Committee became suspicious that the Contras—needing a minimum of around \$20 million a year—were thriving despite having been cut off, and rumors were rising that they were being kept afloat from outside. Casey was fully at ease over this, even sending out compliance officers in Langley to make sure they followed the letter and spirit of the law, smoothly assuring the Senate the Contras were fundraising and buying arms privately—while Lt. Col. North told Contra figurehead Alfonso Robelo “Congress must believe that there continues to be an urgent need for funding.”<sup>119</sup>

Congress did not investigate the rumors of continuing U.S. government support, so the CIA doubted it would become a major issue; indeed the Senate approved resumption of nonlethal aid June 1985 (the aid planes “privately” loaded with Enterprise ammunition, another violation), and lethal aid in 1986 just before Eugene Hasenfus’s October 1986 shutdown that confirmed the U.S. government was still involved in the Contra War—before the lethal aid was legally authorized to resume (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”). But Reagan admitted in February

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<sup>117</sup> The mercenary Civilian Military Assistance and other private fundraisers managed to bring in millions of dollars separate from the partner countries—but not independently of the state, Reagan personally endorsing and speaking at the fundraisers, and hundreds of top donors were rewarded with private meetings. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 152, 154, 189. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 358. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 33. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 178-80. Jack Terrell, with Ron Martz, *Disposable Patriot: Revelations of a Soldier in America’s Secret Wars* (Washington: National Press Books, 1992).

<sup>118</sup> Maj. Gen. Singlaub said that “the Boland Amendment might prove to be a godsend for the Contras, weaning them from too strict American control ... CIA advisers had been inflexible, often doctrinaire, and above all patronizing.” Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 143. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 170.

<sup>119</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 432.



1985 that his objective was now to remove the Sandinista government, recently certified by election, escalating (non-CIA) covert operations and making overt arguments for restoration of Contra aid even while the Boland violations were being exposed.<sup>120</sup>

Casey managed to separate the airplanes, loading, crewmen, ground control, etc., from the CIA—at least on paper. He withdrew his CIA only to fill the Enterprise with “retired” agents and lead it himself, but as an NSC member rather than CIA director. As CIA Director Casey’s task was to avoid illegal and destructive requests from the White House—but Casey was also Reagan’s trusted confidant, an author of foreign policy who held himself above the Secretary of State, a member of the Cabinet and NSC. Félix Rodríguez operated as a CIA contractor “between jobs” when he managed the Enterprise’s five planes on their routes from Ilopango Airport, San Salvador (Chapter 5, “Conventional Military Deception”)—and the only Spanish-speaker, to maintain the fiction that they were FDN planes. The San José, Costa Rica, Station chief José Fernández always maintained that his superiors knew he was aiding Lt. Col. North with the Contras.<sup>121</sup> Because there was so little change from the 1982-84 period when the flights were a CIA operation, the 1985-86 Contra supply crews genuinely thought they were working for CIA, as Hasenfus damningly told the EPS soldiers who arrested him.

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<sup>120</sup> Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 19, 31. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 96.

<sup>121</sup> Casey was sure that “interdiction” had the right, *limited* framing, while Haig reiterated that “Covert operations can be ancillary to a foreign policy, but they can’t be the policy” even if it “allowed the White House people to go to bed at night saying we did something ... And it allowed them to wake up in the morning still beloved by the American people because they hadn’t dragged our boys into a war.” As early as February 1982 Clarridge gave away the game by boasting of 1,100 Contras—twice the 500 authorized as an interdiction force, and the numbers got bigger with each of Casey’s briefings that year. Contra support never had a convincing rationale in a whole decade—neither Nicaragua nor El Salvador was a convincing threat to the United States itself, and by 1985 the Administration admitted that regime change was the goal, openly indicating that “interdiction” had been just a temporary excuse to delay opposition, that the real goal was never justifiable to the public. The mission also visibly backed the ex-Sandinista *comandante* Edén Pastora’s *Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática* (ARDE)—which Adm. Inman noted could not possibly have anything to do with El Salvador, being based in north Costa Rica. John N. McMahon complained “It’s not as if he’s a son of a bitch but at least he’s *our* son of a bitch. He isn’t even ours!” Casey was indifferent, pointing out that the OSS’s Bill Donovan recruited avowed Communists. Amson, *Crossroads*, 1993: 275. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 160. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 396, 398. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 19. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 95. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 273, 291-92, 302. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 508.

This was followed up by numerous acts of destruction of evidence and perjury, which counsel Arthur Liman said came from a mentality that it was “patriotic to lie to Congress, to circumvent checks and balances through covert actions.”<sup>122</sup> The Cold Warriors believed Congress had no legitimate role in foreign policy, since it was Constitutionally in the hands of the President. Not just the undeclared enemy, but nobody outside the national-security elite had any right to true information (even if it had been previously available to the public).<sup>123</sup> Focusing on “what the President knew and when did he know it” as though it was a second Watergate obscured support for decades of international extremism and criminality.<sup>124</sup> Persico calls Iran-Contra “possibly the most serious challenge to the United States’s democratic institutions,” and Secretary Shultz and Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh concluded that only Casey’s death prevented Reagan’s impeachment—regardless of the unprecedented popularity ratings he achieved (when he was *not* impeached).<sup>125</sup>

To support the Contra War, the White House and Casey’s autonomous “Enterprise” had targeted the press and activists’ freedom of expression, circumvented elected representatives, and remained unpunished. Support for the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan wars fueled international activism (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”) and drew protests from Western Europe. Ultimately the Enterprise itself was a way to end-run the law, “privatizing” it from the proverbial

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<sup>122</sup> Lt. Col. North was keenly aware that the excuse of patriotically saving hostages was a false one, and posed an explosive level of risk. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 173.

<sup>123</sup> Amson, *Crossroads*, 1993: 273. Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 113. Saul Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine: National Security and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988): 4.

<sup>124</sup> Hertsgaard believes that focusing on the Contra Enterprise let the Administration shift attention away from the even-less-popular arms-for-hostages deal, insulate Reagan by focusing on North and V.Adm. John Poindexter, narrow and redefining “wrongdoing” as solely diversion of funds. The covert, extralegal, unconstitutional national security apparatus independent of even the CIA was a far more insidious threat, but only investigated in detail after George H.W. Bush’s Inauguration. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 199. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 323.

<sup>125</sup> The Vietnam War had likewise imploded Johnson and Nixon’s popularity of after landslide reelections, and Iraq did similarly for George W. Bush. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 97. Longley, “An Obsession,” in Coleman and Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World* 2017: 221. Persico, *Casey* 1990: xii. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 542-43. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 57.

White House basement—an official international arms pipeline, independently funded, for a parallel foreign policy, putting itself above the law. Reagan was more eager than Nixon to circumvent checks and balances.<sup>126</sup> Under Maj. Gen. Singlaub the Enterprise was the model for a worldwide flow of weapons independent of the President or CIA Director as well as of Congress, a global ideological parastate, intimately tied to the global criminal underground—worse than Iran-Contra itself. In Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler’s words, Casey was building “a totally autonomous secret warfare infrastructure, controlled only by the White House. It would have given the president the ability to conduct worldwide covert operations completely independent of Congress.”<sup>127</sup>

## Conclusion

The scandal that was labeled “Iran-Contra” in 1986 was the brainchild of several groups that had taken power relatively recently, from the most reactionary members of Argentina’s police state to U.S. neoconservatives hoping for a global wave of resistance against new revolutionary states. The details of the “Casey Doctrine” shows evidence that its planners were already aware of the various components of the “intervention cycle” (Chapter 1) in the wake of the Vietnam War and had already anticipated the degree of media exposure. The “new” Langley knew

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<sup>126</sup> Technically, the Old Executive Office Building next door to the White House. Maj. Gen. Singlaub was annoyed by North—he was prone to fabrication, blaming others, incapable of covertness: the WACL chief believed that arms should go to the mujahedeen, but not to Tehran to buy off Shi’ite terrorists or to play around with Manuel Noriega (who Casey introduced to North as a fellow Cold Warrior 1984). Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 199-201. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 172. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 404. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 550. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 177, 192.

<sup>127</sup> The Contra scandal was far bigger than nearly toppling a President—self-funded counterrevolution based on Argentinean generals’ Operation Condor networks and Bolivian cocaine cash. Proponents of the “rogue elephant” school say that this process was already ongoing since the 1950s involvement in the heroin trade and the attempt to “railroad” Kennedy into Cuba 1961, but all the elements analyzed in the all sections above came together with Reagan’s 1980 election. This was also akin to the developed “deep states” of Cold-War Argentina, Italy, Greece, or Turkey, independent from any particular institution. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 196, 202. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 365. Eric Wilson, ed., *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex* (Burlington, Vt.: Routledge, 2012).

that covert warfare meant media manipulation as well as the more conventional cover-up—William Casey even becoming known for selective leaks of classified intelligence.

By 1984 Reagan himself broke with all precedent of plausible deniability and covert warfare and attempted to use his rhetorical skills to try and make a *public* case for war against Nicaragua. The intervention cycle is notable here because the Contra War exhibited every one of its phases—and because each of these phases has its own potential for a controversial public exposure. Although half a dozen countries were being targeted by the Casey Doctrine, only the Contra War produced a contemporary controversy—the U.S. Senate sending four times more support for the Afghan mujahedeen than the Administration and Langley had requested. Reagan put his reputation on the line for the Contras, and eroded his protection from the press even before the scandal broke out—but the revelations of 1986-87 were not enough for impeachment.

As 1981-87 CIA Director, Casey established a system of covert-war techniques that would be more influential in the 21st century—that is, more of a precedent than anything set up by Allen Dulles in the 1950s. The course of U.S. foreign policy would be determined by the return of several key players of Iran-Contra to the White House in 2001. The Casey Doctrine had explicitly made U.S. officials patrons of terrorists, death squads, secret police, traffickers, and “rogue” agents. Mexican cartel members or open admirers of Adolf Hitler were not likely to leak their connections to Washington, but “Contra cocaine” was covered as early as 1985. By 1989 the Kerry Committee had documented Lt. Col. Oliver North’s personal involvement with Gen. José Bueso Rosa and Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, and personally signing off on flights carrying thousands of kilograms of cocaine—but the Committee’s report came months after Reagan had stepped down, and thus had no legal consequences. In the end, the White House’s ability to

quash liabilities was not a given: the poorest Guatemalan *campesinas* or Iowan church volunteers were able to badly hurt the “Teflon President.”

## Chapter 3

### Iran-Contra: The Press Campaign

“They came home without a victory not because they’d been defeated, but because they’d been denied permission to win”<sup>1</sup>

—Ronald Reagan on the Vietnam War, 1981

“The United States does not start fights. We will never be an aggressor. We maintain our strength in order to deter and defend against aggression—to preserve freedom and peace.”<sup>2</sup>

—Ronald Reagan, 1983

#### Introduction

The Iran-Contra scandal has been extensively analyzed, not just as a media “event” but as a way to examine the structures of the entire press within the United States—how it interacted with the public and with the elected officials in Congress and the White House. This dissertation expands the sources to contemporary Honduras and the cast of characters to U.S. Embassy staffers, Honduran Congresspersons, New Right novelists, illiterate cartel kingpins, and politically-connected fortunetellers. This allows the dissertation to trace about a dozen stories that originated on *catracho* soil as they were obstructed, as their witnesses and warrantors came under sustained attack.

By contrast to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, Honduras had no mass guerrilla movement or political genocide killing thousands; its press and legislature remained in operation *de jure*. This let Honduras be used as a staging-ground for U.S. military support as a “partner state” against El Salvador and Nicaragua—which also meant it was key to providing the covert war with a denial that was no less important than supplying joint exercises, Contra camps, clandestine prisons (and cemeteries), or secret airstrips. The Honduran media expands the analysis of Iran-Contra beyond the scandal’s U.S. *reception*, to how Washington and Tegucigalpa had to

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<sup>1</sup> “Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez,” Feb. 24, 1981, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-presenting-medal-honor-master-sergeant-roy-p-benavidez-0>.

<sup>2</sup> “Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security,” Mar. 23, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-defense-and-national-security>.

work to conceal it. The Presidential scandal was only one end of a bridge of news reaching from the Oval Office to Olancho Department.

The White House's news management—and its failures—have already been analyzed in depth. The new Reagan Administration attacked the press directly as having “lost” one war already, and used proxies to make even more widespread attacks on its patriotism. Although Reagan's rhetoric did not convince many voters to become neoconservatives themselves (let alone that Nicaraguan tanks could roll through Mexico)—but had a definitive effect on the coverage of the foreign-policy scandal in 1986. After years of browbeating, editors would be more willing to limit the effects of the fallout, wanting to avoid another “Watergate” and not fight a popular leader—even if his popularity had been granted to him by the press itself by not investigating further.

Each of Honduras's neighbors had a significant incident that reveals how the Reagan Administration attacked those who witnessed events and those who “warranted” these witnesses' stories. A year after the 1980 Río Sumpul Massacre was denied (Chapter 4), the White House launched a secret campaign against the reporters investigating the 1981 El Mozote Massacre, through the Office of Public Diplomacy and Accuracy in Media. *The New York Times* withdrew reporter Raymond Bonner under the pressure—a risky move, since if the massacre had been confirmed, Reagan would have been *doubly* exposed as 1. deceiving the Senate by “certifying” human-rights progress by the Salvadoran military, 2. having created, trained, and armed the special-forces counterinsurgency unit responsible for a massacre of a thousand (including hundreds of children in a church), and 3. knowingly blocking every avenue of investigation to avoid consequences.

Witness for Peace was a volunteer organization of U.S. citizens making long-term stays in Nicaragua: its members had embarrassed the Administration by publicizing Contra atrocities they lived through and bringing back a copy of a Contra political-warfare manual written by the CIA. But Witness was “debunked” with its kidnapping by the *Contras* in 1985—and without the White House having to take any action against any one figure, or to prepare the ground beforehand with a targeted media campaign. By the time the captured journalists were released their own editors were no longer interested in the story. Witness had lost its reputation in the U.S. press—and, worse, now *Contras* could kill U.S. citizens and the U.S. press would go along with blaming the Sandinista government. Congress then proved more willing to support the *Contras* 1985-88 and some pressure lessened before Eugene Hasenfus’s shootdown, affecting how the consequent scandal was received.

“We’re not in the business of imperialism, aggression, or conquest. We threaten no one. ... Isn’t it time for us to reaffirm an undeniable truth that America remains the greatest force for peace anywhere in the world today?”<sup>3</sup>

—Ronald Reagan, 1983

### A War on News (Against News of War)

The new White House was uniquely focused on public relations and telegenic politics: that ostensibly meant that flat denial of stories and threats against reporters were too risky, too *crude*<sup>4</sup>—evidently deployed only once, against Raymond Bonner (below, “El Mozote”). Instead, Reagan was framed as “the Great Communicator,” as even the most popular President in history. Noam Chomsky noted he was unique because his programs and policies were *opposed* in the polls, while Reagan himself remained well-liked. Chomsky even concludes that voters “hoped that his policies would not be enacted” since many of them went against even their basic self-

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<sup>3</sup> “Remarks at the Annual Washington Conference of the American Legion,” Feb. 22, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-washington-conference-american-legion>.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996): 170-71.



interest.<sup>5</sup> Walter Karp and David Gergen point out that Reagan's reputation as the "Teflon President," immune from scandal, was entirely self-inflicted by the press. Fearing having their patriotism impugned or their "access" cut off, they shielded him from criticism and consequences, collaborating to hide the "backstage" methods that the Administration used to enforce positive coverage. It was not luck, personality, acting career, or some extraordinary public love for Reagan's actions: the press ignored bigger crimes than those of Nixon. Had they shifted to criticizing Reagan, his supposed impunity would have evaporated and the Administration would not have been able to control independent, "uncontrolled" news stories.<sup>6</sup> But even Chomsky characterized Reagan's media management as representing a softer touch, as a sign of electoral democracy in the United States (as opposed to the rigorist military regimes of Greece, Chile, or Argentina).

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<sup>5</sup> Chomsky's view of 1980s media was that "as long as people are marginalized and distracted and have no way to organize or articulate their sentiments, or even know that others have these sentiments ... [they] assumed that they were the only people with that crazy idea in their heads. They never heard it from anywhere else." White House public-relations experts prided themselves on how easy it was to reverse even a 2-to-1 ratio in the polls by reframing benefits for the already-wealthy, militarization, and cuts to social spending (see below, "The Global News War," n67). Even expert organizations such as the Latin American Studies Association could be excluded—and their exclusion "looped" as proof they were radicals who should not have the proverbial microphone. Even if the commercial media covered a serious policy dispute, the solutions they offered went little beyond simply voting for the other candidate out of two U.S. parties. A white paper distributed to delegates at the 1980 Republican National Convention called him an expression of "society's periodic need to re-conceptualize its political leaders," rendering the actual content of his speeches practically irrelevant. Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World," in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 140. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1988): xv. Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 39. Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002): 31. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 32, 140.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Karp contempered Reagan as "a feckless, lawless President with an appalling appetite for private power," while the Democrats were only too happy to use his framing as "the most popular President in history" (which was granted only by the lack of Senate or press investigation) as an alibi for their own inaction. By not reframing Reagan as a crook, the for-profit press gave the processes of meaning-distribution the hiddenness and implicitness necessary for Reagan to still be presented as "Presidential" rather than a lawbreaker (see Introduction, "Media Theory," n73). The Administration in turn could not launch another attack on the press (as it had 1982 and 1984-86) would make the processes protecting Reagan explicit, putting them under public examination. In other words, the scandal threatened to force *all* the state actors into a reputational standoff. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 54, 57, 100. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 21. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 203. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 147-48, 150. Walter C. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality: The Caribbean Basin, 1953-1992* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2001): 167.

The Iran-Contra scandal has already produced numerous works focusing on how the White House directly intervened in “preventing” news, such as the El Mozote massacre or Contra drug-running. These works cover how such potential scandals were diverted, their saliency reduced by Washington’s political culture, or how Administration witnesses and defendants revived a rhetoric of patriotism and foreign threats to blunt the response to any potential scandal. The Administration had to laud the Contras, control the circulation and reception of Central American news, and condemn certain sources as unwitting propagators of Soviet propaganda—as vehicles for *dezinformatsiya*, solely because they distributed news that went against the White House’s wars.<sup>7</sup>

U.S. coverage of the Contra War in Nicaragua and Honduras was the first time 1. that those two countries had been significantly attention in the press and 2. the first time a “covert” war received such a significant level of media coverage. Many doves as well as the hardliners agreed that the main “battlefield” of Vietnam had been the headlines and TV screens of Paris, Washington, and millions of suburban homes. Otto Reich said that in Vietnam “The outcome was not decided on the battlefield; it was decided on the street and in the halls of Washington.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore the new Administration explicitly attacked the press as a Soviet vector aimed at the hearts and minds of the citizenry of the United States itself. Reagan’s White House was the first to not just explicitly launch a public-relations plan, but also to anticipate with public fallout from

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<sup>7</sup> This topic raises the question of whether the CIA, Administration, Iran-Contra conspirators, Southern-Cone generals were *serious*, or whether the plots and anticommunism were all a cunning ruse to increase domestic and global control. This dissertation cannot draw any conclusions about the private “honesty” of any figure beyond their actual actions. To E. Bradford Burns an Administration that was deluded “true believers,” rather than cynical and knowing plotters, might be even more terrifying. E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987): 47. Margaret E. Leahy, “The Harassment of Nicaraguanists and Fellow Travelers,” in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987): 240.

<sup>8</sup> Media analysts caution against taking it for granted that yellow journalism caused the Spanish-American War, that it was televised images that turned the public against the Vietnam War, that the Gulf War was a “simulacrum”—that might be like saying video games are indeed “murder simulators.” Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 203. Michael Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012): 18.

the wars it planned, deploying several techniques not seen before in public relations or in covert warfare. The neoconservatives were particularly dismissive of the public: they were to be excluded from foreign policy, so the Central American wars were carefully shielded from the Congressional intelligence committees and from the media.<sup>9</sup>

The New Right 1. condemned a supposed noninterventionism (the “Vietnam Syndrome”) as having caused the 1979 Nicaraguan and Iranian Revolutions, and 2. dismissed any notion that decades of interventionism could have produced such hostile responses (as “anti-American”). Candidate Reagan was able to frame the crisis as yet one more barbarous assault against what James M. Scott described as the “innocence, benevolence, and exceptionalism of the United States”—its basic goodness in the face of insensate evil.<sup>10</sup> Honduras was key to maintaining not just the Contras but the accusation that Nicaragua was threatening its neighbors without reason (while perfidiously claiming to be under attack).

In Central America, the Contra Directorate’s publicist Edgar Chamorro outright bought dozens of Honduran and Costa Rican journalists—for a mere US\$50-100 a month. Chamorro set up shell “human-rights groups” (existing only in name, without any members) in several West European cities—not to gain any local support but to open an indirect approach to the U.S. audience by means of seemingly-independent organizations. Langley even supplied lists of local leaders and newspapers in a home district for the Miami Contras to target a Senator or Congressperson through “astroturf” writing campaigns: the campaign would simulate a notable level of

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<sup>9</sup> Patricia Flynn, “The United States at War in Central America: Unable to Win, Unwilling to Lose,” in Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn, eds., *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press; Berkeley, Calif.: Center for the Study of the Americas, 1984):105. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 104. William M. LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 202-3. Robert A. Pastor, “The War Between the Branches: Explaining U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua, 1979-89,” in Richard Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy Over Contra Aid* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993): 231.

<sup>10</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 64.

Contra support by secretly coordinating (or forging) letters from numerous writers, going off of a single set of “bullet points.”<sup>11</sup>

Reagan failed to sway the public on Central America with his 1984-86 campaign against Managua, which constrained the U.S. Senate funding that the Contras did receive 1985-88. Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams even insisted that polls were ultimately unimportant: “the importance of public opinion was relatively low,” that “The polls were purely instrumental” since one could “prove” anything with them, reverse a two-to-one ratio with the most basic public-relations techniques, reshuffling agendas and reframing an issue without a single change in actual policy. Reagan himself could retain high (superficial) popularity ratings even while his policies remained unpopular; the White House risked impeachment pursuing Central American counterrevolution—its *worst*-polling policy.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The CIA had extensive media contacts through “Operation Mockingbird” in the 1950s and 60s, with direct liaisons with fifty U.S. journalists—*Time*, *Look*, *Fortune*, *Parade*, *Reader’s Digest*—and hundreds abroad. Domestically the network was aimed at boosting the Agency over other Federal departments and countering real or perceived Soviet influence in student, union, and peace organizing. Dulles could pick up the phone to edit a *New York Times* or *Washington Post* story or have a journalist relocated (see Chapter 3, “A War on News,” n19)—due to shared anti-communism more than any ability unique to the Agency itself. Carl Bernstein revealed that the CIA had over 400 journalists as assets or direct channels in the 1950s and 60s, and maybe 50 in 1976—but they never needed to be asked, there was no need to *subvert* the supportive media, that was simply what patriots did during wartime. During the 80s Langley favored the “frame” of a Superpower proxy conflict: the Congresspersons therefore did not have to concern themselves with any of the actualities of Nicaraguans politics or society. Congress feared a “second Cuba” as much as did a “second Vietnam.” Martha Honey, “Contra Coverage—Paid for by the CIA: The Company Goes to Work in Central America,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 25:6 (March-April 1987): 31-32. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001): 182. Jack A. Blum, “Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem,” in Craig Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity: U.S. Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 81. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation* (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 22-23, 41-42. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 2, 22. International Court of Justice, *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America): Affidavit of Edgar Chamorro* (The Hague: International Court of Justice, 1985): 12. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 240-41. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 308. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983): 30-31. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 132. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 77.

<sup>12</sup> A simple reframing turned a 2-to-1 disapproval of Reagan’s education cutbacks into 2-to-1 approval, without a single change, and in just six weeks. Two-thirds were against the 1984 mining of Nicaragua—but only a fifth of those surveyed could identify whether Reagan was backing the Nicaraguan government or the rebels! (see above, n5, and below, “The Global News War,” n84). This dissertation does not concern polling outcomes in Honduras or,

The main White House institution for intimidating the press was the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy under Otto Reich and Robert Kagan, active 1983-86 and coordinating across several official agencies and with unofficial neoconservative nonprofits to directly or deniably pressure newspapers and TV and radio stations. The OPD declared that its mission was to counter a formidable and well-established Soviet, Cuban, FSLN, and FMLN propaganda apparatus in the United States. Robert Parry described the OPD as discrediting journalists and delaying stories until the Senate had voted on aid—before news such as the CIA mining of Nicaragua's ports reached Washington.<sup>13</sup> It threatened editors, discredited eyewitnesses, trimmed back stories, and set up smear campaigns through proxies such as Reed Irvine's Accuracy in Media (to give a false appearance of independence).<sup>14</sup>

Reich personally visited National Public Radio's headquarters after it reported on a Contra massacre at a farming cooperative November 1984; he warned NPR managers that the OPD was monitoring and analyzing the stories coming from what he called the radio station's "little Havana on the Potomac." He bragged that he had visited other newspapers and television networks and successfully gotten reporters replaced in the field and independent investigations in Nicaragua dropped. A senior NPR journalist resigned and another was pressured until she asked

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necessarily, how much coverage each Honduran story got in the U.S. press. Elliott Abrams and J. Edward Fox, interviewees, "Public Opinion and Reagan Policy: Administration Commentaries," in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 108, 114. Linas J. Kojelis, Otto Reich, Ronald Hinckley, and Robert Parry, interviewees, "Public Diplomacy: Seeking Public Support for Contra Aid Policy," in *ibid.*: 157. Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 240. Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 255-56. Richard Sobel, "Introduction: Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy Over Contra Aid," in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 10.

<sup>13</sup> Kojelis, Reich, Hinckley, and Parry, "Public Diplomacy," in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 163. Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan's Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 8.

<sup>14</sup> Irvine also created Accuracy in Academia, claiming to have up to 10,000 pro-Russian and/or anti-U.S. professors on their monitoring list. Leahy, "The Harassment of Nicaraguanists and Fellow Travelers," in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 239.

to be reassigned to Ethiopia; editor Bill Buzenberg said that NPR's attitude was now " 'What would Otto Reich think?' "

The OPD took special steps against journalists who could not themselves be daunted: Brian Barger's colleague at the Associated Press received anonymous calls that Barger was a Sandinista agent. In July 1985 Otto Reich publicly told *New York* magazine that U.S. journalists in Managua had received sexual favors from prostitutes sent by the FSLN government in exchange for positive coverage—and that "It wasn't only women," citing *Newsday's* openly-gay Morris Thompson. Reich had Accuracy in Media declare that *The Washington Post's* John Langtigua was being given "live-in female Sandinista sex slaves in exchange for penning Sandinista agitprop." Female journalists were accused of sleeping with Sandinistas at cocktail parties.<sup>15</sup>

The OPD also conducted more conventional media manipulation, countering the accounts of U.S. visitors and Nicaraguan survivors of Contra atrocities by scheduling speaking tours of Miskito refugees, or two Nicaraguan Jews to claim rampant discrimination. The OPD was the conduit for Barry Seal's staged photographs alleging Sandinista cocaine trafficking and the claim on Election Day November 1984 that a dozen MiG-21s were *en route* to Nicaragua (a story promptly retracted next week, while SR-71 Blackbirds continued to harass Managua, laying one sonic boom after the other over the city). It concocted stories of FSLN *comandantes* living a high life of drugs and corruption, planted articles and ghostwritten editorials, leaked false and misleading intel after Contra atrocities, and monitored all major news outlets in Nicaragua and the United States. The OPD leaked classified information from Langley and mounted a massive

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Parry and Peter Kornbluh, "Iran-Contra's Untold Story," *Foreign Policy* 72 (Autumn 1988): 18, 24-26. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007): 132. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 164. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 271-72.

campaign to deceive the public. But because of the cachet of secrecy, the numerous false leaks were perceived as knowledge by the press, not a claim by an Administration facing reelection.<sup>16</sup>

The neoconservative line was that any deviation from the “frame” of clean and spontaneous freedom fighters against a totalitarian would-be regional conqueror was, in and of itself, just intrinsically proof of the overwhelming KGB propaganda permeating the U.S. news. The Administration insisted that it was not running a propaganda outfit but only protecting the media and the public from a Cuban-Soviet propaganda apparatus entrenched in U.S. soil. Neoconservatives and liberals alike insisted that formidable left-wing lobbies blocked criticism of Pol Pot or the Sandinistas in the press or academia. USAID’s Kate Semerad said that her public-relations office was there “to counter the Soviet-orchestrated effort to influence the United States’ Congress, the national media and the general public,” which had caused the U.S. defeats since Vietnam. According to these self-proclaimed information warriors, the West’s weakness was its free press, easily turned into a vector for lies by the FSLN and the FMLN.<sup>17</sup> Any negative news about U.S. allies such as Gens. Efraín Ríos Montt or Augusto Pinochet was of course only further proof of cutting-edge Soviet-Bloc information warfare.

The State Department’s 1985 report on the Sandinistas insisted that Managua’s campaign had succeeded in “diverting attention from their own illegal actions by accusing others of abusing the norms they themselves have violated has been reasonably successful as a propaganda exercise.” “A nation engaged in the unlawful use of armed force against another becomes the prop-

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<sup>16</sup> Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 46-47. Martin Diskin, “The Manipulation of Indigenous Struggles,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 80. Ed Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1991): 125. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 2, 19-21. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 133. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 270-72.

<sup>17</sup> Whether they *knew* that they were covering up an actual massacre to keep the war going, or genuinely *believed* they were besieged domestically by some of the smallest countries in Latin America, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 22. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 323-24. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 292-93. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 164. Parry and Kornbluh, “Iran-Contra’s Untold Story,” *Foreign Policy* 1988: 5-8, 27.

er object of necessary and proportionate action by the victim and its allies [...] Nicaragua cannot claim the protection of the very principles of international law it is itself violating.” It concluded that “U.S. actions clearly are not the acts of one government determined to destroy another. Nor are they the acts of a government seeking only to create a pretext for intervention,” it continued.<sup>18</sup>

This dis-ingenuous approach dated back to 1954: CIA Director Allen Dulles personally approached *The New York Times*’s editors to get Sydney Gruson pulled from Central America after he described President Jacobo Arbenz as a nationalist rather than a Stalinist threat. *Time* magazine’s response to the revelation of the CIA’s role in the Guatemalan coup was to decry the press for exposing it—“a sort of Reichstag fire in reverse, masterminded in Moscow and designed to divert the attention from Guatemala as the Western Hemisphere’s Red problem child.” Gregory F. Treverton notes that “the leaks, not the operation, were discredited.”<sup>19</sup>

The White House persisted in backing the Contras after 1984, even if it meant dodging the CIA to do so: that produced constant leaks and risks of even greater exposures. Some analysts conclude the Reagan Administration was not interested in secrecy or deniability on Nicaragua at all. Between 1984 and 1986, Reagan made a personal rhetorical push to defend his Central-America policy to the *public*—especially concentrating on *covert* war against Nicaragua. This was 1. unsuccessful in defending the Contra War to the public, meaning the story was “sali-

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, “*Revolution Beyond Our Borders*”: *Sandinista Intervention in Central America*, Special Report 132 (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 1985): 31-32.

<sup>19</sup> United Fruit’s spokesman quipped that “It is difficult to make a convincing case for manipulation of the press when the victims proved so eager.” Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 323-24. Hannah Gurman, “Unfit to Print: The Press and the Contragate Whistleblowers,” in Kaeten Mistry and Hannah Gurman, eds., *Whistleblowing Nation: The History of National Security Disclosures and the Cult of State Secrecy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020): 276. Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984): 187. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 91. Gregory F. Treverton, *Covert Action: The Limits of Intervention in the Postwar World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987): 187.



ent” (Introduction, “Media Theory”) when it was breached, but 2. the Senate supplying nonlethal and then lethal aid legally—the arms scheduled to arrive just as U.S. government contractor Eugene Hasenfus was shot down while airdropping arms and ammunition over Nicaragua.<sup>20</sup>

The White House was able to ride out the ebb and flow of the level of secrecy, even after the scandal exploded in October 1986: in eight decades of covert warfare, “Iran-Contra” was the only one to produce a Presidential scandal. The Reagan Administration took significant risks to cover up the El Mozote massacre and slander journalists 1982, but also persuaded the Senate to fund the Contras based on exaggerated “incursions” in Honduras 1986 and 1988 even as Iran-Contra unfolded (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”). The processes that were required to maintain the covertness of the war operated on a broader “field,” constituted by the needs of the militaries, governments, and press of several involved states.

The CIA first contacted Cuban and Nicaraguan émigrés in Miami and Central America February 1980, and 800-1,200 Nicaraguan Guardsmen volunteers received training from U.S. mercenaries or “off-duty” Army Green Berets in California, Texas, and the Everglades. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* reports caused some consternation in the White House—the largest CIA covert operation in a decade, sending journalists flocking to Central America.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Even if Congress supplied aid 1985-88 and the Iranian deal was more controversial in 1986. This does raise the question of what details had to be concealed or downplayed, and for which audience. David M. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005): 189. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 2. Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 96, 167. Gregory F. Treverton, “Covert Action: From ‘Covert’ to Overt,” *Daedalus* 116:2 (Spring 1987): 95.

<sup>21</sup> Training guerrillas could be obvious to neighbors and local press, but not generate a national story without the right conditions. Cuban exiles’ training in Florida got coverage: in 1960 some “good old boys” near Homestead saw them drilling and heard Spanish-language speeches over the loudspeakers and decided to have some “fun” tossing firecrackers at them—and were met with the émigrés pouring forth, guns blazing. Only Federal intervention persuaded the county sheriff to drop charges, and CIA Director Allen Dulles had to have Stanley Karnow “spike” the story. In 1961 sheriffs and soldiers drew arms on one another at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, after locals noticed exile Tibetans training with military arms and airplanes. This case likewise required Secretary of De-

In autumn 1982 *Newsweek* revealed details of the CIA involvement in the FDN “secret army”—even with air power—leading to the first Boland Amendment that December. In 1982 the Senate concluded that 3,000 National Guardsmen had set up camp in Honduras, to fight across the border. *The Miami Herald* revealed in early 1983 that the CIA had created, funded, and armed the FDN in Honduras, and the article was reprinted in Tegucigalpa’s *El Heraldo*; the Contras brought camera crews along in their attacks into Nicaragua, with the blessing of the White House—ending with the deaths of three U.S. journalists in 1983 (Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: Borders and Reporters”). The U.S. Army’s 1984 publications noted the camps’ location along the Nicaraguan border, and also that the Contras had been constantly attacking the EPS since 1982 under mortar and artillery cover that was being openly provided by the FF.AA.<sup>22</sup>

In June 1985 the Senate approved of an initial US\$21 million in nonlethal aid after Reagan assured Congress that “we do not seek the military overthrow of the Sandinista government.” The Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office flights began in October 1985; the Enterprise set up in 1984 (Chapter 2, “Iran and the Contras”) covertly loaded the planes with lethal *matériel* to arrive at Toncontín and El Aguacate—the planes then continuing southwards to be

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fense Robert McNamara’s personal intervention after the story reached *The Colorado Springs Gazette*. Usually, however, covert-war planners could take significant advantage of the press’s presence, including in Nicaragua (see Chapter 1, “3: Discoverability,” n118). Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador’s Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000): 165. Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 155. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 345. Kombluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 20-21. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 130. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 90. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 201-02, 226, 515. James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 158. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 75-76.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985): 158. LeoGrande, “The Controversy Over Contra Aid,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 30. Steve C. Ropp, “National Security,” in James D. Rudolph, ed., with Kenneth Nolde and Mark Rosenberg, *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984): 239. U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in Honduras: A Staff Report* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983): 17.

loaded with cocaine and cannabis as “in-kind” payment for the Enterprise and NHAO shipments.<sup>23</sup>

The White House could browbeat the press and successfully conceal risky stories in 1980-82, but the two “halves” of the Iran-Contra scheme had publicly circulated in the news since 1982. Illegal continued state involvement in the Contra War and backdoor negotiations with Tehran—could have been pieced together from national newspapers as early as spring 1985. However, the stories were not pursued by editors and thus did not spread in the U.S. and international media. Academics and activists were not able to turn the *news* into a *scandal*, so the Administration was encouraged to court the risk of even more illegal and unpopular operations.<sup>24</sup>

Eventually a scandal could appear, even originating in a noncritical country with little regular press coverage and setting off the proverbial “trail of gunpowder” into the Oval Office itself. The press coverage of a scandal has certain “tipping-points,” conditioned by the fact that all covert wars had some press coverage: whether the story expanded or was buried for the historians to find (or was buried only to erupt later), it had a “shape” in the news before it “broke.” To Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, the Iran-Contra coverage came too late, the Administration

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<sup>23</sup> The U.S. Congress, more conservative than in 1981-84, had made its vote after Daniel Ortega’s April 1985 visit to Moscow to negotiate for petroleum. Half a dozen previous trips to the Soviet capital in four years had drawn no opprobrium, but it was perceived as a deliberate insult to Democrats who had gone “out on a limb” for Managua against Reagan, who himself was certain Congress would “come to its senses” once the Sandinistas approached the Soviet Bloc. “Denuncia,” *CODEH* 4:21 (October-November 1985). Robert Busby, *Reagan and the Iran-Contra Affair: The Politics of Presidential Recovery* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998): 64. Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan’s Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2014): 135, 140, 174-75, 177, 181. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 375. Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 33. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 199-200. LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in *ibid.*: 211. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard* 1998: 430-33, 502. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 26, 173.

<sup>24</sup> Individual reporters had known about the Iran arms sales since mid-1985, but the story was not pursued or spread, not “picked up” and given a sufficiently-high profile. The main group of U.S. citizens near the warzone—a source of independent stories—had been “discredited” August 1985 (below, “Debunked by Being Right”). Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 137-38. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 302-03, 306, 315, 321, 329. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 152.

having to conduct “damage control” to keep the press at bay—Lt. Col. North volunteering as the “fall guy,” the language shifts to the softening frame of mistakes or cowboys rather than conspiracy and state crimes, Reagan’s involvement scares off rather than encourages the Senate and press, and the scandal is contained and concludes with the narrative that “the System works.”<sup>25</sup>

The FDN’s drug running was exposed by Robert Parry and Brian Barger for the Associated Press summer 1985—then “spiked” by their editors as a favor to the White House, permanently barred from publication. The story was only accidentally released on the Spanish-language wire and retranslated by *The Miami Herald*. It was Parry and Barger who were forced to retire, and even accused by right-wing media of poisoning Lt. Col. North’s dog.<sup>26</sup> Several U.S. citizens had already been shot down on Nicaraguan soil before 1986, one survivor even saying they were working for the CIA (Chapter 5, “Conventional Military Deception”). The CIA’s bombing of Managua and mining of Nicaragua’s harbors was covered for months, and the discovery of a CIA-written manual instructing Contras on how to attack civilians (below, “Debunked by Being Right”) led to the second Boland Amendment May 1984—written specifically to be airtight in forbidding any intelligence agency to continue involvement in the war.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Implicitly, any further talk of state ties to traffickers or terrorists is categorized as more in the realm of “conspiracy theory” than history, softening the impact of hard-won documentation. This is due to the subject matter, not from any particular move by the press or state to obscure its actions by placing it among space lasers or Atlantis rising (Chapter 10, “Conclusion”). Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 147, 153-54.

<sup>26</sup> North had been regularly chatting up Associated Press’s Washington chief Charles J. Lewis—not giving orders like Otto Reich, just maintaining a cooperative *connection*. An unnamed journalist said “I had the Oliver North story for two years before it broke, but never ran it. Ollie was my best Washington source.” As presented in 1986-87 “Iran-Contra” threatened to oust Reagan—but a far more decisively stigmatizing story, worse than anything Nixon was suspected of doing, was “buried” successfully. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (Tucson, Ariz.: Odonian Press, [1992] 2005): 69. Gurman, “Unfit to Print,” in Mistry and Gurman, eds., *Whistleblowing Nation* 2020: 277-81. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 306, 315. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 290-91. Robert Parry, *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & “Project Truth”* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 1999). Parry and Kornbluh, “Iran-Contra’s Untold Story,” *Foreign Policy* 1988: 24-25. Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991): 174. Jack Terrell, with Ron Martz, *Disposable Patriot: Revelations of a Soldier in America’s Secret Wars* (Washington: National Press Books, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration’s Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987): 10.

Eugene Hasenfus was shot down October 5, 1986, surviving to tell the EPS forces that he was working for the CIA (though the Enterprise was under CIA Director Casey, who took every sophistry to make sure it was *not* CIA according to the stricter terms of U.S. law). Hasenfus even had a list of phone numbers for U.S. state representatives in Central America, in the Embassies and the CIA Stations. Casey had considered leaks inevitable and pre-anticipated trouble from Central America. The story of Hasenfus was not confined to the “alternative” press, nor restricted to a few journalists who could be threatened, smeared, or replaced (as with the El Mozote story). Now Contra terrorism and trafficking became potential topics of controversy, the details underlying the rhetoric of “freedom fighters.” Iran-Contra was reframed as individual incompetence, as “bad apples” and overzealous patriots: above all it was the unacknowledged, tacit *intentions* that had to be protected from publicity—“the general and largely invariant guidelines for U.S. policies.”<sup>28</sup>

But ultimately “secrecy” in Iran-Contra meant not lack of exposure of the covert actions, but immunity from prosecution for the conspirators: consequences were reduced, response delayed—in other words, a safe zone for criminal action, while remaining under the cover of “higher” state goals. The consensus among media analysts is that Watergate and the Church Committee were a *negative* example. Newspaper editors wanted to prove they were not *irresponsible* when it came to the national interest.<sup>29</sup> Reagan remained popular because few journalists

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<sup>28</sup> By now the White House was *overconfident* after the 1985-86 Senate votes—but the second Boland Amendment still remained in effect. This returns to the question of whether a story “propagates on its own,” finally uncontrollable by the highest authorities in the White House and CIA—or whether stories depend entirely on social context. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 113. Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

<sup>29</sup> There were no fantasies of “journalistic Davids slaying White House Goliaths”—with no potential “breaking point” revelations (such as the Watergate burglars operating out of the White House or Nixon asking the CIA’s Colby and Vernon Walters to help him fight FBI investigators); there were no Senate or intelligence-agency factions interested in ousting the President in 1986, as there had been in 1974. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 58. Berkowitz

would venture to reframe him as a second Nixon, lying and end-running Congress, dodging the law, and flouting the Constitution. Every scandal that failed to take root was because the Democrats did not want to target Reagan, and Mark Hertsgaard concludes that the press was only as adversarial as the opposition party allows for it to be. Without the prospect of impeachment, the high crimes became too *delicate* to pursue by the media.<sup>30</sup>

William LeoGrande concludes that opposition was restricted to the officials of the Democratic party—who already conceded that (even if half of Reagan’s wildest accusations were true) Managua was still a sworn enemy of every resident of the United States. This left little room for real pushback against the Casey Doctrine, and they even agreed to attacks against themselves in advance.<sup>31</sup> Without a consistent frame of criminal foreign policy, there was no debate about the Cold-War assumptions behind Iran-Contra: the scandal did not produce a public return to accepting official reality or the need for global intervention—but neither did it actually challenge or criticize decades of foreign policy, except for reinforcing “a pervasive cynicism” (which was more in the modes of the U.S. historical traditions labeled “isolationism” or “conspiracism” (Chapter 10, “Conclusion”)).<sup>32</sup>

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and Goodman, “The Logic of Covert Action” 1998: 40. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 6. Kornbluh, “The Iran-Contra Scandal” *World Policy Journal* 1987/8: 141-42. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 147, 153-54. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 12.

<sup>30</sup> Nixon likewise had to *become* “a crook”—that after 36 men had served in the office, in all the controversies and accusations against them none of them had become a *criminal* President. It had to become possible to even conceive of a criminal President before Nixon himself could then be reframed as one (see Introduction, “Media Theory,” n73). Michael Schudson writes that “Representative democracy is a political system built on distrust of power and the powerful,” but representatives rely on reputation and trust. And all of this did *not* happen with Reagan by 1988. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 16. Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 52. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 69, 345. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 205. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 147-48. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 96-97. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 235. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 167. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 85-86.

<sup>31</sup> LeoGrande, “The Controversy Over Contra Aid,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 44.

<sup>32</sup> In this case, Iran-Contra did not produce a longer-lasting peace movement—no counterhegemony. Conspiracy theories have been analyzed, but the isolationist legacy in the United States is under-covered and -theorized by comparison to expansionism, imperialism, hawkishness—often simply glossed as xenophobia and provincialism. Gray Cavender, Nancy C. Jurik, and Albert K. Cohen, “The Baffling Case of the Smoking Gun: The Social Ecology of

The Kerry Committee concluded in 1989 that trafficking pervaded every step of the Contra War effort and that the National Security Council sanctioned cocaine as a perfect solution to funding problems—but this alarming conclusion got little coverage, let alone the level of scandal that had erupted in 1986. Two dozen Contra leaders were known to be traffickers by their CIA handlers as early as 1981, requiring Casey to keep the Drug Enforcement Agency away from Ilopango. Lt. Col. North directly implicated himself in the trafficking, overseeing a total of US\$14 million for the FDN and ARDE from drugs. The Department of Justice and the CIA made a “memorandum of understanding” to ignore trafficking connections in Agency assets, pilots, or mercenaries, as long as they were not themselves CIA staff—receiving only modest media attention, but “would have created a political explosion if publicly known in the 1980s,” Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler note.<sup>33</sup>

The “Contra cocaine” stories were generally buried until after George H.W. Bush’s election in 1988. During the 1989 invasion of Panama, Manuel Noriega’s past—funding the Contras and regularly meeting with Bush—were still too risky to the press. Bob Woodward (famous and well-warranted) alleged in 1987 that Casey had arranged for a 1985 truck bombing against the chief of Hezbollah—that instead incinerated eighty bystanders in Beirut: commuters, people

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Political Accounts in the Iran-Contra Affair,” *Social Problems* 40:2 (May 1993): 163. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 333-34. Roger C. Peace, *A Call to Conscience: The Anti/Contra War Campaign* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012): 51.

<sup>33</sup> It was also common knowledge to foreign-affairs journalists that Air America had transported Burmese and Laotian heroin in the 1960s and 70s, and the trafficking of the Afghan *mujahedeen* in the 80s was regularly reported—though not rising and converging to the level of a “scandal.” Photographs of Bush with Noriega still became a scandal in the November 1988 election. Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989): 4-5. Goodman, “Espionage and Covert Action,” in Eisen-drath, ed., *National Insecurity* 2000: 32. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 396, 398. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 170, 290-91. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 613. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 9-10.

leaving from mosque, infants in their cribs. Even an avowed act of mass terrorism perpetrated by the mastermind of all the Iran-Contra crimes did not make any headlines.<sup>34</sup>

Taryn Butler concludes that the Iran-Contra scandal—far bigger than Watergate—was successfully moved off of the headlines by November 1988: the press could “shrug off the affair as if nothing had happened, and the memory began to fade.” Those who were sentenced did not stay imprisoned past 1992, and all the later revelations would be relegated to specialized histories. Robert Entman goes so far as to conclude that Hasenfus may as well have died that October day!<sup>35</sup> Critical historians conclude that “Iran-Contra” did not increase public knowledge of the Executive Branch’s actions, even decades later. The media’s role as an ideological apparatus obscuring or misrepresenting U.S. foreign policy remained unchanged.<sup>36</sup> Taryn Butler points out there was no critique of a radical neoconservative group who believed the public had no right to know about illegal warfare, sponsoring terrorism, and cooperating with drug traffickers.<sup>37</sup> Holly Sklar points out that both the Contra War and the Reagan Administration “survived sustained public opposition, battlefield failure, World Court condemnation and explosive scandals.”<sup>38</sup>

Whatever was revealed in the 1990s and 2000s has had less consequence than the 1992 pardon of

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph E. Persico is actually dubious of Woodward’s account, since Casey was careful to insulate the CIA’s name from any activity. Steven Emerson, *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (New York: Putnam, 1988):199. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 293-95. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 428-31, 434-36, 441-43. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 395-98, 405, 505-07.

<sup>35</sup> Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens* 1989: 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Jesse Owen Hearn-Branaman, “What the Propaganda Model Can Learn from the Sociology of Journalism,” in Joan Pedro-Carañana, Daniel Broudy, and Jeffery Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness* (London: University of Westminster Press): 25-26. Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, “Conclusion,” in *ibid.*: 285.

<sup>37</sup> Richard J. Barnett, “The Costs and Perils of Intervention,” in Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988): 218-20.

<sup>38</sup> Nixon had bombed Cambodia for over a year, wiretapped Americans, overthrown Chile, increased CIA domestic spying, and sent out goons to illegally smear Daniel Ellsberg: “Watergate” was merely Nixon walking into his own trap because the press had done nothing until 1973. Taryn Butler, “How Low Can Transparency Go? Secrecy in the Iran-Contra Affair as an Effect of Power,” M.A. thesis (Normal, Ill., Illinois State University, 2017): 57. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 303. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 389.



the few perpetrators who had been tried and sentenced—Lt. Col. North even ran for the Senate in 1994.<sup>39</sup>

The Reagan White House came in prepared to undermine specific stories and journalists in 1981. But undermining the “warrantors” of stories in Central America—journalists, clergy, interpreters, officers and officials who could take stories to the international press—required a more subtle approach. Altering the reception of stories, manipulating standards of knowledge, quibbling evidence, downgrading legal consequences, adjusting audience impact, agenda, saliency, or framing—these all provided the advantage of manipulating the media, without the risks involved in tackling a specific story or undermining specific warrantors. This was not simply Red-baiting, but reinforced and exploited the broader political and cultural context of the Cold War. This went further than state manipulation or disinformation: the Cold Warriors had a media context that let them withstand the revelations, passively *defusing* rather than requiring action to *block* news.<sup>40</sup>

The White House had power over the institutions warranting and transmitting stories, but was also keenly aware of its vulnerability to explosive stories: suppressing the stories risked the paradox of exposure. If the El Mozote cover-up had failed, the White House would have faced a double scandal of funding and endorsing the murderers *and* then threatening the press to silence

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<sup>39</sup> More exhaustive treatment of the cocaine and other underworld aspects of Iran-Contra was begun by the 1989 Kerry Committee report and the 1993 report by Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh—but its salience had ended with the 1988 election and the 1989-91 fall of the Soviet Union. Cavender, Jurik, and Cohen, “The Baffling Case of the Smoking Gun,” *Social Problems* 1993.

<sup>40</sup> Chomsky even deems all the contemporary commentary on the scandal misguided, as ignoring “the dominant intellectual culture and the values” that 1. produced the Administration’s covert war against Nicaragua before 1986, and 2. constrained public dissent on it afterwards. The apparatus of the Office of Public Diplomacy’s threats, the firing of *New York Times* reporters, the backdoor influence with *The Washington Times*, the Heritage Foundation, or Answers in Media, all needed a greater revival of Cold-War thinking to have any attraction regardless of Reagan’s alleged telegenic charisma. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 3. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xi, 298.

a true atrocity. The more tacit, implicit, or structural techniques against media coverage drew on a broad toolkit to deal with the news—tools to manipulate the analysis and transmission of true knowledge, which have already been analyzed by media theory, *Ideologiekritik*, and epistemology.

“We’re not belligerent people. We’ve always sought peace. We occupy no country, we build no walls to keep our people in, we have no armies of secret police to keep them quiet. But we must understand, and our foes will do everything they can to divide us and to undermine our will. To keep our families safe, to keep our country at peace, the enemies of democracy must know that America has the courage to stay strong.”<sup>41</sup>

—Ronald Reagan, 1983

### The Global News War

The Presidents and militaries of Honduras and the United States entered the 1982-84 era of the Contra War with a firm belief in the ability of witnesses, institutions warranting their stories, and U.S. media coverage to bring unwelcome publicity to covert wars, or damaging official narratives in overt ones. They conceptualized media coverage as a battleground (or a Bourdieu-style “field”) as much as air cover, morale, or materiel. Certain high-stigma stories such as the Río Sumpul and El Mozote massacres had to be directly tackled, by using Cohen’s layers of denial: the stories were said to have been planted, distorted, or exaggerated by the FSLN to fool journalists and Congresspersons. But the international and U.S. media itself was put into doubt, supposedly vulnerable to penetration by not just old-fashioned “salted” stories but new Central American solidarity and public-diplomacy groups such as Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) or Witness for Peace. The White House ultimately could not stop tens of thousands of U.S. citizens from flying in to see Nicaragua for themselves, and then having church-basement meetings and press talks back in the small-town Midwest.<sup>42</sup> The press was attacked *qua* its role as warrantor, to change the meaning and reception of the news, to reframe it

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<sup>41</sup> “Remarks at a California Republican Party Fundraising Dinner in Long Beach,” June 30, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-california-republican-party-fundraising-dinner-long-beach>.

<sup>42</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 211.

as carrying potentially-“discredited” stories.<sup>43</sup> Attacking the press *itself* let the White House avoid many of the complicated necessities involved in argument or denial using the press as a mere *forum*.<sup>44</sup>

Sociologists of knowledge can be divided between those holding that ideas are spread by their verity and the danger they can serve as a “smoking gun” or “defeater” of an official claim or narrative, able to overcome politicized resistance (if not in a timely manner). By contrast comes the conception that ideas are spread by social and political impetus and require warrant and rules of proof.<sup>45</sup> Regardless of *how* the stigmatizing stories were impelled, anticommunism was used to undercut not witnesses or their warrantors, but the whole journalistic structure itself.<sup>46</sup> “Epistemic injustice” was first conceived as targeting marginalized speakers: in the case of the Contra War, Salvadoran and Honduran witnesses could be undermined at second hand.<sup>47</sup> The attack on the reporting and the reception of stories goes beyond concealment or denial: instead

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<sup>43</sup> Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 257. R.G.A. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Roy Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge* (Keele: University of Keele, 1979): 13. Michael Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, 2nd ed., 2012: 18. A. Javier Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 40, 44.

<sup>44</sup> Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 28-32. William J. Talbott, review of *Knowledge in a Social World* by Alvin I. Goldman, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (January 2002): 202.

<sup>45</sup> Leon Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge: A Comparative Study in the Theory of Ideology* (New York: Lang, 1994): 89. Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992): 119. Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 279, 285.

<sup>46</sup> Amy Allen, “Power/Knowledge/Resistance: Foucault and Epistemic Injustice,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 192. Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., “Introduction,” in *ibid.*: 1. Miriam Solomon, “A More Social Epistemology,” in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 219.

<sup>47</sup> Kristie Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 33:1 (2012): 26-29. Jennifer Lackey, “Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others,” in Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 73-74.

they were aimed at reinforcing an asymmetry of knowledge, to shift the burden of proof between the most covert elements of the state against those who were overtly, publicly accountable.<sup>48</sup>

Although the decade started with a return to formal democracy and legislative and party activity, the true power in Honduras cracked down on independent political activity and intellectual freedom: as in Argentina, Gen. Alvarez Martínez death squad targeted campesino and labor unionists and organizers, students, teachers, and professors (Chapter 6). Alvarez Martínez and Suazo Córdova manipulated the country's small new civil institutions and, by attacking the media, went after public discourse itself. However, the Contra War relied on funding from a Senate that paid more attention to human rights and legality than U.S. and Honduran executives. Support for the Casey Doctrine required the maintenance of the images, narratives, and rhetoric of a war between totalitarianism and freedom: so 1. shuttering the established press and the new Congress and invading UNAH, as in 1970s Chile or Argentina, was out of the question, at the same time that 2. they offered tremendous warranting and investigative opportunities that damaged the militarist cause.

Even the commercial press was already accused of slandering the state or serving unscrupulous terrorists, but also of being a Kremlin-manipulated carrier of a sophisticated, pervasive, and insidious “smear campaign” of “disinformation” against Honduras's state and its people, a term from the Russian *dezinformatsiya*, cleverly planted in anti-U.S. periodicals around the world to be picked up and distributed by an unsuspecting media. The press agencies were accused of being unable to perceive the stories' true origin and nature, unable to recognize that they were being fed to them by foreign powers. Undercutting the entire epistemology of the me-

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<sup>48</sup> Robert K. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 45. Stehr and Meja, “Introduction: The Development of the Sociology of Knowledge and Science,” in *ibid.*: 19.

dia landscape allowed a broader attack than simply insinuating that a specific NPR or *New York Times* reporter was carrying water for the FMLN.

During 1981-84 Honduras's pro-military media explicitly imported authors and concepts from the U.S. New Right, which had made Reagan a contender in 1976 and then President four years later. One key element was the attack on independent journalism: Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss's thriller *The Spike* (1980) was premised on the neoconservative idea that the KGB had penetrated all major U.S. news outlets to destroy America through left-wing media biases, including the 1970s' revelations in the Pentagon Papers and Sen. Frank Church's Committee, and the firing of the CIA's paramilitary agents under CIA Director R. Adm. Stansfield Turner.<sup>49</sup> The novel depicts the Kremlin as deceiving the very senses of the U.S. media, having more control over the public discourse than newspaper and TV editors and the White House combined.<sup>50</sup> *The Spike* remained a marginal fantasia (if measured in terms of U.S. book sales), but was taken up by Honduran officers and right-wing media during Alvarez Martínez's crackdown on the other news outlets. *El Heraldito* columnist Pedro Rodrigo praised it as a nonfiction warning for every lover of democracy.<sup>51</sup> *El Heraldito*'s Rafael Bardales cited the novel in his assertion that only media owned by Sun Myung Moon, such as *The Washington Times*, carried any truth on Central American events against the "campaign of misinformation."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1985): 183, 217.

<sup>50</sup> One could even argue that the New Right used Reagan's election to launch a third Red Scare. Cynthia Amson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 59. John Berger, "Review: Through the Screen," review of *The Spike* by Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss, *The Threepenny Review* 8 (Winter 1982): 10-11. Michael T. Klare, "The Interventionist Impulse: U.S. Military Doctrine for Low-Intensity Warfare," in Klare and Kornbluh, eds., *Low-Intensity Warfare* 1988: 69. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 215-16.

<sup>51</sup> Pedro Rodrigo, "Un best-seller, *El Pincho* revela la trama de infiltración soviética en Occidente: La subversión de Moscú alcanza los Estados Unidos," *El Heraldito*, Tegucigalpa, June 25, 1983.

<sup>52</sup> Rafael Bardales, "Malintencionada campaña contra Honduras," *El Heraldito*, Tegucigalpa, July 27, 1982.

*La Prensa*'s Roberto Williams drew U.S. journalists as Soviet dupes and collaborators, kissing the hand of their boss at "Manipulated Pre\$\$," itself controlled by a Russian claw. His cartoons showed U.S. journalists as able to hunt down Richard Nixon and the CIA in the 1970s, but "are *incapable* of investigating their editor\$." "Money is honey," the caricatures of U.S. journalists declared in English.<sup>53</sup> As late as 1988 cartoonist Ramón Villeda Bermúdez drew a slobbering female reporter stabbing Honduras with a pen labeled with *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Miami Herald*, and CBS and NBC firing bullets from their video camera. "With this freedom of press we will win a prize if we destroy Honduras," she says.<sup>54</sup>

In 1982 Suazo Córdova declared that he would complain before the UN General Assembly that Honduras was being mistreated by the media of three continents, fooled or paid by Moscow, that both the Honduran and the U.S. presses were flooded with KGB money, in order to attack Honduran self-defense against guerrillas stationed in its neighbors.<sup>55</sup> Officials and newspaper editors insisted that reports of FF.AA.-backed Contra attacks against Nicaragua<sup>56</sup> were merely a Soviet disinformation campaign. Gen. Alvarez Martínez's former underling, G-2 head Col. Leonidas Torres Arias feared being purged by the zealous new Commander-in-Chief, fleeing north and implicating his superior in the drug trafficking and murders for hire that the *narco*-colonel himself had overseen.<sup>57</sup> Roberto Williams depicted Col. Torres Arias hiding in "kom-

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<sup>53</sup> Roberto Williams, "Alguno\$ periodista\$ gringo\$," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, July 23, 1982.

<sup>54</sup> Ramón Villeda Bermúdez, "Los hijos de Pu ... litzer," *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 20, 1988. Villeda Bermúdez was a scion of the Liberal Party, son of the 1957-63 President Ramón Villeda Morales, deposed by Oswaldo López Arellano in a bloody coup.

<sup>55</sup> "Ante campaña difamatoria Suazo Córdova considera viajar a Asamblea de la ONU," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 2, 1982.

<sup>56</sup> "Encubierta en una campaña de desinformación contra Honduras: Gobierno advierte peligro de una agresión comunista," *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, July 20, 1982. "Con su campaña del desinformación: Nicaragua busca justificar a agresión armada de gran magnitud: Cancillería," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, July 24, 1982. Jorge Talavera Sosa, "Desinformación," *La Tribuna*, Aug. 10, 1982.

<sup>57</sup> Former Army Chief of Staff Gen. José Bueso Rosa was arrested in Miami Nov. 21, 1985, over an assassination attempt against Suazo Córdova funded by a \$10 million cocaine deal, with Gen. Paul F. Gorman and Lt. Gen. Robert L. Schweitzer testifying on his behalf and Elliott Abrams and Lt. Col. North trying to persuade the FBI and Department of Justice to give him a lenient sentence since he "had been a friend of the United States and had helped

munist Mékzico.”<sup>58</sup> Honduran officialdom declared that totalitarianism had infiltrated all major U.S. newspapers and TV stations.<sup>59</sup>

Honduran officials and state-friendly journalists habitually accused the Soviets of being behind the newspapers’ reportage on capital flight, difficulty obtaining foreign investments,<sup>60</sup> and stories of trafficking orphans or their organs.<sup>61</sup> These stories were displayed as proofs—not of troubles inside Honduras, but of a world-spanning Red plot directed against the small country, with the goal of turning bad news into a means of complete national destruction for defending itself against the FSLN. In 1984 Irma Acosta de Fortín, the coordinator for international cooperation, called *El Tiempo*’s reporting on embezzlement a sign of a “negative campaign not just in the United States but also in Europe.” She concluded that the media around the world was fed

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the U.S. military” arming the Contras. North was particularly nervous that Bueso Rosa would change his guilty plea once he found out he was *not* going to a minimum-security facility for a few months: “he will break his longstanding silence about the Nic. Resistance and other sensitive operations.” Ultimately the Honduran officer remained in jail. “The Contras, Cocaine, and Covert Operations,” Electronic Briefing Book 2, National Security Archive, George Washington University, 1996, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB2/index.html>. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 304-05. Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988: 223-24. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008): 42. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 15, 60-62.

<sup>58</sup> Even the U.S. press Col. Torres Arias as having “dealt in guns for Salvadoran leftist guerrillas and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua”—technically correct, just not after 1981! After he partnered with Manuel Noriega for FMLN arms 1980-81, he easily switched to drugs. Unsurprisingly, the colonel was also close to the Somozas before 1979. “Torres Arias utilizado en la campaña de desinformación orquestrada por marxistas,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 3, 1982. Roberto Williams, cartoon, *La Prensa*, Sept. 3, 1982. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 65, 178. Philip E. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base* (Washington: Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action Task Force, 1982): 22.

<sup>59</sup> “Mentis a la desinformación,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, 15, 1982.

<sup>60</sup> Manuel Trejo, “Marcha de la Pazy la Democracia,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 12, 1982. Raúl Barnica, “La desinformación también es de adentro,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Oct. 25, 1982.

<sup>61</sup> Then USAID spin-master Todd Leventhal later became head of the U.S. State Department’s “Counter Misinformation Team.” “Simples ‘rumores’ lo del tráfico con órganos de infantes adoptados,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 3, 1987. “Para vender sus órganos el extranjero: Imposible tráfico de niños con problemas físicos: JNBS,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 9, 1987. David Samper, “Cannibalizing Kids: Rumor and Resistance in Latin America,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 39:1 (January-April 2002): 6-8. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Theft of Life: The Globalization of Organ Stealing Rumours,” *Anthropology Today* 12:3 (June 1996): 5, 8. Schoen and Lamb, “Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications” 2012: 67, 96-97.

lies by “centers of information” led by leftist Hondurans in order to increase the difficulty of Tegucigalpa obtaining aid: “to publish this news against Honduras is treason to the fatherland.”<sup>62</sup>

It could be argued that the use of red-baiting for even common street crime<sup>63</sup> or school-construction scandals in provincial towns<sup>64</sup> reinforced the favored narrative, of an omnipresent menace—that the state had the power to make contradictory and even ridiculous assertions to justify repression, yet they would be recorded and circulated by the press. But it could *also* be argued that the effect of blaming literally every conceivable occurrence—from Tegucigalpa to the remotest *aldea*—on a single undetectable Russian conspiracy was to drain public credulity in the state, starting Salomón’s loss of fear in even the Gen. Alvarez Martínez years—assertion by force, at the expense of building consensus. “Hegemony” is not something achieved through simple repetition by state officials and hirelings: repetition can become overuse, sparking skepticism as well as subduing press and legislature.

The new White House not only had to deny each new story threatening its Latin American policy, but also to invert it into proof that the press were “useful idiots” for hostile powers. Any requests for proof were reframed as further evidence that Kremlin-planted doubts were infiltrating the media.<sup>65</sup> The reports of government slaughter of an entire village in FSLN-held territory were dubbed as an obvious Red trick. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John A. Bushnell called Amnesty International and the Salvadoran Catholic Church dupes of a “well-orchestrated effort” by a “worldwide communist network,” because they had found that the Salvadoran death

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<sup>62</sup> “Fomentada por hondureños, denuncia Irma Acosta de Fortín: Hay una campaña contra nuestros políticos, militares y gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, Feb. 23, 1984.

<sup>63</sup> “Nuevo comandante de la FUSEP: Estamos empeñados en una lucha a fondo contra los intentos desestabilizadores,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 2, 1982.

<sup>64</sup> “‘Existe una campaña financiada por la antipatria,’ aclara ministra Rodas,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 20, 1983.

<sup>65</sup> Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 87, 89, 92.



squads had government ties.<sup>66</sup> White House press liaison Linas Kojelis insisted that there always was a spate of *Washington Post* and *New York Times* articles on state violence and demands for land reform in El Salvador before the country's annual human-rights certification—stories he interpreted as “very clearly an attempt to influence the vote” by Managua and Moscow, via the willing U.S. media.<sup>67</sup>

In January 1982 *The New York Times* noted that U.S. military trainers in El Salvador witnessed torture classes and did nothing; March 3, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Affairs Néstor Sánchez said the article was part of a “sophisticated disinformation campaign” and the violence was not from government forces but “extremes of the left and the right.”<sup>68</sup> The White House's efforts to reform Central America's conventional forces—and make them depart from the headlines—also were why it placed particular emphasis on the new Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt (1982-83) as cleaning up the murderous Guatemalan Army, Reagan famously complaining he had gotten a “bum rap” from the press despite being faced by brutal Cuban terrorists.<sup>69</sup> In October 1982 the Embassy called reports of massacres of unarmed civilians “a concerted disinformation campaign waged in the United States against the Guatemalan government

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<sup>66</sup> Arnson, *Crossroads* 1993: 60.

<sup>67</sup> Kojelis, Reich, Hinckley, and Parry, “Public Diplomacy,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 158.

<sup>68</sup> Reagan's economic advisor Jude Wanniski even compared D'Aubuisson's critics to Sen. Joe McCarthy. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 289.

<sup>69</sup> Reagan praised Gen. Ríos Montt for ending Gen. Fernando Romeo Lucas García's (1978-82) butchery, blaming his predecessor for any Maya genocides against barely-armed laborers organizing for land rights. This came not even a year after Vernon Walters chided Lucas García's critics for not appreciating how the government was defending “peace and liberty” and Guatemala's “constitutional institutions.” The White House and the State Department made apologies for *each* new regime 1982, 1983, and 1984. Reagan, “Remarks in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Following a Meeting with President Jose Efraín Ríos Montt of Guatemala,” Dec. 4, 1982, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-san-pedro-sula-honduras-following-meeting-president-jose-efrain-rios-montt>. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 98. Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 31. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 60. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 152-55. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 74-75, 110-11. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 60, 141, 159. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 106. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 49.

by groups supporting the communist insurgency in Guatemala; this has enlisted the support of conscientious human rights groups and Church organizations,” including Oxfam and Amnesty International. These supposed seekers of truth had been tricked into making themselves Soviet conduits, perfidiously blaming the Army and Civil Self-Defense Patrols for the guerrillas’ atrocities and preventing the U.S. Congress from authorizing arms and equipment to help the Army protect its own people. But eventually human-rights reports in that country could no longer be denied, and of course once Brig. Gen. Óscar Humberto Mejía Víctores (1983-86) overthrew *him*, his atrocities were suddenly acknowledged and the newest regime was hailed by the Administration as another victory for human rights.<sup>70</sup>

The work of attacking institutions that could warrant dangerous stories—press, churches, human-rights organizations—was done overtly and backstage by Otto Reich’s White House Office of Public Diplomacy and third-party think tanks such as Accuracy in Media, the Heritage Foundation, or Freedom House.<sup>71</sup> The media treated Nicaragua more negatively than any other government on the continent—certainly worse than Chad or Chile—precisely *because* the press was relentlessly attacked as having a romantic “love affair” with the Sandinistas.<sup>72</sup> But Cohen-

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<sup>70</sup> Amb. Frederic L. Chapin drew on U.S. narratives insisting the Civil Patrols were like “the American frontier, with armed citizens defending themselves”: while they were accused of the state forces’ massacres, the Guatemalan and Salvadoran guerrillas were ordered to draw down after 1982-83 in order to reduce their casualties of conscripted campesinos and forcibly impressed villagers. (See above, n69.) Kate Doyle, “The Final Battle: Ríos Montt’s Counterinsurgency Campaign,” Electronic Briefing Book 425, National Security Archive, George Washington University, May 9, 2013, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB425>. Kate Doyle and Carlos Osorio, “U.S. Policy in Guatemala, 1966-1996,” Electronic Briefing Book 11, National Security Archive, George Washington University, 1995, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB11/docs>. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 156. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 106.

<sup>71</sup> Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984): 104, 119. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 28, 169-70, 226. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: x. Robert Parry, “The Victory of ‘Perception Management,’” *Consortium News*, Dec. 28, 2014, <https://consortiumnews.com/2014/12/28/the-victory-of-perception-management>.

<sup>72</sup> Michael Ledeen even complained “that the mass media believe Qaddafi more readily than the U.S. government”—a patriot would simply not think of *speaking* to Libyans in the first place. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 114-15, 121, 137, 140, 142, 165. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 160. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 201.

style denial was required against stories of large-scale murder—they could indicate the *size* of the concealed potential story: the El Mozote Massacre by the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion, CIA agents in the Tegucigalpa Embassy reviewing weekly murder lists, Eugene Hasenfus announcing he was working for the CIA in Barry Seal’s own airplane.

Starting in 1983 Reagan personally launched a new rhetorical offensive against the Soviet Union and all its supposed offenses around the globe—proactive, rather than defensively denying specific incidents. Here anticommunism unifies the two approaches, especially the assumption of a pro-socialist sympathy or influence in the media. Both approaches also had epistemic hazards of their own: a denied incident could be “blown” and conformed as true instead, while wild claims against the Nicaraguan threat could spur doubt. The 1983-86 campaign was highly assertive, aimed at mobilizing the public behind the controverted Central American policy, or at least divert the debate to the level of the guerrillas’ perfidy. But the campaign could tacitly undermine stories according to content or origin, rather than requiring explicit acts of prior restraint or *post-facto* denial.

The campaign was not strictly an offensive against supposed “hostile” states such as Angola or Nicaragua: now inspired by Casey’s invocation of the 1776 Revolutionary War rather than Jeane Kirkpatrick’s interpretation of bloc-based *Realpolitik*, it sought a large-scale reframing of U.S. interventionism as serving democracy and freedom, using a narrative of fighting dictatorship of the Left and Right alike.<sup>73</sup> Casey mounted the CIA’s most aggressive public-

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<sup>73</sup> By Reagan’s second term the Administration was taking credit for a global democratic revolution—against the governments of Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Nicaragua, or Poland, but also the movements for democracy and human rights in Chile, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan—that is, against the same dictatorships long backed by the Cold Warriors. By 1986 the Administration had dropped the Kirkpatrick Doctrine for a “democratic revolution” sweeping the globe. This approach was promoted by the “pragmatist” U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz as much as the hardline CIA Director William Casey, and had its precedents in Carter applying human-rights criteria to the Kremlin as well as to U.S.-aligned dictatorships—a neatly Gramscian hegemony. Like the Administration’s treatment of the revolving door of generals in Guatemala City (see above, n69), the hypocrisy was driven by a belief in the morality of foreign policy—whichever figure they supported at the moment was always

relations strategy in history, to “sell” the desirability of covert action in Nicaragua, inviting top experts.<sup>74</sup> If it could not shift the polls, it could at least fight for hegemony in the press and the Senate. Even if few in the public, press, or Capitol Hill would be *convinced*, the Reagan Administration was still able to set the terms of debate before it happened.

William LeoGrande describes how the campaign was not aimed at convincing opposition in Congress or the press but to blunt it, to force Senators and editors to take sides. The accusations against Managua were so extreme that several national newspapers took the unusual step of follow-up investigative reporting. “The demonization of Nicaragua became so extreme that it caricatured itself. Few people who followed the issue closely took the charges literally ... But even though the exaggerated rhetoric was discounted, it had an effect more subtle than belief or disbelief. It skewed the terms of debate, shifting the ground from the question of the effectiveness and propriety of the contra war to the issue of Sandinista government’s character,” forcing the Democrats to concede Managua’s evils and thus lose the argument before it had even started: “If the Sandinistas were as bad as Reagan said—or even half as bad—then certainly the United States needed to do something about them.”<sup>75</sup> So if Miskito MISURA leader Steadman Fagoth said that 10,000 Miskito had been beheaded or buried alive, the U.S. media “will assume that he

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interpreted as supporting democratic and reform, even if it meant a complete reversal from the previous week! See Chapter 7, “López Reyes: Interregnum,” n126. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (1992) 2000: 54. Joseph Andrew Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War: A ‘Neat Idea’ and the Reagan Doctrine,” M.A. thesis (Tufts University, Medford and Somerville, Mass., 2016): 29-30. Morris H. Morley and Chris McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle Over U.S. Policy Toward Chile* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 117. Chester Pach, “The Reagan Doctrine: Principle, Pragmatism, and Policy,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (March 2006): 78. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 518. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 557. Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, “Reagan and the Evil Empire,” in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War: The Rhetoric of Hearts and Minds* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018): 455. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 360-61.

<sup>74</sup> David S. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2018): 57, 67-68.

<sup>75</sup> Chomsky, ed. James Peck, *The Chomsky Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987): 357. LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 214, 222.

is exaggerating, perhaps even wildly exaggerating, but they will not consider the possibility that what he is saying is totally untrue, that the Sandinistas have not summarily executed even one Miskito—not a thousand, not a hundred, not one,” William Schaap noted.<sup>76</sup> Flooding the media space with “atrocious stories” let the actual atrocities of the Contras or Salvadoran forces 1. easier to quantitatively lose and 2. in qualitative terms, just one more disquieting news item from Central America. The party line that foreigners were behind all unrest in Nicaragua and El Salvador was never challenged for any *evidence*.<sup>77</sup>

In March 1983 Reagan called the Soviet Union “the focus of evil in the modern world” and the Cold War “the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.” With the October 1983 invasion he called Grenada “a military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy,” part of a “Red Triangle” threatening the Panama Canal alongside Nicaragua and Cuba. “It was a Soviet-Cuban colony, being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy. We got there just in time.”<sup>78</sup> The same month he bragged to the Heritage Foundation that “democratic revolution” was “writing the last sad pages of a bizarre chapter in human history known as communism.” In 1984 Reagan said Nicaragua was a “totalitarian dungeon” under “a Communist reign of terror” and building up to “export their terror to every other country in the

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<sup>76</sup> ABC’s chyrons scrolled “Nicaragua: Kill with Attack Dogs” in 1984 for a story anonymously sourced from the Administration, the network afterwards admitting that they made no verification. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 35, 42. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 312. Paul Ramshaw and Tom Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial: The New York War Crimes Tribunal on Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1987): 91.

<sup>77</sup> Journalists relied on the 8-page White Paper on FMLN arms, none bothering to examine the nineteen supporting documents; this ended only with a new narrative, that of the second “Vietnam,” took over. Haig himself cared little about El Salvador or the White Paper, except as a way to target Cuba, and was irritated at the press attention to Central America. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 109-10, 113.

<sup>78</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, FL,” Mar. 8, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-convention-national-association-evangelicals-orlando-fl>. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada,” Oct. 27, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-events-lebanon-and-grenada>. Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War” 2016: 26-28. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 353. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 287.

region” while the FMLN was trying to “shoot their way into power and establish totalitarian rule” in El Salvador.<sup>79</sup>

Reagan’s second term continued to press the narrative of the rest of the world as threatening the United States and its citizens out of irrational hostility and outside agitators. January 1985 Casey described the decade as one of “freedom fighters resisting communist regimes.”<sup>80</sup> February 6, 1985, Reagan told Congress “We cannot play innocents abroad in a world that’s not innocent. Nor can we be passive when freedom is under siege”: “the moral equal of our Founding Fathers,” Simón Bolívar, and the French Resistance were “risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—against Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth,” the *true* “global revolutionaries.”<sup>81</sup> He even insisted the Contras were the *true* Sandinistas:

the real counterrevolutionaries are the Sandinista commandantes [*sic*], who betrayed the hopes of the Nicaraguan revolution and sold out their country to the Soviet empire. The commandantes even betrayed the memory of the Nicaraguan rebel leader Sandino, whose legacy they falsely claim. For the real Sandino, because he was a genuine nationalist, was opposed to communism. In fact, Sandino broke with the Salvadoran Communist leader, Farbundo Marti [*sic*], over this very issue<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America,” May 9, 1984, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-united-states-policy-central-america>. Reagan, “Remarks to an Outreach Working Group on United States Policy in Central America,” July 18, 1984, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-outreach-working-group-united-states-policy-central-america>.

<sup>80</sup> Casey believed if Congress could not understand what was at stake in Nicaragua, Reagan should go over its head directly to the people, describing the Contras as “the Latino equivalent of those ragged heroes at Valley Forge. The contras were today’s resistance fighters, like the French, the Dutch, the Belgians in World War II.” This was entirely genuine, not the deception of a hidden puppet master of world events. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 431.

<sup>81</sup> Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” Feb. 6, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-joint-session-congress-state-union-february-1985>. Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Dinner of the Conservative Political Action Conference,” Mar. 1, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-dinner-conservative-political-action-conference>. Reagan, “Message to the Congress on Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace,” Mar. 14, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/message-congress-freedom-regional-security-and-global-peace>.

<sup>82</sup> As early as 1981 Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York) claimed that “the Sandinistas, in the best Leninist fashion, had betrayed their revolution, a revolution that outsiders, not the least being the United States, had helped them to win.” Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” June 8, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/radio-address-nation-united-states-assistance-nicaraguan-democratic-resistance>. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” June 24, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-united-states-assistance-nicaraguan-democratic-resistance>. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 275.

May 1985 Reagan declared that “I am a Jew ... I am an Afghan, and I am a prisoner of the Gulag. I am a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off the coast of Vietnam. I am a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban, and a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua. I, too, am a potential victim of totalitarianism.”<sup>83</sup>

The White House could not build much consensus for overthrowing Managua or returning to before 1979: these plans simply did not reflect any reality in Nicaragua itself. *Support* for Contra policy remained in the low-20s range, and two-to-one against, throughout the decade.<sup>84</sup> Reagan never could make a *defense, per se*, of death squads and drug traffickers and priest-murderers. At the same time he made exceptional efforts to defend the war in which the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries were necessary partners, having to legitimize it as often as possible because of the level of domestic opposition.<sup>85</sup> The Salvadoran atrocities were committed by the military of a fledgling democracy and the Contras were volunteers and freedom fighters named the *Democratic Forces* or the *Resistance*. Here framing pushed into Cohen’s full interpretive denial: emphasizing the *names* of the perpetrators was much more congenial to the White House than risking a fight over their *deeds*. The role of hegemony is apparent in the *terms* of Reagan’s rhetoric. In order to justify and maintain the covert war against Nicaragua, U.S. and Honduran politicians and editorialists associated with the White House worked to pour all the world’s imaginable evils onto the Nicaraguan state 1984-86.

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<sup>83</sup> Reagan, “Remarks at a Mississippi Republican Party Fundraising Dinner in Jackson,” June 20, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-mississippi-republican-party-fundraising-dinner-jackson>. Reagan, “Remarks at a Joint German-American Military Ceremony at Bitburg Air Base in the Federal Republic of Germany,” May 5, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-joint-german-american-military-ceremony-bitburg-air-base-federal-republic>.

<sup>84</sup> At the same time the overall level of engaged public *knowledge* remained low—by 1988 only 54% knew that Washington had been covertly backing rebels trying to overthrow Nicaragua, and fewer could identify its location. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 7. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 93. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 69. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 362.

<sup>85</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 133. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 382.

Kirkpatrick claimed there were 250,000 Nicaraguans in FSLN concentration camps, mostly Miskito,<sup>86</sup> and Reagan insisted 1984 “there has been an attempt to wipe out an entire culture, the Miskito Indians, thousands of whom have been slaughtered or herded into detention camps”<sup>87</sup>—at the same time that he was praising Gen. Ríos Montt as he oversaw an unprecedented Mayan genocide in Guatemala. In January 1982 Al Haig knowingly misrepresented a 1978 *Le Figaro* photograph of the Red Cross burning the corpses of those killed by the National Guard in western Nicaragua as contemporary Miskito victims of EPS genocide.<sup>88</sup> Private groups (that is, covertly connected to the New Right) went even further, claiming the EPS burned churches, kidnapped children to Cuba, and murdered the elderly to make soap from them.<sup>89</sup> As early as 1984 these accusations against the Sandinistas became a litany,<sup>90</sup> repeated over and over from Reagan and his officials: genocide of the Miskito, war against their own people, driving out all Nicaragua’s Jews in a pogrom, deliberately flooding the United States with drugs and refugees (Chapter 8).

In 1986 the State and Defense Departments still insisted that “in the American continent, there is no regime more barbaric and bloody, no regime that violates human rights in a manner more constant and permanent, than the Sandinista regime” and the neoconservatives called the

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<sup>86</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 12. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 103.

<sup>87</sup> Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America,” May 9, 1984.

<sup>88</sup> Because of the target—“Communist” Nicaragua—Haig could lie and the effect of the lie would survive its exposure and retraction. Chomsky calls this his “narrative,” but the process at work is far more tacit—reliant on implicit factors (Introduction, “Media Theory”). Thousands of Miskito were forcibly relocated by the *ladino*-dominated EPS in January 1982 from the Río Coco on the border, with MISURA on both sides of the river, eventually drawing Sioux activist Russell Means to Mosquitia. Managua admitted it was a grave error and Steadman Fagoth fled to Honduras after his *somocista* service was revealed. Diskin, “The Manipulation of Indigenous Struggles,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 103. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 513, 569. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 103.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 45.

<sup>90</sup> Such lists of atrocity allegations eventually build up to the point where they become numbing, monotonous litanies of horror—almost with no perpetrator, no *history*, just a force of nature or an object lesson in humanity’s brutal nature. Lists of Contra or Salvadoran atrocities can also be counteracted by inverse lists, the White House using its own “witnesses” to cynically turn eyewitness truth into just another contender in a symmetrical he-said-she-said media spectacle.



Sandinistas the “Pol Pot left,” damning any “moral equivalence” between the regimes armed by the United States versus those armed by the Soviet Union. This provoked *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* into pointing out that Nicaragua indeed lacked the mass slaughter, torture, and terror of its Central American neighbors.<sup>91</sup>

It can be argued that, despite the downing of Hasenfus threatening to implicate the White House in direct contravention of the law and in intimate involvement of brutal cocaine traffickers, 1985-88 was marked by a chain of budgetary *successes* for the Reagan Administration. But that is not to say that the White House successfully fought and conquered a hegemony—however limited—in a prolonged campaign against adverse stories, where press and Senate agreed to give it free rein over northern Central America. Instead, the U.S. and Honduran states made several deliberate moves, whether to undermine stories before they could expand into scandals, or to make claims against Managua that attracted vocal disbelief as well as constantly bombarding the reputation of the besieged Sandinista state. Each accusation against the supposed globe-spanning Russian plot presented risks and opportunities that were not merely rhetorical but backed by material factors—violation of the Boland Amendments, knowledge of political massacre and FDN cocaine cash. The importance of any fight for hegemony lies not in whether the White House and FF.AA. successfully won it, but in identifying which issues they believed were important enough to risk the struggle.

“to portray Nicaragua as a victim in the current situation is a complete, Orwellian inversion of what is actually happening in Central America”<sup>92</sup>

—UN Amb. Jeane Kirkpatrick, 1984

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<sup>91</sup> However, this pushback *would* still be important in preparing the ground for the eruption of “Iran-Contra” in 1986. Chomsky insists that this pushback was only a temporary exception to the usual Cold-War hegemony. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 101. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 64. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 302.

<sup>92</sup> Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 239. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 169.

## The Reagan Doctrine: Consequences

By 1983 the Contra War—entirely based out of Honduras—had combined arms, cash, and techniques from Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Israel, the United States, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>93</sup> The ex-Guardsmen’s consolidation into the Contras and their attacks against Nicaragua had been an international affair even 1979-80, promoted and protected by the older Salvadoran and Guatemalan death squads.<sup>94</sup> 1982 saw Argentina’s defeat by the British over the nearby Falkland Islands, followed shortly by Gen. Ariel Sharon’s recall over the Sabra and Shatila Massacre in Israel’s war with Lebanon, leaving the CIA and Pentagon as the Contras’ sole supplier and funder.<sup>95</sup> The Administration anticipated a full cutoff after the first Boland Amendment, already seeking the “third-country” funding and arms that would become “the Enterprise” by 1984, and then “Iran-Contra” in 1986.<sup>96</sup>

In material terms the 1981-83 period allowed a tremendous building boom for the FF.AA. and the Contras by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: the equivalent to US\$170 million of tank traps, barracks, El Aguacate base with its logistics and command posts, a dozen upgraded runways, roads between the bases, and the *Centro Regional de Entrenamiento Militar* (CREM)

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<sup>93</sup> After its 1982 invasion of Lebanon Israel had so many Soviet and Chinese arms they were literally giving them away, shipping \$10 million worth to the Contras as “Tipped Kettle”—though one crate unfortunately arrived with “CIA Warehouse, San Antonio” stamped on it. Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988: 123. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 522.

<sup>94</sup> Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 93. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 72. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 62. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 85-88. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 46, 87.

<sup>95</sup> Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988): 117. Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994): 241. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 95-98. Ropp, “National Security,” in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 235.

<sup>96</sup> The “Safari Club” of disaffected CIA agents and U.S. officials, French, Egyptian, Saudi, and Iranian intelligence agencies also provided the pattern for both halves of Casey’s “Iran-Contra” operation—plausibly-deniable covert wars in Africa independently funded by the remaining monarchs of the Middle East. Butler, “How Low Can Transparency Go?” 2017: 41-46, 64. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 12-15. Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 347. Armin Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* (Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 61-62, 202. Anne Laurent, ed., *On a Short Fuse: Militarization in Central America* (Washington: Caribbean Basin Information Project, 1985). Persico, *Casey* 1990: 362. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 521-22.

at Puerto Castilla—which trained over 2,000 Salvadoran officers 1983-85. The school had been set up in a third country to get around Congress’s cap on the number of U.S. advisors in El Salvador itself and to disguise how much money was going to Salvadoran forces. U.S. infantry participating in joint exercises regularly left behind both heavy and small arms.<sup>97</sup> The 1980-83 case for the Contras as an interdiction force was made entirely within Honduras and its boundaries, covering the air, land, and sea routes between Nicaragua and El Salvador. Dewey Clarridge announced “My plan was simple: 1) Take the war to Nicaragua and 2) Start killing Cubans.” No Nicaraguan or Cuban gunrunning planes or motherships were found, no fighters captured (despite the FMLN indeed having been more dependent on Cuban sources than it had let on in the 1980s).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> The Government Accounting Office took notice of the Pentagon spending in 1983, concluding the construction of bases, airstrips, and facilities and leaving behind materiel and equipment during the joint exercise Ahuas Tara “Big Pine” II was unconstitutionally- and illegally-unauthorized spending. Ahuas Tara II (August 1983-February 1984) saw 2,000 U.S. soldiers and 2,000 Marines simulate naval interdiction, airlifts, aerial bombardment, amphibious landings, and counterinsurgency against the EPS for 6 months—the longest “joint exercise” in U.S. history. This was repeated January-April 1985 with Ahuas Tara III, and grew to 6,000 for “Universal Trek” April and May 1985. 50,000 U.S. forces, mostly sailors, simulated an attack on Nicaragua in 1987. Some argue that the relocation to Honduras saved the White House’s policy: there were no Boland Amendments for El Salvador painting the Administration into a corner until it broke the law to continue its policy, as there were for Nicaragua. Buenos Aires sent over 100 trainers to El Salvador—likewise getting around any Senatorial ban, but also independent of all U.S. involvement in Central America. “Política militar estadounidense hacia Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 23 (April 1986). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 119. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America* 1997: 88. Leyda Barbieri, *Honduran Elections and Democracy, Withered by Washington: A Report on Past and Present Elections in Honduras, and an Evaluation of the Last Five Years of Constitutional Rule* (Washington: Washington Office on Latin America, 1986): 18. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 126. Matías Funes, *Los deliberantes: El poder militar en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1995): 328. Joy Hackel and Daniel Siegel, eds., *In Contempt of Congress: The Reagan Record on Central America: A Citizen’s Guide* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 115. Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 27. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 140-41, 145, 150-51. Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993): 298. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard* 1998: 396. Stanley A. Nuccio, *What’s Wrong, Who’s Right in Central America?: A Citizen’s Guide* (New York: Facts on File, 1986): 55-56. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 514. Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994): 88-89, 278.

<sup>98</sup> Even Raymond Bonner, who exposed the El Mozote massacre, believed at first that there would be Nicaraguans and Cubans fighting with the FMLN—but none were ever found. See Chapter 4, “Conventional Military Deception: El Salvador,” n37. Aranson, *Crossroads* 1993: 275-76. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 116. International Court of Justice, *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America): Affidavit of Edgar Chamorro* 1985: 1. Eldon Kenworthy, “Selling the Policy,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 170-71. John Lamperti, *What are We Afraid of?: An Assessment of the “Communist Threat” in Central America* (Boston, South End Press, 1988): 61-65. Andrea Oñate-Madrazo, *Insurgent Di-*

Gen. Alvarez Martínez boasted in January 1983 that he and the Contras would be in Managua by his next birthday (*i.e.*, December 12, 1983); likewise Casey promised “liberated zones” by the end of 1983.<sup>99</sup> But the Contras’ inability to leave Honduras meant failure was always inevitable (without a full U.S. ground invasion, perhaps)—and most in the Administration shared such an evaluation, except for the hardliners operating the Contra War itself.<sup>100</sup> In May 1983 Casey and Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders again predicted the Contras had a good chance of overthrowing Managua by the end of the year—undermining everything the White House had told Congress and the public.<sup>101</sup> While there were some true believers in reversing the Nicaraguan Revolution, such as Alvarez Martínez and the Contras’ Col. Ricardo Lau and “Comandante Suicida” Pedro Pablo Ortiz Centeno, the leadership of the Contras and the FF.AA. were far more interested in prolonging the lucrative cash and trafficking that the war permitted than in winning any strategic or tactical conflict, much like El Salvador’s senior officers.<sup>102</sup> In September 1983 the FDN swept into Ocotal and Somoto, but fled the EPS once it mobilized. On

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*plomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992*, Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2016). Persico, *Casey* 1990: 335. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 118. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 509, 526. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 151.

<sup>99</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 117. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 3. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 155. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 105. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 337. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 520, 525.

<sup>100</sup> One hypothesis was that Central America (and, really the rest of the Casey Doctrine) was given over to hardliners in the CIA, Pentagon, and State Department while Reagan could focus on more Soviet-centered diplomacy or Solidarity in Poland, allowing a semi-independent foreign-policy group to require him to “put up” his reputation to bail them out when a policy he favored went horribly awry. The most hardline sided with Buenos Aires over London in 1982, ultimately ending in the removal of both Secretary of State Haig and UN Amb. Kirkpatrick. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 303. Flynn, “The United States at War in Central America,” in Burbach and Flynn, eds., *The Politics of Intervention* 1984: 118. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 153. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 64-65, 88-90. Willard C. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 337-38, 341. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 144. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 253-55.

<sup>101</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 320.

<sup>102</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994. William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1996).

October 18 300 Contras devastated Pantasma, killing seven out of 20 Militia defenders and massacring forty civilians—and after a few days were thrown back across the border.<sup>103</sup>

Debate over intent and motive within the Reagan Administration is here secondary to the ways in which secrecy was maintained and stories denied within Honduras. Reagan was tied down by having publicly lied that the war was not to topple the FSLN, but also by the Contras' inability to hold land, let alone reach Managua. Explicit justification of the war took second place to the measures required to continue it by any means, including the maintenance of secrecy over what the CIA and then the National Security Council were doing. Between the two Boland Amendments the White House did shift its public rationale in 1983 and 1984.<sup>104</sup> Now the pretext for the growing army was to force Managua toward some hypothetical negotiation process with the Contras, participate in the Contadora process, and hold an election—and then punished it for cooperating every time. The White House constantly undermined Contadora, instructing envoy Harry W. Shlaudeman and Lt. Gen. Colin Powell to secretly pressure the other four Central American governments not to sign when Managua accepted the proposal in June 1984.<sup>105</sup> The White House also condemned Nicaragua's 1984 election, on the grounds of opposition candidate Arturo Cruz, Sr.'s withdrawal—which the CIA had covertly ordered him to do, against his will. Candidates from the Conservative and Liberal Parties complained about offers of bribes to with-

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<sup>103</sup> Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 33. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 151.

<sup>104</sup> The sequence of events in Nicaragua almost recapitulates the backing of Holden Roberto's (avowedly left-wing) FNLA in 1975. At first the stated rationale was "interdicting arms" from Cuba and the Soviet Union headed for the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola. When this arms flow proved disappointing and arming the FNLA brought in Cuban troops, the rationale switched to "pressuring" the regime in Luanda to negotiating with the other guerrillas (all while knowing the FNLA could never overthrow the MPLA). Gerald Ford's Administration was unable to convince Congress to continue support under this new rationale, and the 1976 Clark Amendment forbade all aid until repealed 1985, allowing Reagan and Casey to fund the pro-Beijing UNITA. Ultimately the Angolan Civil War can be described as a failure of the "new Cold War," dragging on until UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi's 2002 assassination. The Nixon White House had likewise falsified its aerial bombardment as a way "to compel the North Vietnamese to return to negotiations." Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 263-82. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 230. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders* 2001: 280-83. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 440-55. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 160.

<sup>105</sup> Longley, "An Obsession," in Coleman and Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World* 2017: 228. Oñate-Madrazo, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016: 264. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 386.

draw. The election that the Administration had demanded was now reframed and “looped” as proof that Nicaragua was not democratic, since the “non-democratic” party had won!<sup>106</sup> The Administration’s goal was not consistent foreign policy, nor even to produce the conditions that would most rationally bring about the FSLN’s deposition from power, but rhetoric strictly aimed at the U.S. public.

Goffman conceptualized “looping” to explain use of a target’s self-defense as key justification for retaliation.<sup>107</sup> Managua was subjected to aggressive and rather open looping, even after Hasenfus’s shootdown, until the FSLN’s 1990 electoral loss. Chomsky has interpreted it as simply a consequence of the White House’s ill-concealed motive, to topple the Sandinistas even at risk of impeachment. It certainly could be used to continue a narrative of FSLN “rejectionism” or put Managua into enough peril to further increase its reliance on Moscow.<sup>108</sup> But that interpretation risks mistaking outcome for intent, of downplaying the other choices the Reagan Administration—or Washington in general—could have made towards Central America. Instead the Nicaraguan state was being punished for its *compliance*—a step further than Goffman’s original description.

1983 saw active Administration efforts to “clean up” the FDN, *à la* the training and “conventionalization” of the Salvadoran Army: as almost happened in El Mozote, this approach backfired and drew more attention, and eventually a full Congressional cutoff. CIA “unilaterally-controlled Latin assets” launching from Honduras bombed Managua International and almost

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<sup>106</sup> Casey, Kirkpatrick, Constantine Menges, Clarridge, and Lt. Col. North all moved to undermine Secretary of State Schultz’s proposed Contra–Nicaraguan peace treaty as a showcase before the November 1984 U.S. election; instead, the hardliners announced the Election-Day “discovery” of Soviet MiG-29s *en route* to the Sandinista Air Force (retracted after the election was over). Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 25-26. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 12. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 129. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 413. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 539. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 167.

<sup>107</sup> Ann Branaman, “Interaction and Hierarchy in Everyday Life: Goffman and Beyond,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 111-12.

<sup>108</sup> That is, contemporary observers. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 54. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 33.

killed Senators Hart (D-Colorado) and Cohen (R-Maine)—there to visit Nicaragua on Casey’s own encouragement. Aerial bombardment, mining Nicaragua’s ports and igniting fuel tanks at Puerto Sandino, Corinto, and San Juan del Sur were all part of Dewey Clarridge’s coordinated push to make the Contras look like a real—and independent—political-military force.<sup>109</sup> Instead these capers by CIA assets disguised as Contras backfired (and were hardly defensible as “arms interdiction” any more).

In January 1984 Reagan still believed that Contra military victory and Nicaraguan regime change were still possible, stepping up the mining and bombing—ending plausible deniability and Congressional support, enraging Sen. Barry Goldwater. Even assuming the Cold-War mentality was hegemonic on Capitol Hill, opposition to the Contra War was sharp once exposed *because* it had been concealed: the 1983-84 outrage over the Administration’s deceit over direct CIA involvement in the bombings was a preview of the 1986-87 reaction to Hasenfus.<sup>110</sup> Instead the Contras were at a low ebb spring 1984, stuck in their Honduras basecamps, their \$24 million from 1983 all spent, another Boland Amendment on its way, and only 6 or 10 months left without U.S. funding.<sup>111</sup>

The second Boland Amendment was passed May 25, 1984, largely to *protect* the CIA (and Administration) from Contra failure and exposure, but the White House circumvented the

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<sup>109</sup> A similar sabotage had been planned against Cuba 1960-64, but John F. Kennedy refused to let the CIA be involved directly because of lack of deniability and damage to Western European vessels. The FDN even staged divers practicing minelaying at Puerto Lempira for NBC, to provide media cover for the CIA’s attack on the harbors; but few were *fooled* by the “Contras” sudden acquisition of high-speed attack boats, mines, mortars, frogmen, and planes and helicopters launching bombs and rockets against Nicaragua’s cities. Most writers agree that Casey had opposed Clarridge’s proposal—and thus the latter had not informed his DCI, in hope of bringing about a breakthrough that would justify the act after the fact: indeed Larry Hancock concludes it was a sign of desperation at the Contras’ ineffectiveness and the Sandinistas’ resilience. Instead it cost the support of Congress—Sen. Goldwater included—and initiated the International Court of Justice case of *Nicaragua v. United States of America* at the Hague. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 28. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 162. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 158-59. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 348. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 112. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 365, 371-72. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 523, 533-34. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 388-89.

<sup>110</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 7.

<sup>111</sup> Persico, *Casey* 1990: 398. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 538.

law and substituted formal CIA management with the National Security Council and “third-country” sources of cash and ammunition such as Taiwan, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>112</sup> Ex-Sandinista Edén Pastora’s 3,000-strong *Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática* in northern Costa Rica—the only anti-Sandinista group with anti-Somoza credentials—imploded, the remaining Contras were left without the CIA’s arms or aerial resupply, and “Enterprise” flights began going from Ilopango near San Salvador to Lt. Col. North’s El Murciélago airstrip in northwestern Costa Rica—and then flying on to Colombia or Venezuela to pick up “in-kind” payment: cocaine.<sup>113</sup>

Between 1984 and 1986 the White House mounted a publicity campaign accusing the Nicaraguan government of such atrocities that even the U.S. press voiced skepticism of what it was reporting and made rebuttals. Reagan described the map of Central America turning red one by one—ending with Mexico—and the threat of EPS T-54 tanks rolling up the Pan-American highway from Honduras to Texas.<sup>114</sup> The White House organized counter-*testimonio* speaking

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<sup>112</sup> Amson, *Crossroads* 1993: 176, 178-9. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 194-5. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard* 1998: 330-4, 339-40, 343-46.

<sup>113</sup> Active alienation of Costa Rican soil for the FDN’s El Murciélago was much more controversial in San José than any passive acquiescence to ARDE: the new 6,500-foot airstrip was even visible to pilots making their approach to San José Santamaría Airport. The new Costa Rican President Óscar Arias sent police to shut down the runway when he took office May 1986, and Amb. Tambs had to beg him to cancel his televised exposé. Richard Boudreaux, “Contra Backer Hull: An American ‘Don’ Falls in Costa Rica,” *The Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1989. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 25, 41, 98, 172-73, 182-86, 241. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 162. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994: 397-98. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 535, 552, 563-64. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 166.

<sup>114</sup> Reagan noted that “El Salvador is nearer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts. Nicaragua is just as close to Miami, San Antonio, San Diego, and Tucson as those cities are to Washington” and insisted the EPS was creating a “sanctuary for terrorists and subversives just two days’ driving time from Harlingen, Texas,” though he joked the Dallas Cowboys’ Roger Staubach would give them the heave-ho. This reflected the scare tactics of 1952-53, of Soviet bombers flying out of Guatemala City, Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) saying Central America was “only 960 miles, or a few hours’ bomber time, from the refiner[ie]s, the chemical plants, and the homes of my own Second District.” Allen Dulles had insisted Jacobo Arbenz could “roll down and seize the Panama Canal.” He called Nicaragua “a Soviet military beachhead inside our defense perimeters, about 500 miles from Mexico,” and that El Salvador had almost followed the same fate before U.S. military aid arrived (fortunately avoiding the proverbial “second Vietnam” that would demand intervention). “[I]f the Members of Congress hide their heads in the sand and pretend the strategic threat in Nicaragua will go away, they are courting disaster, and history will hold them accountable. If we don’t want to see the map of Central America covered in a sea of red, eventually lapping at our own borders, we must act now.” Ronald Reagan, “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Members of the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco,” Mar. 4, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks->



tours in the United States of self-described victims of Sandinista anti-Miskito, -Catholic, and -Jewish persecution.<sup>115</sup> Ultimately, the Administration was able to achieve one important goal: to evade a wholesale reframing of the Contra War as *state-sponsored terrorism*. But the requirements of “taking the case” for the FDN and against Managua to the public surrendered the whole practice of “plausible deniability” that Presidents had carefully cultivated for a quarter century.<sup>116</sup> The Reagan White House had to tackle the impossible task of building a consensus or re-building a pre-Vietnam foreign-policy hegemony, one which only its most dedicated Cold Warriors believed in.<sup>117</sup>

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[and-question-and-answer-session-members-commonwealth-club-california-san](#). Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Central America,” Apr. 27, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-joint-session-congress-central-america>. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America,” May 9, 1984, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-united-states-policy-central-america>. Reagan, “Remarks at a White House Meeting for Supporters of United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” Mar. 3, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-white-house-meeting-supporters-united-states-assistance-nicaraguan>. Reagan, “Remarks to Jewish Leaders During a White House Briefing on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” Mar. 5, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-jewish-leaders-during-white-house-briefing-united-states-assistance>. Reagan, “Remarks at a White House Reception for Private Sector Supporters of United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” Mar. 21, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-white-house-reception-private-sector-supporters-united-states-assistance>. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on the Situation in Nicaragua,” Mar. 16, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-situation-nicaragua>. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” June 24, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-united-states-assistance-nicaraguan-democratic-resistance>. Reagan, “Remarks at a Campaign Fundraiser for William Clements in Dallas, Texas,” July 23, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-campaign-fundraiser-william-clements-dallas-texas>. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on Aid to the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” Feb. 2, 1988, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-aid-nicaraguan-democratic-resistance-february-1988>. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 86-88. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 102. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 89-90. Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 190.

<sup>115</sup> However extravagant the claims, they were still dutifully transmitted by the doubtful press: opponents of White House policy still acceded to its terminology, narrative, or paradigm: *the Sandinista buildup is unacceptable, Communist expansionism must be stopped, if even half of the allegations are true*—only the means, not the ends, were disputed. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 46-47. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 77-78. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 61. Kombluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 205. William LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 214, 222-23. LeoGrande, “The Controversy Over Contra Aid, 1981-90: A Historical Narrative,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 44. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 101-04, 120. Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 190. Reagan, “Remarks at a Conference on Religious Liberty,” Apr. 16, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-conference-religious-liberty>. Reagan, “Remarks at the International Convention of B’nai B’rith,” Sept. 6, 1984, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-international-convention-bnai-brith>.

<sup>116</sup> Hertzgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 310.

<sup>117</sup> Chomsky, ed. Peck, *The Chomsky Reader* 1987: 132.

It was at Casey's encouragement—and with Casey's wording—that Reagan hailed the Contras as underdog “freedom fighters” and “the moral equal of our Founding Fathers” and the French Resistance in March 1985 alongside the Afghan mujahedeen, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>118</sup> Next year Reagan told Congress this was his “global revolution” on every continent<sup>119</sup> (against the one promised by Soviet-backed crypto-Stalinist totalitarians). These “open-secret” covert theaters of the “Reagan Doctrine” were not nearly as controversial as Central America, Operation Cyclone for Afghanistan receiving more money from the Senate than requested by the White House.<sup>120</sup> There was little lobbying against the more-distant countries, but a definite public and Congressional opposition to supporting the Salvadoran and Contra forces.<sup>121</sup> The White House and Casey had certain epistemic needs, to try to render palatable a war it knew to be unpopular—but went ahead without them anyway.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> The rhetoric was that the Contras were proven fighters “all in” for the long haul, but also needing indefinite funding. Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Dinner of the Conservative Political Action Conference,” Mar. 1, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-dinner-conservative-political-action-conference>.

<sup>119</sup> Reagan, “Message to the Congress on Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace,” Mar. 14, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/message-congress-freedom-regional-security-and-global-peace>.

<sup>120</sup> In part this was due to the distancing and buffering effects of the inevitable required “third-party” partners—from China, Pakistan, and South Africa down to Zaire or Honduras. By contrast to the controversies wreathing El Salvador and Nicaragua, Afghan assistance was four times higher than the Executive Branch requested and Mohammad Najibullah's 1992 flight was greeted with a bipartisan triumphalism, and then promptly followed by the country dropping off the radar for a decade. The Casey Doctrine made its first public appearance at the 1985 “Democratic International” or “Jamboree in Jamba,” Angola, featuring Afghan, Angolan, Laotian, and Nicaraguan guerrillas fighting against supposed Soviet-bloc governments. (See Chapter 1, “5: Criminality and Extremism,” n169.) Jack A. Blum, “Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem,” in Johan Lidberg and Denis Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security—Secrecy, Surveillance and Journalism* (London: Anthem, 2018): 87. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 155, 184-86. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 10, 37. Robert Parry, *America's Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 2012): 201-04. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 490-92. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 69-77, 128.

<sup>121</sup> The Administration pushed harder for the more-controversial Central American counterrevolutionaries, perceiving the FSLN and FMLN as menaces to the Panama Canal and the Mexican border (see above, n114), rather than simple remote domino-theory scenarios. Reagan declared the Isthmus was strategically important, the United States's “fourth border,” versus those analysts dismissing the region because U.S. investments in coffee and cotton were relatively low. “Remarks on Central America and El Salvador at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers,” Mar. 10, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-central-america-and-el-salvador-annual-meeting-national-association>.

<sup>122</sup> Perhaps reflecting how no covert action has ever followed Kermit Roosevelt, Jr.'s *sine qua non* that the target public's country support it (Chapter 1, “3: The Specter of Failure,” n93).

The anti-Sandinista campaign was not restricted just to rhetoric: the Cold Warriors sought to frame Managua for the state crimes of running drugs and guns—while doing so themselves and exposing the White House to enormous risk—potential explosive scandals with far more lethal fallout than the shutdown of one “load kicker” illegally over Nicaraguan soil. Lt. Col. Oliver North had Barry Seal fly cocaine into Nicaragua 1984, to get pictures of a Nicaraguan loading it into a plane bound for Florida, and distributed the photographs in order to buttress the White House’s claim that the Sandinistas were responsible for the cocaine coming in to the United States. In 1986 North also attempted to plant Soviet-Bloc arms in El Salvador to provide evidence of ongoing FSLN–FMLN gunrunning.<sup>123</sup>

Making a case for Nicaraguan intervention required making *positive* claims about the Sandinistas, rather than concealing incidents by U.S.-backed forces or the Contras’ inability to depart permanently from Honduras into Nicaragua. This required frames and narratives such as El Salvador being a fledgling democracy, the Contras a voluntary rebellion by freedom fighters, and Honduras defending its territory against unprovoked strikes from unexplainable Sandinista mad dogs akin to Libya’s Col. Muammar Qaddafi or Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Joel Brinkley, “Drug Agency Rebuts Reagan Charge,” *The New York Times*, Mar. 19, 1986. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 222. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 72-73. Parry and Kornbluh, “Iran-Contra’s Untold Story,” *Foreign Policy* 72 (Autumn 1988): 12. Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 223. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 553. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 275.

<sup>124</sup> The efforts to “turn” these leaders from one perceived superpower alignment (Moscow) to another (Washington) tripped up CIA luminaries like Ed Wilson and Ted Shackley, and then immediately led to illicit efforts to regain Tehran’s favor. Rather than a solid “bloc,” Tripoli and Tehran had immediate and long-term needs to be on Washington’s good side. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 60-61, 69, 137. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 100. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 96-99, 102-06. Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop* 2007: 95. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 357-58. Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider’s View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004): 27-28. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 12-16, 41, 176-86. Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative* 2012: 144-45. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 404, 447, 450-51, 466-67, 484, 505-06, 520. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 399, 402, 404. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 186, 413, 428, 496.

These frames formed a vocabulary to justify violence against a small state that was reinterpreted as not just an enemy but a threat.<sup>125</sup>

The original Administration stance from 1980-82, that Central America was where the “Soviets” would be rolled back, was reinforced by Casey against the Administration’s more “dovish” officials such as Haig’s successor Secretary of State George Schultz and even Reagan himself as he opened a new round of détente with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev. Analyses of institutional competition emphasize Casey’s desire to strengthen the CIA’s operations capability and to defeat the CIA Department of Intelligence or the State Department for Reagan’s ear—who had even insisted Langley was too soft-line.<sup>126</sup> Others argue the goal was secrecy itself—to preserve the covertness of overseas action, its unaccountability to the public and impunity from Congressional oversight or formal declarations of war (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare”; Chapter 1). Mark Hertsgaard concluded that the counterrevolution against Nicaragua was more about restoring the lack of unwanted press exposure that had prevailed before the Vietnam War, rather than even “avenging” the fall of Saigon.<sup>127</sup>

Only in February 1985 did Reagan publicly state that his objective was to remove the government in Managua: his promises of pursuing a political solution had been blindsided by Contadora’s progress, backed by Mexico City and Caracas.<sup>128</sup> After 1985 the stated motives and goals for the Honduran apparatus of secrecy—for supplying the Contras with a measure of con-

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<sup>125</sup> Under the counterinsurgency interpretation, states such as Honduras, Laos, or Afghanistan, with U.S.-friendly governments and no large-scale Marxist-Leninist guerilla movements, far from Europe or strategic sealanes, were precisely where Moscow would make its undetectable and unprovable moves. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 52.

<sup>126</sup> Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 53. Anne Cahn, *Killing Detente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 4, 305-10. Persico, *Casey* 1990: xii.

<sup>127</sup> Even the liberal Senators grew quiet over Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1965 conventional invasion of the Dominican Republic: this would decisively come to an end with the 1965-68 phase of the Vietnam War. Reagan preferred short, airpower-intensive attacks such as Grenada 1983 and Libya 1986, or George H.W. Bush’s strictly-limited “liberations” of Panama 1989 and Kuwait 1991. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 132-33.

<sup>128</sup> Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 96, 105.

cealment—shifted: the FF.AA. revealed that the Contras had been in Tegucigalpa and the border departments all along. Rather than perennially playing the EPS’s victim, the Honduran state semi-annually asserted the Contras had successfully moved to Nicaragua and were no longer in Honduras. The existing deception was reoriented to concealing their failure to break free from Honduran soil and U.S. funding, rather than attempting to justify a restarting of support for them—which was the point of Reagan’s campaign.

During the 1984-86 period between Boland II and Hasenfus the White House ended up tensed between two opposing and countervailing needs: 1. to condemn the Sandinista government, in order to attempt to shift U.S. public opinion and regain Congressional funding of the Contras, and 2. to keep a sufficient level of secrecy around the knowing evasion of the second Boland Amendment through the “Enterprise” under Casey—as a member of the National Security Council, rather than as CIA head, a blatant dissimulation.<sup>129</sup> The White House was in this predicament because no positive public justification or defense *could* be made for the actions of the Contras in Nicaragua, nor the Salvadoran forces.<sup>130</sup> Even Reagan’s 1984-86 accusation campaign against the Sandinistas still relied on *preventing* news about Contras’ strategically aggressive and tactically brutal attacks on Nicaraguan civilians—launched from Honduran territory with U.S.-supplied arms, intelligence, and aircraft.

Reagan certainly was able to instrumentalize the press, and did so through his acting experience, and aggressive pressure from think tanks depicting the press as biased against him and

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<sup>129</sup> Lt. Col. North’s Office to Combat Terrorism was secret from many members of the NSC itself! Persico notes that the Intelligence Oversight Board’s logic separating Casey on the NSC from Casey as CIA Director “preposterous reasoning. By the same logic, the National Park Service or the National Endowment for the Arts could have run the contra operation too.” Persico, *Casey* 1990: 433. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 242.

<sup>130</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 255-56. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 184-85. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 95, 167. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 632.

favoring the supposed adversaries of the United States. But W. Lance Bennett emphasizes that Reagan was *stuck*, not able to back down in Central America since that would reframe him as a *loser*, to obviate all the media's self-induced "Teflon": he *had* to pursue the Contra War to avoid publicly ending it. Reagan's supposed charisma itself depended on nobody breaking ranks to question its hegemony.<sup>131</sup> Chomsky argues that while the public is excluded from all meaningful foreign-policy decision-making, it was able to provide some limit to use of force once the press reported it—in other words forcing U.S. state terror underground, since the Contras or Salvadoran Army could not be directly justified even by Reagan.<sup>132</sup> W. Lance Bennett was even sharper than Chomsky: the press allowed itself to be the White House punching-bag while Reagan showed no understanding of the issues and proposed policies that were loathed by the public, but which the press downplayed so as not to draw accusations of attacking the Administration. Since the White House could see the press trapping itself, it launched the attacks came anyway, further disciplining the "watchdogs."<sup>133</sup> Despite the previous outrages, Reagan also managed to obtain nonlethal Contra funding in 1985, and military aid in spring 1986 and 1988 that kept the FDN from collapsing even after Hasenfus.

There was no single approach to "secrecy" or "covertness" in the Contra War before the 1985 FF.AA. revelation of the Contras: journalists were taken on ride-alongs in Honduran territory, sea ports and airports were bombed for show, and the White House imitated a full Presidential press campaign, with prepared briefings and speaking tours. At the same time, Congress was

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<sup>131</sup> Even against Col. Qaddafi's Libya the rationales for the April 1986 bombing were revealed as falsified that autumn, showing that the U.S. media was secretly being treated as "enemy territory." Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 118-19. Busby, *Reagan and the Iran-Contra Affair* 1998: 69. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 147-48. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 58.

<sup>132</sup> Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 170. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 113. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 7, 39.

<sup>133</sup> A focus on personal attacks rather than policy "created the illusion of critical reporting, without risking the introduction of much political substance or detailed analysis": by 1987-88 Reagan managed approval ratings over 50% at the same time that 70% of U.S. respondents believed he was lying to them. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 57-58.

tightening legal restrictions on backing the Contras while the Executive Branch misled itself into believing that Congress was not really *serious* about the 1984 explicit ban, heartened by the 1985-86 support in the run-up to Hasenfus's shutdown.<sup>134</sup>

The field of secrecy shifted between the 1984 Boland Amendment that banned any U.S. involvement in the Contra war and the 1986 shutdown of Eugene Hasenfus that revealed two years of the law being violated—it was not simply about hiding the Contras in Honduras, but about concealing an entire army being maintained in another country by the White House, knowingly against the law. The techniques and Cold-War rhetoric deployed by the Executive allowed Congress to maintain its self-image as lawful and peaceable—but whatever public justification was less important than the ability to continue the Casey Doctrine under sufficient secrecy. What was hidden and unsaid was changing, and, once it was brought to light, caused reinterpretation of the publicly-known facts.<sup>135</sup>

“These are children’s clothing! This is like a kindergarten! I can’t believe it! No one said that there were so many children!”<sup>136</sup>

—judicial secretary, El Mozote, 1992

### El Mozote: The Second Massacre Buried

Salvadoran President Gen. Carlos Humberto Romero was replaced in October 1979 by a civil-military junta including social democrats, academics, and non-commissioned officers—but the military remained in hardliners’ hands and the junta members were quickly replaced.<sup>137</sup> During the year 1980 over 10,000 civilians were murdered by the National Guard, Treasury Police, Maj. Roberto D’Aubuisson’s ORDEN (*Organización Democrática Nacionalista*) paramilitary,

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<sup>134</sup> LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 211, 213. Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011): 175-77.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Ackermann, review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller, *Erkenntnis* 33:1 (July 1990): 134.

<sup>136</sup> Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 142-43.

<sup>137</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State*: 1996.

and various other death squads feigning independence from the state forces. ORDEN had been murdering Jesuits since 1977, Archbishop Óscar Romero was murdered by Maj. D'Aubuisson's personal order March 1980. Salvadoran Guardsmen abducted and massacred the leadership of the civilian *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* party in November 1980 and raped and murdered four U.S. Maryknoll sisters in December, forcing a suspension of U.S. aid—until Reagan's Inauguration January 1981.

The 1980 *matanza* had made El Salvador into an issue in the U.S. news just before the election—into a location where threatening stories could emerge with full and unimpeachable “warrant.” The new Administration ordered regular Salvadoran Army units to be trained at Fort Bragg, partly to “ruralize” the violence way from San Salvador-based coverage.<sup>138</sup> The main U.S.-trained new elite unit was the Atlacatl Battalion, which promptly annihilated 700-900 residents and refugees at the neutral, Evangelical-heavy village of El Mozote, Morazán Department, on December 11-18, 1981, with U.S. bullets. *The New York Times*'s Raymond Bonner went to see for himself, crossing over from Honduras January 3, 1982, and reaching El Mozote on the 6th, as well as Alma Guillermoprieto for *The Washington Post*. Anyone who visited the village could see the charred skeletons—most buried, but still “skulls, rib cages, femurs, a spinal column” in the adobe rubble of the sacristy, or “one infant—a bullet hole in the head.” The massacre started out with a dozen eyewitnesses and photographic evidence, from the Embassy and U.S. national newspapers.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987.

<sup>139</sup> The *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* did admit it had left some corpses unburied until an outsider could see them. The Chalatenango villages involved in the Río Sumpul Massacre had been among those who had backed ERP, but armed guerrillas could not stay behind to defend them: this was *not* the case at El Mozote. Robin Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006): 87. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 59, 233. Mark Danner, “The Truth of El Mozote,” *The New Yorker*, Dec. 6, 1993, <http://markdanner.com/1993/12/06/the-truth-of-el-mozote>. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York: Vintage, 1994): 101.



The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador itself made an independent investigation under staffer Todd Greentree, though he never actually crossed the line of conflict to see the village itself, reporting to the Embassy that he was certain something significant *had* happened. Like many others on the staff, he found that his reports were being sat upon by the new Administration: Greentree's investigation was not even put down to paper where other staffers might see it. Leigh Binford concludes that Washington "officials did their best not to see, not to hear, and therefore not to know," largely in order to prevent a repeat of the 1980 outrage over the churchwomen. Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders said the Embassy had made an investigation and found nothing—turning it into a theatrical *show* of verification.<sup>140</sup> Those cables that did come out of the Embassy to Foggy Bottom used only Salvadoran military briefings as their sole source.<sup>141</sup>

Raymond Bonner's story was published the day before the White House certified the Salvador regime as making "a concrete and significant effort to comply with internationally recognized human rights," which was a legal requirement for Senate aid: the massacre repudiated Reagan's fundamental moral claim of backing democratization.<sup>142</sup> *Any* news from El Salvador was bad news, and it moved too quickly for White House rhetoric to catch up—but ultimately it neutralized the story through concealed pressure on editors. Bonner, Guillermprieto, and Greentree had all *previously* been politically "acceptable," well-warranted journalists who personally seen the bones and interviewed survivors: now they were turned into examples for any other journalist.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 78. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 117, 127. Michael Massing, "About-Face on El Salvador," *The Columbia Journalism Review* 22:4 (November-December 1983): 44.

<sup>141</sup> Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* 2006:91. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 63, 134. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 110-11.

<sup>142</sup> Officials pointed out this "timing" as circumstantial evidence of a set-up. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 60. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 188-90. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 254.

<sup>143</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 7, 69. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 254.

If they did address the massacre, anonymous officials called it a rumor, a battle between the FMLN and the Army, a massacre by the FMLN itself to blame the Army, or that Bonner was tricked by the FMLN and taken on a “Potemkin” tour. It was framed as propaganda, so any true details were just ways by the guerrillas to add verisimilitude.<sup>144</sup> The more direct avenue of attack was to accuse Bonner and Guillermprieto of being activists, foreign meddlers, and Russian proxies to weaken the West’s determination to fight. *The Wall Street Journal* called Bonner “credulous” of a clear “propaganda exercise,” hoodwinked by FMLN campaign. Guillermprieto described how the criticism of her “was not ‘No, the evidence is not there,’ it was ‘No, you are a leftist sympathizer.’ ” Since any material evidence came from territory held by the guerrillas, even her photographs were ignored.<sup>145</sup>

Accuracy in Media made Bonner a *cause célèbre* for the New Right, leading a campaign tailored to give all the appearance of a concerned, independent think tank. Reed Irvine said that Bonner was worth a division of soldiers to the “Communists.” The Embassy, White House, New Right, and Bonner’s own supervisors declared that he was too credulous toward the peasantry and therefore could easily fall for the Soviets’ usual tricks.<sup>146</sup> Ambassador Deane R. Hinton met with *The Times*’s editor Abe Rosenthal, who promptly called Bonner off the case and reassigned

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<sup>144</sup> Even more accepting interpretations relied on the conventional notion of the “fog of war,” that there *can* be little accurate news that after a battle or massacre—a heuristic that helped El Mozote be reframed as potentially unverifiable. Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* 2006: 89. Arnson, *Crossroads* 1993: 59. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 61-62, 65, 70, 74, 146-47, 294. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 105, 128, 230. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 188-90.

<sup>145</sup> Ironically one of the tangents against Raymond Bonner was that the United States “would never” back an atrocity of that level (Introduction, “Ideology and Hegemony”; Chapter 1, “0: Premises”). Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 104. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 110-39. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 188-90. Massing, “About-Face on El Salvador,” *The Columbia Journalism Review* 22:4 (November-December 1983): 44.

<sup>146</sup> AIM was central to *un*-creating knowledge: it was not just the White House’s hidden weapon against news, but an organization that goaded a Red-scare atmosphere and attacked science at the behest of big business (see Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives,” n19; and Chapter 10, “Conclusion”). Worse for the White House, Bonner was a Marine veteran and had consistently reported that the FMLN had considerable support and that the armed forces were terrorists, torturers, and murderers rather than defending a fledgling democracy. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 92-93. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 137. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 190-91.

him. It was rare for a reporter to be sacked publicly like that: the usual procedures were supposed to prevent something like that, which could attract attention. This action by the prestigious “Grey Lady” shocked the rest of the media—into submission, rather than into a scandal that would have protected the journalists themselves.<sup>147</sup>

Going on the offensive allowed the White House to force its critics to expend their effort on defending themselves from accusations that they cited FMLN “fronts.” The Administration’s concerted but covert attacks—against Bonner as the main witness and warrantor, Otto Reich’s threats to NPR—also meant a high level of risk. The level of secrecy and attention risked signaling that there might be something newsworthy, and if it “exploded” into what could be termed a “scandal,” not only would it have trained the perpetrators but also pulled out the stops to hide terrorism. Worse, it might risk shifting the debate from *means* to *ends*: by 1982 the White House had successfully limited Congressional debate on how much military aid to send (to avoid Reagan having to invade directly). The Democrats always insisted that they shared Reagan’s ends in Nicaragua and El Salvador, conceding the terms of discussion before criticizing any of the means, not challenging the broader regional counterrevolution—practically begging Reagan to Red-bait them. There was little internal challenge to the discourse that all conflict in the isthmus arose from a Soviet threat, the debate limited to whether the guerrillas were being *properly* confronted. The Senate supplied San Salvador with US\$6 billion over the decade.<sup>148</sup>

Binford found that most Salvadoran human-rights violations *were* acknowledged later on by the White House—but only in order to deny contemporary violations, to argue that the situa-

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<sup>147</sup> Rosenthal denied that he had been pressured into reassigning *anyone* under his watch, asking “Why start with Ray Bonner?” and announcing that he doubted the White House as much as the FMLN. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1988): 93. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 200. Massing, “About-Face on El Salvador” 1983: 45.

<sup>148</sup> Amson, *Crossroads* 1993: 277. Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 142. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 7, 69, 295. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 10. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 190. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 142. Parry and Kombluh, “Iran-Contra’s Untold Story,” *Foreign Policy* 1988: 6.

tion had improved and aid should be increased. Ultimately the story of El Mozote faded after 1982, until it “assumed the status of just one more (among many) ‘alleged’ army massacres in ‘violence-torn’ El Salvador”—the war reframed as a murky and confused situation marked by exaggeration, fabrication, and hearsay. As a news topic, El Salvador received little U.S. media or Congressional attention between the April 1982 election and the November 1989 massacre of six Jesuit professors, their housekeeper, and her daughter—again by the Atlacatl Battalion.<sup>149</sup> Only with its 1992 excavation did “El Mozote” become iconic; only then was the sole survivor Rufina Amaya re-interviewed.<sup>150</sup>

Binford noted that a massacre of this scale was successfully concealed and then forgotten for ten years *after* being reported in *The New York Times*.<sup>151</sup> This was not just a cover-up or Cohen’s implicative denial, but a way to dissuade investigation into any subsequent reports of atrocities. El Mozote was not the first massacre to have been unmade: the May 1980 Río Sumpul Massacre also provoked a controversy under Carter, the Embassy officially taking the FF.AA. entirely at its word and denouncing the Congresspersons for flying to the Honduran border to see for themselves as dupes of the FMLN. Amb. Jack R. Binns explicitly wrote in his memoir that simply wanting to *see* the site was a mark of political extremism (Chapter 4, “The Sumpul Mas-

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<sup>149</sup> Binford counts that El Mozote appeared only 15 times in the U.S. press 1983-89. However, Salvadorans were one of the core activists against the Central American wars. David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012). Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 4, 134. Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016.

<sup>150</sup> The Argentine Forensic Anthropology Unit explicitly arrived to prevent the manipulation of the excavation—to prevent further postmortem denial. Supervising judge Juan Matéu Llorc interfered constantly, as he had at the Río Sumpul site, ordering the work at El Mozote halted just as the team found the bones and U.S. bullets. Even afterwards he insisted the FMLN had many child soldiers. Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* 2006: 87. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 137-38. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 3-4, 74, 135, 139, 141-49, 310, 315, 327. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 9. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 176.

<sup>151</sup> Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* 2006: 95.

sacre: The U.S. Embassy”)—a sign of already having concluded that the Embassy and the reformist Honduran and Salvadoran militaries were in the wrong.<sup>152</sup>

### Debunked by Being Right: Witness for Peace

Noam Chomsky notes that some “communities of knowledge”—alternative media, academic specialists—could take themselves beyond the limits of Beltway or newsroom thinking on 1980s Central America. U.S. opposition to the Salvadoran counterrevolution produced the Solidarity and Sanctuary movements: CISPES did help the FMLN lobby against the Cold-War conceptualization of the Salvadoran Civil War, turning the war into a touchstone of opposition to Reagan’s foreign policy in the United States and Western Europe. Witness for Peace was another group, established in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua. Witness let campesinos directly bring in “counterhegemonic” stories that would tie up Reagan—testimonies of elaborate murder and illegal warfare, of attacks on Nicaraguan sovereignty that would be recognized by the Organization of American States and the United Nations. “Counterhegemony” (Introduction) is defined as when more marginalized subgroups of society are still able to use mass media to make certain actions politically unacceptable. The Reagan Administration’s claim that the Contras were “collective self-defense” against Managua’s support for the FMLN was undermined by direct testimony, leading to loss of the *Nicaragua v. United States* case at the World Court.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ironically an Embassy under Reagan did far more independent investigation than the self-described liberal Democrat appointed by Jimmy Carter Amb. Jack R. Binns—who expressed outrage that anyone would try and see for themselves instead of taking his warrant of what his FF.AA. contacts said, that they were political extremists, pathological denialists. Binns was then unceremoniously fired October 1981 for reporting on the actual plans of the FF.AA.

<sup>153</sup> A counterhegemony does not have to “take over” the terms of public discussion to have its effect—it is enough to disrupt the terms of current hegemony. Ed Griffin-Nolan even wonders what would have happened without Witnesses who were literally there. Political science and media studies generally analyze polling, letters to Congresspersons, interest-group mobilization, or street protests, but the Solidarity movement found that these were not strong or persistent enough. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 21. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 228. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 60, 120, 129-30.

It is possible to conclude that the Reagan White House *did* get what it wanted on Central America—the FMLN were kept from office in El Salvador and the FSLN out in Nicaragua 1990; the Senate gave unquestioned support to San Salvador and lethal aid to the FDN even after the 1986 exposure of “Iran-Contra” (see Chapter 2). But an equally-supportable conclusion is that the stories brought by the Solidarity and Witness movements ensured that the Administration was unable to make a case *for* the Contras, that there was always warranted news to contradict interventionist claims and narratives. These grassroots groups made “outright U.S. invasion of Nicaragua unfeasible” and *covert* warfare impossible, restricting the Administration to underground measures (such as the persecution of Raymond Bonner or the non-CIA “Enterprise”). Director William Casey personally cursed Witness’s presence.<sup>154</sup>

Nicaraguans in the Segovia mountains had been free to witness whatever atrocities and U.S. involvement that they liked: they certainly knew who was arming their attackers. Even if Managua’s complaints were reported, they could be dismissed as proof only of how far the Kremlin propaganda campaign had gotten, much like the El Mozote Massacre within the designated zone of combat. But unlike Afghanistan or Laos, Nicaragua was within range of a commercial plane ticket.<sup>155</sup> By 1986 over 100,000 U.S. citizens had visited Nicaragua—40,000 in 1985 alone—in order to see not just the changes made by the 1979 Revolution but also the brutal warfare being waged by ex-Guardsmen via the Honduran and Costa Rican frontiers, while being

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<sup>154</sup> Ed Griffin-Nolan concludes that the Pentagon held “that the people of the United States ... will not become concerned so long as the blood being shed is not their own. The national security planners have taken a moral inventory of the U.S. public and found the shelves to be all but empty”—that people really *are* as selfish and uncaring like everyone says. Witnessing let them prove that entire premise wrong, he concludes. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 210. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 18, 74, 168, 232. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 306.

<sup>155</sup> Hondurans outside of El Paraíso and Olancho remained uniformed before 1985, the FF.AA. and media instead insisting on Honduras’s victimization by Central America’s spreading revolution, especially condemning Managua’s complaints of constant Contra attacks from Honduran soil. It was Witness for Peace’s direct presence that informed the international and U.S. media that the circumstances were opposite. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 24, 89-91. Saul Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine: National Security and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988): 158. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 152.

hidden from U.S. voters. The Honduran and Salvadoran states remained hostile to such lengthy residencies, though U.S. citizens were able to make some testimonies disseminated by the U.S.-Salvadoran Solidarity movement.<sup>156</sup>

The Nicaraguan state welcomed U.S. citizens while Reagan was damning it as an “anti-American” threat to their safety. The more pluralistic Sandinistas were qualitatively different from the other target states of the Casey Doctrine (see Chapter 2)—Afghanistan’s Mohammad Najibullah, Cambodia’s Hun Sen, Ethiopia’s Haile Mariam Mengistu, or Angola’s José Eduardo dos Santos, perpetrating no equivalent acts of political or ethnic repression.<sup>157</sup> These targets of the Casey Doctrine generated no letters to the editor—and the Senate even quadrupled requests for the mujahedeen. Afghan and Cambodian rebels were clearly resisting foreign invaders and UNITA was a long-standing indigenous movement: but the Contras lacked broad support and their conscripts were led by the officers of the National Guard.<sup>158</sup>

The only significant national movement that mobilized grassroots constituent pressure on the U.S. Congress was on Central America, *making* it into a salient issue; arguably it was the only subject where pressure through the media came close to contradicting the Cold-War assump-

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<sup>156</sup> Thousands of U.S. citizens did not attempt to come to eastern Honduras to observe the Contras’ effects from the rear—even Honduran Congresspersons were kept out of the Contra zones. A planeload of churchwomen was rejected December 1983 from visiting Honduras’s “peaceful” frontier 1983—and welcomed in “totalitarian” Managua (Chapter 9, “Alvarez Martínez: Forced Disappearances”). Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 104. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 157-58.

<sup>157</sup> Alfonso Robelo and Violeta Chamorro left the broad anti-*somocista* junta after the death of Jorge Salazar Argüello, supposedly in a shootout with the revolutionary government after trying to bring officers into the Contras. But even ex-Guardsmen were not executed on any large scale. Foreign minister Miguel D’Escoto was a Los Angeles-born Maryknoll priest and culture minister Ernesto Cardenal a priest who founded a cooperative on Lake Nicaragua. Even hardline EPS officers like interior minister Tomás Borge were considerably more tolerant than Casey’s more Soviet-dependent targets. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 5-6, 88.

<sup>158</sup> Arguably there was no “Vietnam Syndrome” or liberal doves in U.S. politics: out of half a dozen wars on three continents, only Central America drew significant opposition. Assistant Secretary of State J. Edward Fox was curious at how the more elaborate and costly programs supporting the mujahedeen, UNITA, and Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea passed without comment. “Realist” and “liberal”-normative theories of international relations cannot explain why one asymmetric conflict drew U.S. activists, and not Afghanistan or Angola (see above, “The Reagan Doctrine,” n120) Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 5, 198. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 188.

tions behind the practice of covert warfare. Witness for Peace produced thousands of column-inches and hundreds of photographs for local, regional, and national newspapers in the United States.<sup>159</sup>

The White House made its own accusations of atrocities against Managua and witness testimony of its own—publications from the Heritage Fund, documentaries such as the Unification Church-funded *Nicaragua Was Our Home* (1987), tours by some Jewish and Old Catholic Nicaraguans.<sup>160</sup> But the White House appears to have dodged any direct engagement against Witness for Peace itself: to even acknowledge the thousands of U.S. citizens coming to Nicaragua would draw attention to their free ability to do so—so much for the “totalitarian dungeon” that Reagan claimed.<sup>161</sup>

4,000 visitors with Witness for Peace lived in the homes and villages of the Nicaraguans, volunteering medical and construction skills, even picking coffee and building clinics alongside their neighbors. Their task was explicitly to share the same dangers as the people of the Segovias for months or years, so that they could return to explain what they had experienced at the hands of U.S. taxpayers’ own dollars—their own experiences, and warranted by their status as middle-class, churchgoing U.S. citizens.<sup>162</sup> Many Witnesses insisted on long-term life in towns such as

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<sup>159</sup> By contrast, FMLN leaders such as Cayetano Carpio or Mayo Sibrián would not have made for such appealing characters to be represented in Middle America’s rec rooms and church gyms. Diskin, “The Manipulation of Indigenous Struggles,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 44. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 170. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 179, 199-200, 219. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 34-35. Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy*: 1993.

<sup>160</sup> That is, *not* a Catholic with any connection to the Vatican. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 92. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 276.

<sup>161</sup> The White House “flooded” journalists with atrocity-stories, so true events—babies on bayonets, a church full of children, drugs for guns—would be interpreted on the same “level” of probability (see above, “The Global News War,” n77).

<sup>162</sup> U.S. citizen Ben Linder was murdered in 1987 building a water system at El Cuá, Jinotega; Rep. Connie Mack (R-Florida) then told his mother that she was politicizing his death—“I don’t want to be tough on you, but I really feel you have asked for it.” But again the Contras could not be framed as freedom fighters standing as the last line for U.S. homes and churches against Red totalitarian aggression, instead preying on U.S. citizens. Sharon Erickson



Jalapa, Pantasma, or San José de Bocay—for months at a time, while rejecting any publicity as “human shields”—even if it was quite clear in person that the FDN would have to go through the U.S. citizens first.<sup>163</sup>

The first group arrived in April 9, 1983, thirty shocked North Carolinians exiting the bus at El Porvenir, Nueva Segovia; most arrived as families, generally middle-aged, middle-class: eight of them were pastors. Their first sight was a shack where blood coated the floor, its only inhabitant left a young mother, shaking after an ambulance took away her whole family.<sup>164</sup>

Witness for Peace saw firsthand that it was a war aimed against the poorest mountain campesinos in Nicaragua—that it was a war against children: 10-year-old girls blown up with shells or used as target practice, a 4-year-old killed running from a bomb shelter to retrieve her pet chicken, young boys forced to pull the pins of grenades tied around their fathers’ necks.<sup>165</sup> The Contras avoided the EPS and favored schools, chapels, clinics, granaries to discredit Managua, not fight a *war*. Witnesses could testify before Congress that they had seen telephone linemen, road workers, tree-planters, or teenagers picking coffee tortured, dismembered, castrated—and several of them had been their friends and housemates. The Witnesses had welcomed back old men forced to carry Contra baggage, mourned 81-year-old grandmothers who had their throats cut, clergy delivering pencils because the campesinos were in danger if they were found

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Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture, and Agency in the Central America Solidarity Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 122, 164. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 20. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 69-70, 109, 134. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 157-58, 263.

<sup>163</sup> After years in the Nicaraguan provinces Witnesses were living with families that had cousins in the Contras as well as the EPS; in Zelaya Department the Anglophone, Moravian Miskito had a different attitude towards the Revolution, which the Witnesses also publicized. One Witness was even kidnapped in Chontales Department and given a guided tour of Contra holdings, to convert *him*, the counter guerrillas hoping for a press conference from a Witness to admit that their cause had at least some popular support! Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 62, 73, 78, 110-15, 186, 194. Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul* 2004: 117.

<sup>164</sup> Others were parent-teacher association members who recounted that they had “never even heard a gun go off in my life.” Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 25-26, 92.

<sup>165</sup> Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 25, 30, 80, 197-98. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 68, 109. Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: 96-98.

with supplies given by the Nicaraguan state.<sup>166</sup> In August 1986 the Senate approved of US\$100 million for the Contras, including lethal aid (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”), leaving a bloody summer and autumn where the Witnesses were “on the run from one smoldering cooperative to the next” throughout 1987.<sup>167</sup>

While a Witness could be exposed to horrors such as having to see a young man changing to the sallow yellow color of death after a Contra raid, many Witness recounted how the regular exit visit to the U.S. Embassy in Managua was the *most* upsetting part of the trip for them. “The difference between what they thought they saw in the countryside and what they heard in the embassy was enough to drive many delegations to tears,” Ed Griffin-Nolan writes. Amb. Anthony Quainton’s staff told them about a country called “Nicaragua” that had nothing to do with anything in the real Nicaragua—and left them more determined than ever to oppose official discourse.<sup>168</sup>

By 1983 Casey found that the FDN was perceived as nothing more than soldiers of fortune—without meaning or direction, without any support in Nicaragua: after two years of combat the Contras had taken no land, avoiding the EPS and instead targeting villages, crops, storehouses, schools, and clinics. He concluded that “Somebody ought to be writing a manual that

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<sup>166</sup> To the Contras the farm cooperatives epitomized a Stalinist society set to enslave the whole countryside and particularly targeted. Witnesses treated a bus full of EPS soldiers’ mothers hit with a rocket-propelled grenade (killing eight) or witnessed grenade attacks that killed half a dozen children at a time; others were themselves kidnapped by the FDN’s Larry McDonald Task Force, named for the U.S. Congressman. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 130, 159, 201-04. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 190-92, 197-98. Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: 98, 101. Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

<sup>167</sup> By 1987 Witness reported that the people no longer determined to resist U.S. aggression but just *tired*; they felt that the heroism and spirit of a new society was gone. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 165, 180, 183, 185.

<sup>168</sup> Note that the Embassy visit was an epistemic insult: it was not that they were presented with a string of propositions that contradicted the justified beliefs they held, but that they were being lectured by the same ignorant appointees responsible for everything their Nicaraguan friends had been forced to live through. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 1991: 40, 168, 216-17.

would lay out in simple, forceful language what they were fighting for and how they should go about it,” expanding the FDN’s fight to the psychological and political theaters—and improve their public image by teaching sabotage, torture techniques that left less physical damage, and targeted assassination rather than indiscriminate massacre of villages. As with El Salvador’s ruralization and conventionalization of violence, the goal was to make the bloodshed less *public*, less alienating to Senate funders.<sup>169</sup>

Langley therefore ordered the creation of *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare* to turn the Contras into political soldiers—more presentable and self-sufficient for the news cameras. The manual’s author “John Kirkpatrick” literally arrived at La Quinta Escuela near Tegucigalpa in 1983 to the screams of the most sadistic FDN officer, “Comandante Suicida” Ortiz, as he was tortured before he was taken to the border to be executed. The manual included instructions on criminality, terrorism, murdering fleeing officials or villagers. Fearful of scandal, the FDN Directorate’s public-relations head Edgar Chamorro hired two boys to cut out the pages recommending that “shock troops” with “knives, razors, chains, clubs, bludgeons” to be put “slightly behind the innocent and gullible participants” in protests and parades to create martyrs, or to just murder the Contras’ own allies to create “martyrs.”<sup>170</sup> It was Witness for Peace which publicized a copy of the manual that a campesino found in the Segovias 1983. The fallout from the “murder manual” was so bad that some high-ranking officers at Langley believed it was a

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<sup>169</sup> Casey proudly believed that the manual would let the FDN be “persuasive in face-to-face communication” and that as long as there was *some* improvement there would not be a *controversy* from the manual. (See Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: The Pivot to Nicaragua,” n15.) Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 55. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 349. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 112. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 323.

<sup>170</sup> Working under Dewey Clarridge, “Kirkpatrick” had based the manual on the Green Berets’ texts at Ft. Bragg for South Vietnamese political operatives and damned the FDN leaders by comparison. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 55. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 251. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 418. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 519. Marcus G. Raskin and A. Carl LeVan, “The National Security State, War, and Congress,” in Raskin and LeVan, *In Democracy’s Shadow: The Secret World of National Security* (New York: Nation Books, 2005): 260. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 389.

forgery planted as a covert action *against* the CIA. Along with the naval mining and aerial bombardment by Clarridge's CIA agents, the manual contributed to the 1984 total cutoff.<sup>171</sup>

Because they were the only persons even visiting the war zone from the south, Witness for Peace became a favored source for the press—even a chokepoint. Witnesses brought the war to suburban schools, pulpits, community centers, basements and living rooms in every region of the United States.<sup>172</sup> The Witnesses' return was the biggest news in a place like Ellsworth, Maine; in Louisville or Albuquerque Witnesses were interviewed by the local press. Midlevel newspapers such as *The Burlington Hawk Eye*, Iowa, were able to carry reports from campesinos in Jalapa and Ocotul. Two New York ministers brought back a bazooka fragment stamped with "Made in USA." The ability to turn it into a local story in a dozen towns built more endurance to the campaign than simply going to the national newspapers—and harder for the Administration to counter.<sup>173</sup>

Witness for Peace took pains to maintain a self-presentation as Catholics and mainline Protestants.<sup>174</sup> Witness for Peace even worked with the Pentecostal Assemblies of God and other Evangelicals. They were able to bring explicit condemnation down on the Administration from

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<sup>171</sup> Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 120. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 399-400.

<sup>172</sup> One Witness made an appeal to the integrity of ordinary citizens: "We worked to set up this choice for journalists and their readers: 'You have to decide: do you believe Ronald Reagan or do you believe the local Baptist pastor? Because you can't believe both'"—they warranted themselves as the person across the street, in the pew. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 26, 44, 90, 92. Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul* 2004: 127. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 110. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 259, 263.

<sup>173</sup> They told their hometown neighbors that that they wished they could have brought *more* Nicaraguan pain back to them. Though they also remembered the beauty and courage and friendliness of the people; they remembered Jalapa's beauty—hibiscus, orchid, poinsettias, quiet pigs and horses, a wooden cross dating from 1920. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 71, 86-92. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 10. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 261.

<sup>174</sup> Witness took pains to avoid any seeming association with established antiwar groups, with anything hinting of the stereotype of the flag-burning perennial protesters (a case which William Kunstler successfully took to the Supreme Court in 1989), with "politicization." (A Gramscian reading might insist that they just conceded much of Reagan's terms no less than Democrats on Capitol Hill: that the Sandinistas were someone that you had to avoid "endorsing" in order to be considered objective.) Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 135, 177. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 157-58, 343-44.

the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops was even more opposed to the Contra War than Nicaragua's episcopal conference. Church affiliation kept them from being written off by the press and let them disrupt Reagan's framing of Christendom versus the puppet-masters of the Evil Empire.<sup>175</sup>

Officials called the Sanctuary movement as a Soviet smuggling front, Reagan personally complained that the Sandinistas practically controlled the U.S. press and tricked naïve visitors: mere personal experience was dismissed. The FBI compiled lists of activists and academics who traveled to El Salvador and Nicaragua (including Congresspersons and Amb. Robert E. White as potential risks), tailing them, seizing and copying their address books and research materials at Customs when they returned.<sup>176</sup> Salvadoran National Guardsmen were even free to head north and perpetrate direct threats, break-ins, and rapes against refugees and CISPES members in Los Angeles.<sup>177</sup> The Witnesses noted that the Administration's claims about the wars could only be maintained by suppressing true events and by threatening independent researchers—by making it

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<sup>175</sup> The Maryknoll Society described its members abroad as “reverse missionaries”—that it was the U.S. Christians that had something to learn. Religiosity provided both material networks and warrant for the stories: the war was also reframed as immoral rather than just illegal, that Reagan was not ill-informed but intentionally deceiving the public. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 9, 51-52, 60, 72. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 129-30. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 144.

<sup>176</sup> The FBI and CIA committed wiretapping and break-ins on the assumption that antiwar and youth dissidents had Soviet ties—and turned up nothing. Local police departments had specialized “Red squads,” whose confidential state records were smuggled to outfits such as the American Security Council or Maj. Gen. John Singlaub and Rep. Larry McDonald's (D-Georgia) private intelligence agency, the Western Goals Foundation—a World Anti-Communist League member whose computerized database of “subversives” was openly inspired by Condor. Lt. Col. North planned “Readiness Exercise” or “REX 84” to put 400,000 undocumented Central Americans into camps in case of U.S. invasion in the region—plus 12,000 U.S. citizens, such as the members of CISPES, put on lists for “custodial detention” in the event of direct U.S. invasion in Central America. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service informants recorded license plates in church parking lots during “political” services and tricked Salvadoran refugees into revealing Sanctuary addresses by saying their children would be receiving Christmas presents. The Central American war was not just seen as a campaign issue, but as threatening potential insurrection. (See also Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security,” n89.) Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 42, 97-98. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 42. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 71. Leahy, “The Harassment of Nicaraguans and Fellow Travelers,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 229. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 153-55. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 61. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 92, 182. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 357-59. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 282-83, 288-91, 298, 310-11. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 285.

<sup>177</sup> Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 307-09.

difficult for anyone going to see for themselves, to physically go to a designated “enemy” country and see what was actually being done there.<sup>178</sup>

Witness for Peace explicitly anticipated accusations of being taken on guided tours through “Potemkin villages” like those that had misled the willing Walter Duranty to praise Stalin’s Soviet Union as a country liberated from hunger and forced labor. They evaded any possible Nicaraguan state “handlers” in order to maintain the needed independence and objectivity to overcome objections of naïve “political tourism.”<sup>179</sup> They were there to oppose intervention, not to build U.S. support for the FSLN. However, journalists demanded that they “prove” their independence by condemning and blaming Managua for the war, so Witness refused to agree to such a Reaganesque standard of evidence.<sup>180</sup> Witness’s strong connection with the media could also be a weak point—that it depended on a “third party” to distribute its stories and to continually reinforce its “warrant.”

By 1985 Witness was expanding into the Mosquitia on the Atlantic coast and the Costa Rican border. A Peace Flotilla—29 members of Witness for Peace and over a dozen journalists—were captured on the Río San Juan on the Costa Rican border on August 8, 1985 by Edén Pastora’s *Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática*.<sup>181</sup> They were only a few miles away from the

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<sup>178</sup> Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 93. Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 46-48.

<sup>179</sup> They demanded no protection beyond what Nicaraguan residents had. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 47-48, 122-23. Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 107. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 92.

<sup>180</sup> Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 67, 71. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 105.

<sup>181</sup> The Witnesses protected the Nicaraguan boat crew as ARDE tried to separate them from the U.S. citizens—but also sympathized openly with the ARDE foot soldiers, who were motivated by fear of their commander, who threatened to kill them in front of the observers and journalists. Before they were returned the Witnesses even asked their captors to join hands with them and pray for peace. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 137, 142, 149, 151, 153. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 293.

newer FDN base, airstrip, and field hospital being built by U.S. rancher John Hull across the border—risking uncovering the Contra-War scandal a year early.<sup>182</sup>

An offhand remark in the State Department that the incident had probably been staged was quickly spread and the coverage quickly became outright hostile: the group was labeled as “Witless for Peace,” “Sandalistas,” and “useful idiots.” *The New York Post* ran the headline “Yanks Duped by Reds”; television commentators said the incident was a publicity ploy staged by the FSLN. In a handful of days, the media credibility that Witness for Peace had spent years building up—having to live with the stench of unrefrigerated corpses—evaporated. Hundreds of factual reports hard-won from months or years living in rural Nicaragua were nullified with just one incident.<sup>183</sup>

By the time they were released the story was over, the dozen captured journalists accompanying the Witnesses returned to find that their editors had “closed” their own case. They were stunned that none of the editors—with whom they retained full trust and confidence—wanted to hear a correction, nor even the story of the potentially-deadly ordeal of half a hundred U.S. citizens. The “story” had been told by the time they returned, by journalists who had never been to Central America. Any correction came too late—and resembled the initial accusation since they both used the same mechanisms to identify them as truthful (Introduction, “Epistemology”). Witness for Peace and Managua were now both aware that it was now all too easy for the Contras to harm U.S. citizens and then blame the EPS.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> ARDE had been dropped from sponsorship by the CIA after being caught in cocaine trafficking—but the FDN “Southern Front” that replaced Pastora was no better, Lt. Col. North turning the El Murciélagos airstrip into a drugs-for-arms hub. San José Station chief José Fernández allegedly told Pastora not to harm anyone because there was one CIA agent or asset onboard the Flotilla. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 140-41.

<sup>183</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 22. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 138, 155-56, 166, 216-17. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 92. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 294.

<sup>184</sup> Witness for Peace knew that the story of thirteen kidnapped campesinos’ tortured bodies being found in León Department during the Flotilla incident received no U.S. coverage (see Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: Borders and Reporters”). Perhaps it is fitting (or ironic) that the whole Flotilla story was buried by Japan Air Lines Flight 123,

The capture “raised the organization’s profile while simultaneously undermining its credibility”—its name dirtied, no longer a source for editorial “scoops.” Noam Chomsky notes that if just one dissident’s story is false they cannot recover, whereas the press or White House weathers daily exposures: “Conformity frees one from the burden of evidence” of detail, of witnessing and warranting. Witness for Peace was not only “discredited” as a sources or subjected to “reframing,” but “defeated” as witnesses and warrantors in epistemological terms. Witness for Peace had authenticated itself as un-radical “Middle Americans” precisely to evade any hint of irresponsible “activist” reporting, now they could be reframed as un-neutral, as *political* as the Salvadoran solidarity groups.<sup>185</sup>

This shift was not simply because the White House had framed all dissenters as Soviet dupes, any campaign by Accuracy in Media, or even because the narratives of “Morning in America” had made the editors eager to prove their loyalty.<sup>186</sup> That is to say, epistemological analysis complicates the image of a White House simply able to discredit its critics by applying sufficient amounts of Red-baiting and behind-the-scenes pressure. The removal of their epistemic warrant may have been more complete because it was false—because the “scandal” was entirely confined to rhetoric separated from actual bothersome *details*. But Reagan and Casey’s Central American counterrevolution had long worked to build up an “immune system” within the

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the largest single-plane crash in history: after even the smallest airplane crash or engineering collapse, numerous agencies converge and conduct extensive investigations so that no future flight ever suffered the same disaster—summoning meteorologists, behavioral psychologists, engineers, vascular neurologists, chemists, forensic accountants to reconstruct every second. Foreign-policy disasters have death tolls orders of magnitudes higher—but if they are even *remembered* in Washington, they are simply misused to justify a new intervention (Chapter 1, “8: After the End”). Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 137-38, 141-42, 149, 155, 157. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 1996: 294.

<sup>185</sup> Christian Smith remarks (perhaps acidly) that all their avoidance of the slightest appearance of “anti-Americanism” ended up in vain, due to a fluke. The “political” Salvadoran Solidarity movement still had some success in Congress in the second half of the decade. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 21. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 157. Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 234.

<sup>186</sup> Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 86, 91. Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul* 2004: 8-11. Smith, *Resisting Reagan* 1996: 257, 262, 295.



United States against news from Honduras and Nicaragua's frontiers. The most conspicuous "witness" of the Contra War (even if unwilling) would be Eugene Hasenfus in 1986.

### Conclusion

The Reagan Administration was determined to pursue the Central American counterrevolution, which resulted in the only sustained controversy over his foreign policy: he put his Presidency on the line for his *least* popular overall policy. Central America was the only field that required significant manipulation of the news beyond the usual secrecy of "covert warfare" (Introduction). There were some instances of direct intervention in the media—pulling Raymond Bonner, sending officials to threaten NPR, campaigns by New-Right proxies, having cocaine pilot Barry Seal stage a Sandinista trafficking scene—but these acts carried considerable risk. If Raymond Bonner had hypothetically been allowed to pursue the El Mozote Massacre, the news would have erupted beyond any control 1982; exposure of Lt. Col. Oliver North's role as a cartel liaison before 1989 would have been even worse than Hasenfus's 1986 shutdown.

Campaigns by the White House and the New Right did make the press less willing to confront a popular "Teflon President," and left the narratives of the Cold War free from critical examination (even after they led to a scandal that was impossible to hide). The revelations that came from Iran-Contra after Reagan left office were too late—delayed and watered down beyond much consequence: those few officials who received sentences were pardoned in 1992. Even the endlessly-inventive new Director of the CIA was not in full control of the press (or, perhaps, any control was temporary and contingent). The Contra War still trapped Reagan, leaving him personally exposed: he survived only thanks to the lack of a serious push to actually look for anything impeachable.

The cases in this chapter were not disputes reserved for academics, but had been made into outright *causes célèbres* for both human-rights advocates and neoconservative hawks. They got significant coverage in the contemporary media, whereas Honduras was the source of no such “headline” events. These cases are relevant to media theory or Cohen’s categories of denial (Introduction, “An Anatomy of Denial”)—but also examples of epistemology: what someone believes to be true, how other people believe, verify, or doubt secondhand accounts, how witnesses have to recruit “warrantors” to certify that a story is true and reputable, even how the verification process itself can be remade into a dishonest ruse.

This dissertation is primarily based on 40,000 news articles from Honduras from 1979 to 1993, yielding more detailed and more numerous stories for analysis compared to El Mozote and Witness for Peace (which have already been analyzed). Every aspect of Honduran society—from the FF.AA. to the Catholic Church to the medical bar association—shows the effects of the extensive apparatus set up to prevent stories that would threaten Washington’s funding or to cast doubt on witnesses that threatened the narratives of the civil-military state. Without Tegucigalpa’s campaigns against the reputation of Catholic priests, medical doctors, or human-rights organizations, the network of CIA assets, death squads, and cartels continuing the Contra War could not have kept going.

The archives of San Salvador or Estelí might have been created under the wartime conditions that 1980s Honduras lacked, but this dissertation makes analyses of public and declassified sources that can easily serve as model for the other Central American countries. Ronald Reagan faced one foreign-policy scandal—but given what has already been revealed about the history of covert wars (Introduction), every President has had several potential scandals that never took

off—and, like Iran-Contra, were larger than Nixon's Administration placing wiretaps in the headquarters of the opposing political party.

## Chapter 4

### The First Massacre Denied: Río Sumpul

#### Introduction

The Honduran military regime of 1978-81 joined the Central American counterrevolution before the arrival of any Argentinean, Israeli, or CIA representative. The Honduran Armed Forces (FF.AA.) under President Gen. Policarpo Paz García chose to make the country a regional counterrevolutionary bastion after the defeat of Anastasio Somoza's regime in Nicaragua 1979, to coordinate with the military regimes of El Salvador and Guatemala and the Contras in the three countries of Central America's "northern triangle." Honduras's main role throughout the 1980s was to provide 1. a military rearguard for the war against the Salvadoran *campesinato*, and then 2. a rearguard and a site for the camps, intelligence, and air and ground support for the attacks by the ex-National Guardsmen against state and civilians deep into Nicaragua.

Except for the 1969 war with El Salvador, Honduras had nearly no historical presence in international news until the Río Sumpul Massacre on the Salvadoran frontier May 14, 1980. Hundreds of fleeing *campesinos*, especially women and children, were murdered by Salvadoran armed forces as the FF.AA. tried to turn them back. This came not even a month after Archbishop Óscar Romero's murder at the altar in San Salvador, by a network of Central American death squads (Chapter 6) that were combining to become the first support network for the newly-christened *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense* (FDN).<sup>1</sup> The CIA had contacted Cuban and Nica-

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<sup>1</sup> In mid-1980, now-Col. Ricardo Lau's secret police-led Nicaraguans merged into the September 15 Battalion, taking over and turning the incipient *contrarrevolucionarios* into organized, ideological fighters without even in the absence of a regime left to restore, rather than mere ex-Guard bandits raiding from Honduras. In August 1981 the Nicaraguans met in Guatemala City and became the FDN, and moved to Tegucigalpa under a pact between the CIA's Dewey Clarridge, FF.AA. Col. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, and Argentinean advisor Col. Mario Davico. The FDN was always aimed at a U.S. executive and Congressional audience—not the actual anti-Somoza, anti-FSLN émigré community of Nicaraguans. Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 93. Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador's Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London:

raguan émigrés in Florida and the capitals of northern Central America in February 1980, and Guardsmen began receiving training from U.S. mercenaries or Army Green Berets in Florida, California, and Texas—as covered publicly by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.<sup>2</sup>

The course of the Sumpul story starts from campesino witnesses on the border, to regional Catholic clergy, through the Santa Rosa de Copán diocese in western Honduras, and finally to the national and international press. The scandal posed by the massacre was tackled by the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa with relative success, at least in preventing an outrage on the level of the December 2, 1980, massacre of four U.S. Churchwomen. The process anticipated the Reagan Administration’s successful “interception” of news of the December 11, 1981, El Mozote massacre in El Salvador—despite the confirmation of that atrocity by a *New York Times* reporter and an Embassy staffer (Chapter 3).

“Consensus” is generally defined as that which can provide plausible, socially-accepted explanation for events (Introduction, “Ideology and Hegemony”).<sup>3</sup> However strong it may have

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McFarland & Co., 2000): 311. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation*, Institute for Media Analysis Monograph Series 2 (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 14. Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985): 103-04, 107, 117. Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 28, 45, 52, 56. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 114-8. Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 63. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 510-12. Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991): 48-49, 55, 87. Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012): 206-13. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 77, 94-95.

<sup>2</sup> The newspapers reported 800-1,200 Nicaraguan volunteers training in the United States 1981-82, causing some consternation in the White House as *The New York Times* reported the largest CIA covert operation in a decade, sending journalists flocking to Central America (see Chapter 3, “A War on News,” n21). Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 155. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 345. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 130. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 515. James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 158.

been, the U.S. Cold-War consensus of the 1980s, or the more specific narrative of Soviet-created aggression in Central America, does not seem to have been strong enough to withstand incidents of the scale of El Mozote. The massacre had been perpetrated by the very same U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion in the Salvadoran Army that replaced pseudo-independent death squads and paramilitaries like ORDEN. Ironically the U.S. had trained the Battalion with the intent of making the counterrevolutionary violence more targeted, rural, and less covered in the press than the *Matanza* of 1980. Stories about the Río Sumpul or El Mozote Massacres had to be blocked at the *source*, rather than simply dealt with after the Senate got wind of them.

Noam Chomsky's analysis of news coverage of the Central American counterrevolution said that the U.S. consensus relied on avoiding details and evidence—and if the case being made collapsed, it was quietly abandoned.<sup>4</sup> W. Lance Bennett says that news from Central America could defeat clichéd narratives of seeking peace and strength against Red totalitarian aggression—vulnerable, depending on the story's framing, salience, and reception.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, the Reagan Administration aimed to push El Salvador out of the news altogether, and the consensus appears that the civil war stopped being such a public controversy after the April 29, 1982, election, outside of the Congressional pressure and protests from the Solidarity and Sanctuary movements.<sup>6</sup> This freed the White House to pivot towards building up positive press and Con-

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<sup>3</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 28, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 2, 19-21, 34. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 21.

<sup>5</sup> W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001): 118-19.

<sup>6</sup> David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012). W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1988): 137-38. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 52. Angela Elena Fillingim, *Tortured Logics: Crafting the U.S. Response to Human Rights Violations During the Argentinian Dirty War and the Salvadoran Civil War*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 2015). Andrea Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992*, Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2016). Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 353-54. Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 264.

gressional support for the Nicaraguan Contras instead; the Salvadoran successes perhaps even made the Administration overconfident that it could manipulate the press and the U.S. Senate.

High-saliency stories such as massacres had to be “whittled down”: but this process limited by how far the credibility of campesinos, clergy, and reporters could be visibly attacked and contended by the U.S. or Honduran state. Overt acts like having Raymond Bonner withdrawn, planting arms, or the 1984-86 campaign accusing Nicaragua of persecuting its Jews, genocide against its Miskito, drug trafficking, and even threatening the continental United States<sup>7</sup> 1. invited public doubt by journalists and activists and 2. signaled that Reagan had *not* constructed a consensus on Central America, even if the Administration had managed to keep El Salvador quiet enough and to weather Hasenfus’s shutdown to again obtain Senate aid in 1988. The war also required a regular supply of false assertions—EPS incursions, deceiving journalists into believing they were being taken through Nicaraguan territory, claimed discoveries of arms or guerrilla leaders—that also required work with the rules of evidence.

### The Triangle of Iron and the New Nicaragua

As Anastasio Somoza DeBayle’s regime bombed his own cities out of spite in 1978 and 1979, the military governments of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala met with U.S. and Argentinean representatives and agreed to place themselves against any potential regional revolutionary wave and play host to the fleeing Nicaraguan National Guard—replacing Somoza as a counterrevolutionary bulwark, against the Sandinistas and within their own countries.<sup>8</sup> By 1980

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<sup>7</sup> Chapter 3, “The Reagan Doctrine,” n114; Chapter 8, “Introduction,” n24.

<sup>8</sup> The 1976-83 Argentinean junta took particular interest in Somoza, though the Argentineans who had set up Operation Condor provided little cash and Col. Bermúdez thought little of their advice, which were based on French techniques in the Battle of Algiers and their own Dirty War against largely unarmed non-guerrillas in Buenos Aires. It was Buenos Aires’s first proxy war, helping Somoza fight the FSLN even before its first sponsored coup, the 1980 overthrow of Bolivia’s President Lidia Gueiler Tejada. Col. José Osvaldo Riveiro had helped gather the fleeing Guardsmen in Guatemala City and San Salvador, and then Honduras. Argentinean military intelligence had a sepa-

Jack Anderson described Honduras as the United States' "new Nicaragua—a dependable satellite bought and paid for by American military and economic largesse" to replace almost half a century of Somoza rule in the region.<sup>9</sup> But the FF.AA. had not simply agreed to be a staging-ground for U.S. (or Argentinean) intervention. It was not acting as a U.S. puppet or a backwater to the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran Revolutions and counterrevolutions, but a backstop even before Argentinean or U.S. ideologies (and, more importantly, cash) arrived.

Over 1979 and 1980 Honduras was integrated into Central America's cycle of repression and revolution. The Salvadoran Army and the ORDEN (*Organización Democrática Nacionalista*) paramilitary were allowed into Honduran territory and the *Contrarrevolucionarios* were permitted to strike at Nicaragua from heavily-armed camps in Honduras even before they organized. A secondary factor was to rein in the distinctly *un*-ideological Honduran and Salvadoran

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rate network in Miami with CIA and Cuban-exile contacts across the Caribbean. One of Casey's first moves was to meet with Gen. Leopoldo Galtieri in Washington to develop strategies for the new Contras, and in 1982 the White House probed Buenos Aires about infiltrating Southern-Cone forces into Nicaragua. But the FSLN and FMLN were far stronger than previous Latin American guerrillas: they had experience holding territory, governing as a state, and establishing conventional units. Ironically it may have been covert cooperation on the Contras that led Gen. Galtieri to pull the trigger on invading the British Falklands in 1982, leading to a surprise defeat that required the CIA to take full responsibility for the Contras in 1983 just as the U.S. Senate explicitly forbade all such action. Amb. Kirkpatrick was so pro-Argentinean on this issue she damned the opposing lobby in the Administration as "Brits in American suits." The fall of the continent's most reactionary power in 1983 changed the course of all Latin America, and the Reagan Administrations' hardliners could only stand by as the alleged Cold Warrior-in-Chief treated Galtieri as shabbily as Batista, Diem, Somoza, or the Shah, in their eyes. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997. Armony, "Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America," in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 14, 41-42, 164, 242-43. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 86-89, 155-56. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 102-07. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 120-21. Peter Kornbluh, "The Covert War," in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987): 21-38. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 515. David Ronfeldt, *U.S. Involvement in Central America: Three Views from Honduras* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1989): 33. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 118-19.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 75.



colonels who had never hesitated to sell ammunition and even heavy arms to the Sandinistas and then the FMLN.<sup>10</sup>

Top officers from the *triángulo de hierro* had a secret operational meeting on May 5, 1980, at the El Poy border post, Citalá, Chalatenango, shortly before the *cerco* sweep that concluded with the Sumpul Massacre.<sup>11</sup> The militaries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and *somocista* Nicaragua had decades of counterrevolutionary doctrine and experience “reducing” the Natives of their republics to seasonal coffee labor, culminating in the Salvadoran *Matanza* of 1932 and Guatemala’s 1954-94 reactionary wave. The north Central American armed forces were independent—even contemptuous—of the Argentinean and then the U.S. newcomers’ suggestions beyond the cash and arms they could supply.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration’s Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987): 45. Patricia Flynn, “The United States at War in Central America: Unable to Win, Unwilling to Lose,” in *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Latin America*, ed. Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn (New York: Monthly Review Press; Berkeley, Calif.: Center for the Study of the Americas, 1984): 126. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 76, 81—one Paz García minister (apparently Óscar Mejía Arellano) both selling arms to the Sandinistas and intelligence to Somoza at the same time. Juan E. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras: Signs of the “Argentine Method”* (New York: Americas Watch, 1982): 4. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 335-36. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 65-74. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 137, 148. U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in Honduras: A Staff Report* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983): 15.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps symbolically, Citalá was itself in one of the border *bolsones* neutralized after the 1969 Soccer War (see below, n18). Renato Camarda, *Forced to Move* (San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1985): 81. Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action, *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base*, ed. Philip E. Wheaton (Washington: EPICA Task Force, 1982): 9. Philip E. Wheaton, *The Iron Triangle: The Honduran Connection* (Washington: EPICA, 1981): 2, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 38. Charles D. Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty: Agrarian Transformation and Political Conflict in Central America* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988). Wayne M. Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship in Central America: Guatemala, 1865-1873* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1994). Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007): 95. Lowell Gudmundson and Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1821-1871: Liberalism Before Liberal Reform* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., and London: University of Alabama Press, 1995). David McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820-1920,” in Carol A. Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990): 96-115. Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016: 219-22, 235-36. Paige, *Coffee and Power* 1997. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 52. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 20-31. Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 53-4, 63-4. Carol A. Smith, “Origins of the National Question in Guatemala: A Hypothesis,” in Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State* 1990: 73-95. Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America, a Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976): 151-54. Woodward, “Changes in the Nineteenth-Century Guatemalan State and its Indian Policies,” in Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State* 1990: 52-71.

Gen. Policarpo Paz García (1978-82) initially stayed focused on military involvement supporting the Salvadoran forces (or even sometimes opposing them). He insisted that the Nicaraguan Revolution and Contra raids were internal matters for Nicaragua.<sup>13</sup> But by the end of 1980 Col. Alvarez Martínez convinced him to get behind the former Nicaraguan Guardsmen: once Tegucigalpa agreed to permit the Contras on its soil, the incoming Reagan Administration unfroze \$65 million in USAID money.<sup>14</sup>

Since 1973 Operation Condor had brought together longtime rivals such as Chile, Argentina, and Brazil in the name of a continent-wide persecution of activists, politicians, and guerrillas across borders. Militaries attacking civilians as domestic enemies was not new in Latin America: Condor was the first organized, international effort.<sup>15</sup> Likewise in Central America counterinsurgency was now visualized as a regional war, mandating a switch in official enemies for Honduras. The new, political view of the war meant setting aside national rivalries and longstanding “frozen” conflicts between the Central American states.

The FF.AA. turned from its long-time rival, the Salvadoran military, to a more ideologically-defined foe—revolutionaries and their “sympathizers,” regardless of nationality.<sup>16</sup> Honduras’s officers saw the Salvadoran military as their sole opponent—in fact, as the key reason for

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<sup>13</sup> Tom Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts: The New Battlefield in Central America* (Albuquerque: Resource Center, 1986): 3. Steve C. Ropp, “National Security,” in James D. Rudolph, ed., with Kenneth Nolde and Mark Rosenberg, *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984): 236. Ronfeldt, *U.S. Involvement in Central America* 1989: 13.

<sup>14</sup> “La coyuntura hondureña,” Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Informaciones* 4, 2nd epoch (August-September 1986): 1-25.

<sup>15</sup> The reach of the Chilean and Argentinean death squads projected out to Washington, Paris, Rome, and Gibraltar. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 83. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 322-25. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 5, 193. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 418, 422-25. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 42-45. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 316.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez was essentially the FF.AA.’s only ideological officers, compared to Argentina’s wave of hardliner *colorados* in the 1960s and exterminationists in the 70s. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 49-94.

the FF.AA.'s own existence, to protect the Honduran people from the despised *guanacos*.<sup>17</sup> The various Salvadoran forces and paramilitaries were reviled by Honduran popular organizations and the FF.AA. for their surprise attack in 1969 where they targeted Honduran civilians, but also for their bloodshed against Salvadoran campesinos through the 1970s.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> When the fighting occurred on Honduras's Salvadoran (rather than Nicaraguan) frontier 1980-82 and after 1989, the FF.AA. was most likely to face off *against* El Salvador's government forces. Ronfeldt, *U.S. Involvement in Central America* 1989: 12. E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987): 51. The FF.AA. would often face off against the Salvadoran forces, especially after 1989. "Fuerza Aerea cuzcatleca pretende expulsar hondureños de bolsones," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, July 24, 1985. Donald E. Schulz, *How Honduras Escaped Revolutionary Violence* (Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992): 21. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: xi.

<sup>18</sup> The "Football" or "Soccer War" of July 14-18, 1969, has either 1. been interpreted as classical cases of a populous, "overflowing" El Salvador into an "empty" Honduras, or 2. a "structuralist" interpretation of *campesino* dispossession by planters and ranchers, Gens. Fidel Sánchez Hernández and Oswaldo López Arellano responding with warmongering and brutal chauvinism. By the late 1960s one-tenth or one-eighth of Salvadorans lived in Honduras (by some estimates 300,000, or one in eight residents of Honduras, and one in five of those resident in rural Honduras; most estimates were closer to 100,000). This "agrarian frontier" was unique because it was in *another* country (likewise by the mid-80s one-tenth of Salvadorans were in the United States, as refugees). But this dispute remains a simple numerical issue for subsistence agriculture, which inevitably came after higher crop yields and decreasing infant mortality. The initial alternative explanation is that poverty and deforestation came from underdevelopment that prevents subsistence production and land concentration for cattle and cotton for export. But both interpretations reckon population growth as ultimately a natural phenomenon, rather than a political choice. Thomas P. Anderson, *The War of the Dispossessed: Honduras and El Salvador, 1969* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981): 111-33, 171. Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty* 1988. Marco Virgilio Carías and Daniel Slutzky, *La guerra inútil: Análisis socio-económico del conflicto entre Honduras y El Salvador* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1971). Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 89. Sylvia Chant, with Nikki Craske, *Gender in Latin America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003): 76-78. William H. Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America: Ecological Origins of the Soccer War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1979). Garrett Hardin, review of *Scarcity and Survival* by William H. Durham, *Agricultural History* 54:2 (April 1980). Eddy E. Jiménez Pérez, *La guerra no fue de fútbol* (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1974). James Nations and Jeffrey H. Leonard, "Grounds of Conflict in Central America," in *Bordering on Trouble: Resources and Politics in Latin America*, ed. Andrew Maguire and Janet Welsh Brown (Bethesda, Md.: Adler & Adler, 1986). Noé Pineda Portillo and José Luis Luzón Benedicto, *Honduras* (Madrid: Anaya, 1988): 70-73. Ramón Salgado, *Guanchías, lucha campesina y cooperativismo agrario* (Tegucigalpa: Guaymuras, 1981): 36, 66. Wheaton, *Iron Triangle* 1981: 1-2, 21. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 3, 8. The more specific analyses—of deforestation "on the ground" rather than farm tenure in the abstract—also show that population growth vs. land concentration for export commodities are not two exclusive alternative explanations for the pressures behind the war, but feed into one another. Food production for a growing population can easily drive commercial export agriculture. The forest edge was burned and replaced with traditional corn and beans, then replaced by cattle and cotton after two seasons of diminishing fertility; Honduran and Panamanian ranchers regularly hired the subsistence farmers to clear forests. Population growth fed deforestation and the proletarianization of laborers from Guatemala to Costa Rica, and by 1980 absorbed three-quarters of Honduras's land reform—the most advanced and ambitious in the continent. But studies of Honduras's 1960s and 70s demographics as a social and political issue have opened a different approach: that demographic growth is a policy choice, an outright opportunity to expand land use and "primitive accumulation" of capital. Editorialists and academics, left and right, Salvadoran or Honduran, agreed: three-fourths of polled Honduran elites and 60% of students thought population inadequate. A notable reactionary Salvadoran editor "says it should think of birth control only after it has twice the population of England or France. At one point he speaks of Central America's resources being sufficient for a population ten times its present size." In turn, this position confirmed the darkest suspicions of

Honduras's literate classes, whose attitude after 1969 was "If we would have had more people, El Salvador would not have dared to invade us." A Cabinet minister said "Honduras needs more soldiers for its defense against a populous enemy who seeks our depopulation by means of the bullet and the pill." Left-wing critics asserted that population growth would mean that resources would be locally consumed rather than extracted for export, a French-educated intellectual expecting that "A situation now favorable to the U.S. will no longer be so once Latin America triples its present population." The student union announced, "We have been able to convince a lot of the young doctors to stay away from family planning. We've convinced them that to carry out such a program is to act against the nation. We have been able to force the medical school to suspend all birth control activity"; demography was suspended from UNAH's curriculum. Still others took an accelerationist approach, that a growing undernourished, undereducated, underemployed masses would bring the revolution that would obviate the need for export-based development: thus, contraception prevented "not the 'demographic explosion' but the revolutionary explosion." The FMLN called the Pill a "soft bullet," bloodlessly "killing the guerrillas in the uterus," and the Honduran Patriotic Front warned 1980 that that fertile young women who did not have children were complicit with an imperialist ploy to keep control of Honduras's resources and block the fight for redistribution, development, and autonomy; CODEH opposed even legalization of abortion through the 1980s. Honduras's *campesinas* were noticeably less enthusiastic about having six or more children, 10% of Honduran women aborting every year and another 35% using other means of contraception. One in five Salvadoran women also had had an abortion, one for every four live births. Juan Rodríguez Fidalgo, "Algunas reflexiones sobre el antinatalismo y 'el tercer mundo,'" *Presencia Universitaria* 4:23 (August 1976). Marcos Bernal, "En El Salvador, el control natal: Una forma de genocidio preventivo," *Presencia Universitaria* 4:25 (November 1976). "Palabras de aliento," *Luz en el Camino* (1977): 5-7. "Juventud Católica: La planificación familiar es un genocidio preventivo," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 21, 1977. "Consideraciones sobre una política demográfica nacional," *Presencia Universitaria* 5:36 (October 1977). Carlos Cruz, "Esterilización masiva en Honduras," *Patria* 4:161 (Feb. 23, 1980). Inter-Press Service, "Respalda la planificación familiar: Iglesia Católica reconoce la explosión demográfica," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Oct. 29, 1982. "Derechos Humanos protestará por legalización del aborto," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 19, 1983. "El machismo," *Luz en el Camino* 18 (1983):10-14. "Paternidad responsable," *Luz en el Camino* 26 (1983): 10-14. "Planificación familiar y control de la natalidad," *Luz en el Camino* 25 (1984): 6-11. Alma Pavón, "Diez de cada 100 hondureñas embarazadas prefieren abortar," *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 31, 1986. "El 35 por ciento de la población está usando los anticonceptivos," *El Tiempo*, July 29, 1987. ACAN-EFE, "Advierte guerrilla salvadoreña: Planificación familiar forma parte de un plan 'contra-insurgente,'" *El Herald*, Apr. 11, 1988. "Primer Encuentro de la Mujer Centroamericana," *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 61, 2nd epoch (September 1989). Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988): 70, 89, 94. Elvia Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart*, trans. and ed. Medea Benjamin (Oakland, Calif., and New York: Institute for Food and Development Policy and Harper and Row, 1989): 47-49. Jelke Boesten, "Free Choice or Poverty Alleviation? Population Politics in Peru Under Alberto Fujimori," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies/Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 82 (April 2007): 3-20. Carías and Sutzky, *La guerra inútil* 1971: 50-52, 109. CODEH, *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (Tegucigalpa, CODEH: 1987): 7, 10. Farid Dhanji, *El Salvador: Demographic Issues and Prospects* (Washington: Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office, World Bank, 1979): 28. Debra Gordon, "Group Broadens Focus to Gender Issues," *The Virginian-Pilot*, Norfolk, Va., Oct. 10, 1993. H. Jeffrey Leonard, *Natural Resources and Economic Development in Central America: A Regional Environmental Profile* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987): xi-xii, 124. Alain de Janvry, *The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 9, 48-49, 52, 60. Víctor Meza, *Honduras: La evolución de la crisis*, Colección Realidad Nacional 5 (Tegucigalpa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, 1982): 20. Richard L. Millett, "Historical Setting," in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 44. Axel I. Mundigo, *Elites, Economic Development and Population in Honduras* (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1972). Norman Myers, "Population, Environment, and Conflict," in Kingsley Davis, Mikhail S. Bernstam, and Helen M. Sellers, eds., *Population and Resources in a Changing World: Current Readings* (Stanford, Calif.: Morrison Institute for Population and Resource Studies, 1989). Susan C. Stonich, *I am Destroying the Land! The Political Ecology of Poverty and Environmental Destruction in Honduras* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993). J. Mayone Stycos, "Family Planning and American Goals," in David Chaplin, ed., *Population Policies and Growth in Latin America* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1971): 111-31. Williams, *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America* 1986: 53-55, 117. Angus Lindsay Wright, *The Death of Ramón González: The Modern Agricultural Dilemma* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

But in order to serve regional counterinsurgency, the two countries signed the Lima Treaty October 30, 1980, formally ending the Football War: Tegucigalpa agreed to give Salvadoran forces access to over 440 square kilometers of formerly-neutral border *bolsones*, which had been claimed by both the Salvadoran and Honduran states since the 1969 war, but patrolled by neither.<sup>19</sup> The rebel forces that had gathered into the FMLN October 10 had assembled forces in the *bolsones*, and concentrated themselves primarily in the less population-dense border areas of El Salvador.<sup>20</sup> El Poy allowed conventional collusion: on July 18, 1981, 1,200 Salvadoran forces invaded Honduras, to double back and strike through the border town of Valladolid.<sup>21</sup>

In 1981 the *de facto* leader of the FF.AA., Col. Alvarez Martínez, redefined “national security,” from territorial and national-scale, to ideological and regional.<sup>22</sup> He was a personal friend of Argentina’s Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla and bragged that his bedtime reading was Gen. Pinochet’s *Geopolítica*.<sup>23</sup> His stated worldview was that Honduras’s internal and external “enemies” were a single whole to be combated by a military with an explicitly counterrevolutionary new mission.<sup>24</sup> In April 1981 Alvarez Martínez was first admitted to the CIA headquarters at Langley, the start of formal FF.AA. collaboration.<sup>25</sup>

By 1982 the Honduran regime, with the new civilian President Roberto Suazo Córdova firmly subordinated to Commander-in-Chief Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, was deeply in-

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<sup>19</sup> “La ‘zona recuperada’ vuelve a manos de los nicaragüenses,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 46, 2nd epoch (June 1986). “Premio Nobel de la Paz: Mentira, no se han ido los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, Feb. 24, 1987.

<sup>20</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 210. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 199, 223, 239. Steve Cagan and Beth Cagan, *This Promised Land, El Salvador: The Refugee Community of Colomoncagua and Their Return to Morazán* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991). Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 76. Ropp, “National Security,” in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 198, 240-41.

<sup>21</sup> Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 26.

<sup>22</sup> Margarita Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy: Sociedad y crisis política* (Tegucigalpa, CEDOH and Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, 1987): 84, 163.

<sup>23</sup> Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 80.

<sup>24</sup> Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 73.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. Paz García had sought a flight to Washington to warn the new Administration of his generals’ talk of invading Nicaragua, which he feared would bring Cubans to Nicaragua and sponsor subversion in Honduras. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 148, 153, 158.

volved in the wars of its two main neighbors. That required building up the necessary framework to quiet stories of massacres, or turn Contra attacks against Nicaragua into proof of Kremlin-ordered EPS aggression against Honduras—framed as an *oasis of peace* or *fledgling democracy*. Honduras and Costa Rica were usable as staging-grounds against El Salvador and Nicaragua only *because* of their weak or abolished militaries—they supplied relative calm, a lack of independent generals, and civilian governments that could project a clean image. They could be plausibly framed as victims of aggression by Nicaragua building up their state forces as defenses against an outside threat as Central America democratized.<sup>26</sup>

Since the start of the decade, the FF.AA. worked to turn the frontiers with El Salvador and Nicaragua into geographies of silence in order to hide crucial details, with only the state remaining warranted to describe what had occurred there. The Honduran terrain concealed massacres, bases, whole armies. In the system of verification and discredit necessary to keep the Central American counterrevolution going, they were zones of knowledge where eventually only the FF.AA. was to monopolize “warrant”—by contrast to claims of attacks against FSLN-held land or massacres in FMLN territory. And the deception and plausible deniability would have to be maintained for years longer than the planners expected. Even Gen. Alvarez Martínez always wanted quick victories: the FF.AA. never planned for a complex decade-long war, nor to host the hated Salvadorans or the disruptive Contras into 1990. The tremendous amount of money the military was bringing in—even getting more from the U.S. government than the Honduran—gave the FF.AA. a continued and tremendous quota of power in national decision-making, and a

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<sup>26</sup> “1987 in Review,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). Kirk S. Bowman, “The Public Battles Over Militarisation and Democracy in Honduras, 1954-1963,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33 (2001): 539-60.

disproportionate share of control over the journalistic transmission and state acknowledgement of information within Honduras.<sup>27</sup>

### Conventional Military Deception: El Salvador

Deception and secrecy have long been part of warfare; likewise for military use of the media. Deception of the public, whether calculated or routine, is typically justified in the name of preventing true information from spreading if it would be useful to the enemy in the long or short term, to protect servicepersons' lives. Such traditional "ruses" of war were well-used in the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan Civil Wars, just as false guerrillas were used to make "real" the state narratives of constant subversive infiltration (see also Chapter 1, "3: The Specter of Defeat"). These techniques were not about designating who could be believed or not; they concentrated not on discrediting a story and its bearers, but a positive fabrication of a story or a simple concealment of an act or actor.

The military deceptions here are marked by still being relatively simple, without requiring *post facto* discrediting of witnesses, intercepting of stories, no press manipulation or Presidential oratory. The goal is to conceal the actual agent behind the action, Cohen's second-order "interpretive" denial—for example, that killed pilots are not *U.S. agents*, but reframed as *mercenaries*, and so on. Quashing leaks or pursuing uncontrolled news stories is not needed here, all the actors being Contras or U.S. and host-country militaries and secret services.

These are all Goffman's basic "reframing," shifting the meaning of the overt facts presented by the news, by changing the tacit common assumptions used to interpret them. Again, usually this simply meant concealing or confounding *who* the actors responsible were—police

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<sup>27</sup> "Honduras: Posturas políticas ante las maniobras militares," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987).

carrying “drop” guns to plant on unarmed suspects they killed.<sup>28</sup> This tier of deception includes: forged and planted stories, false witnesses, planting weapons, staging “false-flag” attacks, forced confessions, “spinning” or exaggerating incidents.

The covert wars in Central America allowed for the deployment of the more basic traditional ruses. In November 1982 more than fifty trucks full of FF.AA. soldiers were spotted crossing the border into El Salvador, without Honduran flags or insignia on their uniforms.<sup>29</sup> Government attacks were blamed on the guerrillas, to discredit the opposition and to cast doubt on all stories of atrocities by state forces—and to discredit (as if by the contagion of bearing the story) any journalist or campesino witness. While politicians can uniquely act without consulting anybody else first,<sup>30</sup> “power” has also been defined as nothing more or less than getting someone *else* to act—always in the hands of another.<sup>31</sup> The Carter and Reagan Administrations could not have built any positive public or Congressional case or justification for intervention without active collaboration with the Salvadoran and Honduran military regimes. The White House’s reliance allowed the armed forces to *de facto* trick U.S. officials by pretending to “confirm” the narratives of FSLN smuggling that were already being established.

However, it was *failures* of these more simple and cover-up-oriented techniques that produced a need to go bigger, to sow the seeds of doubt and discredit ahead of time—to take the edge off stories, to make them submerge back into the flow of headlines that appeared every

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<sup>28</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 107.

<sup>29</sup> This was a last-ditch attempt to ensure the success of “Operation Morazán” as even El Salvador’s Atlacatl, Atonal, and Ramón Belloso Battalions were not enough without Honduran reinforcements. Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 86. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 513. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 47.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005): 35.

<sup>31</sup> Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 285.



morning.<sup>32</sup> Honduras was not only the home of the Contra forces, but where the whole pretext for the Contra War resided: and the White House constantly shifting this stated rationale produced constant scandals with the Senate 1982-86.

Reagan and his White House worked their way through several official rationales for Contra support. In March 1981 he authorized the CIA to arm the ex-Guardsmen against “foreign-sponsored subversion and terrorism” and told Congress the goal was to defend El Salvador’s reformist civil-military junta. His November National Security Decision Directive authorized CIA organizing and funding of the ex-Guardsmen as an “interdiction” force to catch the alleged mass quantity of arms going by land across the Nicaraguan border to El Salvador, with the contingency being that without outside weapons the FMLN would collapse: the Contras would thus save El Salvador and prove the Red conspiracy in one move.<sup>33</sup> The State Department had been ordered in February 1981 to prepare a White Paper that hypothesized 500 tons of Nicaraguan arms delivered or promised for the FMLN from across the “Soviet Bloc,” but even the pro-Reagan *Wall Street Journal* picked apart its evidence. December 1981 Casey told the Intelligence Committees “Nobody was talking about overthrowing anybody”: under NSDD 1 they were only there to interdict arms in Honduras and limited to attacks against Cuban combatants in Nicaragua.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This aspect has been well-examined in media theory: even a story that reaches the headlines has the rest of the front page to compete with, and then *every* subsequent front page after that—simply by the nature of the news and the flow of time. Issues of crucial importance to historians decades later can simply submerge at the time.

<sup>33</sup> The allocation for San Salvador and for the Contras was more than for the rest of Latin America combined. The initial proponents of counterinsurgency and counterrevolutionary forces in Central America were in fact thwarted by more conventionally-minded officers like Secretary of State Gen. Al Haig (ret.) who simply assumed the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran Revolutions were outside creations by Havana and Moscow, and therefore any fighting in-country was irrelevant. Simply strike at the “umbilicus” or “tether” giving them material support, and the proxy forces would collapse and be exposed with one swoop. Meanwhile one FMLN commander compared it to having to breathe through a straw while the Salvadoran Army, Air Force, and National Guard had the U.S. spigot open for a decade. (See below, n37.) Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 57, 89. Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016: 257. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 154. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 344.

<sup>34</sup> Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War” 2016: 43. Kyle Longley, “An Obsession: The Central American Policy of the Reagan Administration,” in Bradley Lynn Coleman and Kyle Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981-1989* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 215.

No matter the policies Managua adopted—respecting U.S. investments, honoring Somoza’s debts acquired in repressing and stealing from the Nicaraguan people, maintaining friendly relations with Washington—Carter and Reagan’s Administrations attacked the new government by overt and covert means.<sup>35</sup> The January 1981 attempt by the Salvadoran forces to bolster the narrative that the FMLN relied on Nicaragua was particularly embarrassing: officers showed Embassy staffers a beach “landing” scene by the supposed smugglers, with a trail of neatly-spaced grenades leading into the jungle that reminded CIA analyst David MacMichael of Hänsel and Gretel. But this was enough for Ambassador Robert E. White to claim continued Nicaraguan gunrunning after the failure of the December 1980 FMLN “final offensive.”<sup>36</sup>

*Planting* proof could be risky: it was a performance put on for outside observers like journalists and Embassy staffers, and it made things simply too *real*. Any publicly-stated case for the Contra War had to be kept “offstage” rather than overt, Sandinista interference reduced to a tacit “common knowledge” for Democratic and Republican Senators alike, without needing to be asserted or defended. Casey and his overseer for Latin America Dewey Clarridge opposed this tendency to avoid having to assert, defend, or deny Contra support to keep it out of the headlines like the White House had managed to do with El Salvador: their approach would lead to the more-visible, made-for-media CIA events of 1983.

In all Honduras only one incident of overland gun-running to El Salvador was ever caught—a single truck in January 1981 for FMLN’s Fuerzas Populares de Liberación: frankly

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<sup>35</sup> The Salvadoran armed forces and paramilitaries had been under increasing, overt condemnation from Washington itself since the 1977 election massacres, and the FSLN and FMLN actually found themselves somewhat bemused by Washington making a military reaction to *doing* something about the regime Washington damned until January 1981. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 21-22. David Ryan, “The Peripheral Center: Nicaragua in U.S. Policy and the U.S. Imagination at the End of the Cold War,” in Bevan Sewell and Maria Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery: The Shifting Margins of U.S. International Relations Since World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 290.

<sup>36</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 107. John Lamperti, *What are We Afraid of?: An Assessment of the “Communist Threat” in Central America* (Boston, South End Press, 1988): 66. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 89.

the Salvadoran Army would sell the FMLN what they wanted.<sup>37</sup> By 1983 the San Salvador Embassy cabled Washington that “Since early 1983, it appears that the insurgents may have obtained most of their newly acquired firearms through capture from the Salvadoran military.”<sup>38</sup> U.S. Air Force operators at Cerro La Mole/El Isopo and El Tigre Island provided full radar coverage and radio monitoring of Honduran and Nicaraguan airspace, the EPS, the *bolsones* on the Salvadoran border, and the Gulf of Fonseca where the U.S. Navy patrolled. Nothing could yield the evidence that Casey wanted, of the smuggling that he was so certain of.<sup>39</sup> The December 1982 first Boland Amendment banned aid “for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua”—but not interdiction, which the White House took as a loophole depending on Reagan’s (private) intent.

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<sup>37</sup> Directly sending the FMLN arms from Nicaragua at even 1979-80 levels was too risky for the FSLN: successful exposure would cost Managua crucial support from Western European states and publics by proving Reagan right. The Kremlin itself refused to have any second “Cuba” and assigned Central America next to no importance (while the new Reagan Administration was sure Russian expansionism lay behind practically every action in the isthmus, in a long chess game aimed at the Panama Canal): any enthusiasm came from Havana (more than even Managua). Nora Astorga said that revolution was impossible to export—it was not a *substance* or commodity, but an *event*. Of course U.S. neoconservatives insisted that talk of local histories and dynamics were mere diversions pushed by the Kremlin (Chapter 1). The trailer truck was captured in Comayagua January 1981, headed to arm the FMLN’s Fuerzas Populares de Liberación “Farabundo Martí.” Arquímides Antonio Cañadas, *Comandante “Alejandro Montenegro”* of the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, was captured in Honduras August 1982, describing an overland route from Las Manos, El Paraíso, on the border to El Amatillo, Valle. But the shipments originated in Costa Rica and had gone against the FSLN’s knowledge and policy: Managua had little choice but to always seek to rebuild relationships with Washington. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 138-39. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 332. Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan’s Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 200. Oñate-Madrazo, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016: 109-11, 259. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 123, 127. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 272, 336. Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 118. Warner Poelchau, ed., *White Paper Whitewash: Interviews with Philip Agee on the CIA and El Salvador* (New York: Deep Cover Books, 1981): 100. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 291. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, 1988: 108. U.S. Department of State, “*Revolution Beyond Our Borders*”: *Sandinista Intervention in Central America*, Special Report 132 (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 1985): 9-13, 41. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 380.

<sup>38</sup> Joy Hackel and Daniel Siegel, eds., *In Contempt of Congress: The Reagan Record on Central America: A Citizen’s Guide* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 78.

<sup>39</sup> “This solved the sticky political problem that covert action could pose to the executive branch—that is, after exposure, having to justify publicly what one publicly denied doing,” Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider’s View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004): 83. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 529. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 526. Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984): 266. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 228-29.

In 1981 the U.S. State Department had to effectively retract its White Paper claiming that 200 tons of Eastern Bloc arms had already gone through Honduras to the FMLN, author Jon Glassman admitting he had been encouraged to make a case for intervention.<sup>40</sup> Eldon Kenworthy noted that “For several years the administration tantalized its critics by claiming to have evidence it could not reveal” on the supposed massive arms flow that had justified U.S. presence in Honduras and the CIA organizing and supporting the Contras as an interdiction force.<sup>41</sup> The real goal there was to place the Contras’ continued existence and U.S. support beyond debate, however the rationale might shift.<sup>42</sup> But the story of a massive Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan operation to impose Communism on the whole peninsula had gotten US\$65 million in emergency aid for the Salvadoran armed forces before the story fell apart.<sup>43</sup>

The accusation of trafficking continued to be made despite there not being “a successful interdiction, or a verified report, of arms moving from Nicaragua to El Salvador since April 1981”<sup>44</sup>; official policy continued “on the supposition that such involvement did indeed exist.”<sup>45</sup> By 1982 it was public that most of the FMLN’s weapons were from the Salvadoran military,

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<sup>40</sup> With nothing found in the Gulf of Fonseca or traversing Honduran territory, the White House vaguely claimed instead that Nicaragua was sending arms flights—none of which were caught after 1980. The gun suppliers of Florida, Texas, and California were quite happy to literally deal with the FMLN’s front-end buyers. Arnson, *Crossroads* 1993: 56. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 42. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, 1988: 148.

<sup>41</sup> The White House repeatedly made a show of declaring that it could show evidence for its claims, but it was regrettably classified—while in fact the counterevidence was what was classified, preventing the Congressional Intelligence Committees from rebutting the White House.

<sup>42</sup> Eldon Kenworthy, “Selling the Policy,” in *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas*, ed. Thomas W. Walker (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987): 170. Jack Spence, “The U.S. Media: Covering (Over) Nicaragua,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 190.

<sup>43</sup> This might not have been to the White House’s advantage, either—there was more commitment, more hardline policy-makers, more Congressional and media attention, and less flexibility in Central America. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 127.

<sup>44</sup> Philip Taubman, “In from the Cold and Hot for Truth,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 1984. U.S. Department of State, *Revolution Beyond Our Borders* 1985.

<sup>45</sup> Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984): 146.

whether left on battlefields or sold by San Salvador's own officers.<sup>46</sup> In May 1983 former Amb. White admitted that no significant numbers of arms were entering El Salvador and condemned the White Paper as an embarrassment.<sup>47</sup>

Interdiction of Nicaraguan arms headed for the FMLN was the Administration's stated rationale for aid to the Contras, a heavy U.S. presence in the Pacific Gulf of Fonseca, and the secret death squad Battalion 3-16. Dismantling the FMLN arms network in Honduras was the death squad's ostensible task, but in fact those clandestine prisoners suspected of being actual smugglers were *not* secretly murdered like the other *desaparecidos*, but presented to the press.<sup>48</sup> If the traffickers were Nicaraguan *somocistas* or Honduran officers, then Battalion 3-16 and the Dirección Nacional de Investigaciones would back off altogether.<sup>49</sup>

But without the interception of arms-laden planes or motherships, the late Carter and Reagan Administrations' 1980-83 case for the Contras as an interdiction force had to be made entirely within Honduras. In 1982 the Contras were always reported in eastern Honduras or in northeastern El Paraíso Department—far from the alleged smuggling across and around the Gulf of Fonseca. Interdiction faded as the Administration rationale for Contra support<sup>50</sup>: Honduras was remote and absent from the sphere of U.S. media and even from activists such as Witness

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<sup>46</sup> Except for the more ideological officers, Central America's militaries have been more than happy since the mid-19th century to provide arms and shelter to factions fighting neighboring states' official regime. Lamperti, *What are We Afraid of?* 1988: 60-65. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 50.

<sup>47</sup> "Militarization Polarizes Honduras," *Honduras Update* 1:11 (June 1983). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 125.

<sup>48</sup> "Historia de como nació la contrarrevolución nicaragüense: Tegucigalpa convertida en centro de operaciones de la Contra," 2nd part, *El Tiempo*, Mar. 18, 1989. William M. LeoGrande, "The United States and Nicaragua," in Andrew C. Kimmens, ed., *Nicaragua and the United States* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1987): 49, 57.

<sup>49</sup> "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31.

<sup>50</sup> In spring 1983 Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) was told by Rector of the Central American University Ignacio Ellacuría "You Americans have supplied our little country with all the arms both sides could possibly use. Our army keeps maybe a third; another third, the guerrillas capture or buy under the table," the other third lost. "I also learned down there that the contras hadn't interdicted a shotgun. That's when I began to think that the administration's real intention was to overthrow the Sandinistas' regime." Persico, *Casey* 1990: 336. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 644-45.

for Peace. The claim of interdiction could be both made *and* later quietly dropped in part because it was physically localized within Honduras.

Actual *details* to allegations—how the FMLN was obtaining its arms, multiple “smoking Sandinistas” or “Cubans” paraded before the cameras as proof of foreign fighters driving the Salvadoran conflict—ran the risk of exposure and embarrassing, public backfire. Massacres in the remotest corners of El Salvador—the Río Sumpul, Río Lempa, and El Mozote—more directly threatened the entire stated rationale of U.S. intervention in Central America. Here, news stories had to be discredited and intercepted rather than concocted. Either way, factual detail was a threat to the vague, tacit consent that the Administrations needed from press and Congress.

#### The Sumpul Massacre: The Honduran Press

In 1980 Jimmy Carter was still in the Oval Office and the paramilitaries and regular armed forces were perpetrating the political murder of over 9,000 Salvadorans in city and countryside—students, campesinos, prominent leaders of the civilian opposition, junior Army officers, the Archbishop, U.S. Churchwomen and agrarian-reform advisors.<sup>51</sup> The new Reagan Administration’s efforts to train and conventionalize the Civil War resulted in the infamous December 11, 1981, El Mozote Massacre, which was successfully covered up by a well-studied media operation in the United States and in El Salvador. But the strategies required to “unmake” accurate reports of the murder of hundreds of Salvadorans was first elaborated and successfully used in Honduras, over a year before the more famous annihilation.

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<sup>51</sup> Though most of the murders of internationally-prominent figures during the Carter Administration—the Frente Democrático Revolucionario (Nov. 27, 1980), the Churchwomen (Dec. 2), and Michael Hammer and Mark Pearlman (Jan. 3, 1981)—had been perpetrated explicitly because Reagan had won the election: now the Salvadoran paramilitaries would face neither restraint nor consequence. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 90.

Mark Danner and Leigh Binford have written the canonical works on the extensive—and risky—cover-up that El Mozote required<sup>52</sup>: the case of the Río Sumpul not only provides a parallel to the methods and institutions used across two White Houses, but fills out the larger geography of undermining and defusing stories from rural Central America.

The initial denial of the May 14, 1980 Sumpul Massacre was an attack on the campesinos' social credibility as witnesses—they were ignorant to the point of hallucination. Cohen has theorized how incidents are denied, including attacking witnesses; but states also actively seek to marginalize witnesses to the point of being able to ignore them, to avoid the engagement demanded by overt denial. Miranda Fricker coined the term “epistemic injustice” to summarize the formal and informal processes and prejudices that give a designated group of witnesses unequal access to the greater public production of knowledge, vitiate their testimony, and form a large part of their marginalization.<sup>53</sup> Fricker concludes that there is no stereotype that does not include the reliability, trustworthiness, and honesty of a marginalized group.<sup>54</sup> Theorists of epistemic in-

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<sup>52</sup> Claudia Bernardi, “An Angel Passes By: Silence and Memories at the Massacre of El Mozote,” in Marjorie Agosín, ed., *Inhabiting Memory: Essays on Memory and Human Rights in the Americas* (San Antonio, Tex.: Wings Press, 2011): 28-50. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016 and Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994. Between the 1972 Managua earthquake and the 1978-79 Nicaraguan Revolution—including ABC cameraman Bill Stewart’s televised murder by Guardsmen—Central America was almost never on television, garnering a 0.1% share. Even the murders of four U.S. Churchwomen and Archbishop Romero (let alone the dozens of clergy across Latin America) had fewer headlines and articles than that of Jerzy Popieluszko. *The New York Times* eventually blamed the attack on Romero’s funeral on the left wing. El Salvador provided 1. the advantage of little coverage and few journalists on the ground, but 2. the risk of a far more explosive case than even the 1986 shutdown of Hasenfus in Barry Seal’s former airplane: the murder of nearly 1,000 villagers with U.S. training, funding, and bullets from the Lake City Ordnance Plant, Missouri. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 46. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 38-67. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 188.

<sup>53</sup> Kristie Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 33:1 (2012): 26-29. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 3-4.

<sup>54</sup> In other words, social epistemology is not thought experiments in misremembering or Boolean functions. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 32, 76.

justice emphasize that it damages society in general as well dehumanizing as the direct victims, but do not elaborate on the mechanisms used to actively undermine and discredit.<sup>55</sup>

Collaboration with Salvadoran military forces led to the FF.AA.'s operational complicity in the 1980 Sumpul and 1981 Lempa Massacres. These two incidents were Tegucigalpa's first real international scandal of the Cold War: newspapers revealed that the FF.AA. guarded the attacks of the Salvadoran government against Salvadoran campesinos. The Sumpul Massacre was covered in the "reliable" Honduran press, rather than on territory occupied by the FSLN—a factor used to dismiss the El Mozote Massacre. Exposure of cooperation with the worst elements the Salvadoran state threatened the Paz García regime's international standing and its ostensible relationship with the Catholic Church (Chapter 9). The massacre was initially denied as a collective failure of perception, due to campesino ignorance or even outright hallucination<sup>56</sup>—Cohen's literal denial attacking the witness—and then required the FF.AA. to make crude attacks on the Church and the press as tentacles of one global Communist conspiracy. The attacks on witnesses and warrantors did not increase in complexity or sophistication.

Days after the meeting at El Poy, El Salvador's National Guard and the rural paramilitary ORDEN massacred Salvadoran campesinos trying to flee a military encirclement into Honduras on May 14, 1980.<sup>57</sup> The Honduran Army blocked the refugees and seized any who made it across. They were returned, bound and typically wounded, to the Salvadoran forces to be mur-

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<sup>55</sup> Gaile Pohlhaus, "Varieties of Epistemic Injustice," in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 13, 16. Shannon Sullivan, "On the Harms of Epistemic Injustice: Pragmatism and Transactional Epistemology," in *ibid.*: 205.

<sup>56</sup> Benjamin McMyler, "Responsibility for Testimonial Belief," *Erkenntnis* 76:3 (May 2012): 344. Francis Remedios, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge: An Introduction to Steve Fuller's Social Epistemology* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003): 107.

<sup>57</sup> McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 225.



dered<sup>58</sup>—though horrified FF.AA. soldiers sometimes opened fire on the Salvadoran forces. A reported 600 (later estimated at at least 350) were shot or drowned in total.<sup>59</sup>

Cooperation with the Salvadoran military in the regional war was not compatible with reporting of the massacre. The frontier was entirely controlled by the two militaries, but inhabited by resident Honduran campesinos. It was crucial to the FF.AA. to discredit the witnesses, the warrantors, and the media, rather than just deny the particular incident. The story was also potentially explosive, high in salience (international attention was focused on the slaughter in the capital San Salvador) and impetus (it would be difficult to prevent follow-up to a true story).<sup>60</sup>

Military officers explicitly put the reliability of witnessing itself in doubt. Col. Alfonso Rodríguez Rincón of Colombia, the chief observer on the border to supervise the 1969 ceasefire between the two states under the Organization of American States, said that the reports derived from overactive imaginations, villagers perhaps confusing a clash between the Salvadoran forces and rebels, misperceiving the collateral damage as a massacre.<sup>61</sup> The witnesses were mistaken about the gunfire and bodies, that they were incapable of perceiving the external world, even mistaking training dummies for corpses. This was certainly an attempt at reframing, to claim the story was based on errors of sense perception or interpretation—like Goffman’s cries for help turning out to be a film shoot.<sup>62</sup> Reframing was easier than mobilizing explicit denial,<sup>63</sup> but in

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<sup>58</sup> Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power: Human Rights Violations in the 1980s* (London: Amnesty International, 1988): 14.

<sup>59</sup> UN Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador* (New York: United Nations, 1993): 29-30, 121-24. “Unfinished Sentences,” Center for Human Rights, University of Washington, <https://jsis.washington.edu/humanrights/projects/unfinished-sentences/> and <https://unfinishedsentences.org>.

<sup>60</sup> Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

<sup>61</sup> “Jefe observador de la OEA desconoce matanza,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 24, 1980. UN Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *From Madness to Hope* 1993: 124. See also the analysis of anti-ruralism in Michael Richards, “Cosmopolitan World View and Counterinsurgency in Guatemala,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 58:3 (July 1985).

<sup>62</sup> Jennifer Lackey, “It Takes Two to Tango: Beyond Reductionism and Non-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony,” in Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Epistemology of Testimony* (Oxford: Oxford University

1980 more sophisticated techniques for undermining a news story would require the intervention of the U.S. Embassy.

Denying a single incident (even if the El Mozote massacre was successfully prevented from becoming a significant controversy in the U.S. media) meant accumulating much risk and potential stigma upon confirmation. Lowering the credit and warrant of the Church and media would . The FF.AA. attacked the campesinos' social capital as witnesses, but then had to start expending power in order to attack the warranting power of the Catholic Church in Honduras<sup>64</sup>—far older and with a better reputation than the 1978-80 junta. The Tegucigalpa U.S. Embassy under Carter's Department of State, too, mobilized against the Honduran Church and Congresspersons of the U.S. President's party. Gramscian Marxian analysis emphasizes how peasants obtain politically-recognized allies, such as the Catholic Church, to shield their self-organization and to transmit their experiences to the literate public.<sup>65</sup>

The primary publicist of the massacre was Father Fausto Milla of Corquín, Copán Department. He had denounced the recent Salvadoran incursions and FF.AA. complicity; he was long known locally for having evacuated hundreds of women, children, and elderly ahead of the 1969 Salvadoran ground invasion—while the Honduran Army was keeping local villagers from fleeing in order to provide human shields for itself. His frame of the Sumpul Massacre was that the Army had abandoned the frontier eleven years before, and now was 1. collaborating with the same brutal forces while 2. accusing the warrantors of the massacre of secretly serving Salvador-

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Press, 2006): 170. Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992): 118-20.

<sup>63</sup> Karen S. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 190.

<sup>64</sup> Pels, "Mixing Metaphors," in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 279.

<sup>65</sup> Note that Gramsci's theories were written to explain specifically Mediterranean cultures, rather than the North-west European states that were able to define "modernity" after 1700 (Ch. 9, p. 542, n2). Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis* 1998: 168. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 42, 45.

an interests. He investigated the site on the border and became the loudest voice denouncing the massacre.<sup>66</sup>

Father Robert Gallagher was a U.S.-born Capuchin and parish priest of Guarita, Lempira. He personally saw the riverbanks black with vultures; he interviewed villagers whose fish traps had caught four dead children downstream, or had uncovered tiny skulls on river bends. Survivors who had talked to priests or journalists then started “disappearing,” causing a panic.<sup>67</sup> Father Milla had brought the story to international attention, while Father Gallagher confirmed its details: villagers had witnessed “Women tortured before the *coup de grace*, children at breast thrown in the air to make a target” or tossed onto bayonets, 4-month-olds castrated. Local Hondurans saw hundreds of corpses on the shore, being eaten for days by dogs and buzzards; they complained the Río Sumpul was contaminated from the rot down to nearby Santa Lucia. Father Roberto Yalaga, diocesan representative in Guarita, told of hearing of hundreds of bodies left unburied, the locals fearing an epidemic from the ones in and around the river.<sup>68</sup>

Once the killing came to the national attention with the formal letter of condemnation by the Catholic Diocese of Santa Rosa de Copán, people from the rest of Honduras came to investigate, find witnesses, and draw further media attention. Professors, journalists, and politicians from the Christian Democratic and the Socialist Parties visited the frontier *aldeas*. The left-of-

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<sup>66</sup> “El padre Fausto Milla, un eterno perseguido,” from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 22, 1989, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 100 (August 1989). “Nuevas amenazas de muerte contra padre Fausto Milla,” *CODEH* 67 (August 1990). Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 15, 37. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 226. UN Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *From Madness to Hope* 1993: 121.

<sup>67</sup> Manuel Torres Calderón, “La masacre del Sumpul traumatiza la frontera,” 1st part, *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 9, 1980. “De la bendita paz a su internacionalización,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 37, 2nd epoch (January-February 1985). Martin Francis, “The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization,” *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985. Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 81. Juan Ramón Martínez, *Opinión de un laico sobre la visión de la Iglesia hondureña presentada por una comisión nombrada por el CELAM* (Tegucigalpa: Asesores para el Desarrollo [ASEPADE], 1982).

<sup>68</sup> “Denuncia sacerdote de la Diócesis de Occidente: Matanza en la frontera con El Salvador,” *El Tiempo*, May 24, 1980. “Acusa la Diócesis de Occidente: Ejército participó en la masacre de la frontera,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 24, 1980. “Denuncia Diócesis de Santa Rosa de Copán: Ejército hondureño cómplice de matanza de 600 salvadoreños,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 24, 1980. “Los refugiados en Honduras: 1980-1986,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 6 (October 1986).

center Honduran Patriotic Front sent delegations to interview locals and survivors, whereas the right-wing media didn't even see the campesinos as worth interviewing—implicitly seeing them all as Reds or as simply too ignorant to trust as eyewitnesses.<sup>69</sup>

The massacre could no longer be denied—within Honduras. The evidence was obvious to anyone physically there, so the FF.AA. had to impugn the eyewitnesses and, above all, the clergy that had first vouched for them (Chapter 9, “The Sumpul Massacre”). The FF.AA. launched a heavy anticlerical campaign in southwestern Honduras. The main line of attack on the character of churchpersons was to claim that the diocese's clergy were uniformly Salvadorans expelled by their country for subversion, though actually the diocese had Honduras's highest proportion of native-born Honduran clergy.<sup>70</sup>

The Honduran military dismissed the accusation as not even reaching the level of hearsay, feeling no need to offer any contrary evidence.<sup>71</sup> No rebuttal was needed for campesinos too ignorant to see straight or to remember accurately, nor for members of a coordinated worldwide smear campaign against countries fighting Communist expansion in Central America (Chapter 3).<sup>72</sup> Rather than an effort to reframe reports of an incident, this claim used the reports themselves as a “defeater”: that each new report was a Kremlin-directed fabrication or distortion, which had to be corrected. News had to be “patrolled” against the alleged Soviet handlers and sympathetic journalists to allow the physical war to continue.

The border was also subjected to the Lempa massacre on March 17, 1981, Salvadoran soldiers and Guardsmen killing around 100 fleeing Salvadorans. This time Father Gallagher was

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<sup>69</sup> “Confirmada la matanza,” *Patria* 4:179 (July 12, 1980).

<sup>70</sup> Wheaton, *Iron Triangle* 1981: 17.

<sup>71</sup> Edmundo Salazar, “600 personas ‘no son cualquier sacrificio,’ ” *Patria* 4:183 (Aug. 16, 1980).

<sup>72</sup> Notably how Raymond Bonner and Alma Guillemprieto were quickly damned as FMLN dupes and for their El Mozote reporting. Rigoberta Menchu's Nobel Prize-winning *testimonio* was also deemed a smaller part of a vast “campaign” of defamation and disinformation against U.S. policy and Central American allies mounted by the global left wing. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 165.

personally able to help Salvadorans ford the flooded river into La Virtud, Lempira, until the Salvadoran forces detected his ropeline and moved their rifle and artillery fire to the refugees, the priest dodging bullets.<sup>73</sup> U.S. journalist Alex Drehsler saw dogs eating the dead children: he noted that the 1980 incident was “still an alleged massacre to most people” in the United States and that “If a few priests and journalists hadn’t been at Río Lempa, it would have been the same.”<sup>74</sup> Campesinos’ testimony was still dependent on third-hand warranting—clergy, journalists, lawyers, the Socialist and Christian Democrat parties in Honduras—and, ultimately, the reception in Washington: the White House and Capitol Hill.

Once the Sumpul Massacre became an international scandal, the Embassy in Tegucigalpa strove to prevent the story from exploding in the U.S. media. The December 1981 El Mozote massacre in El Salvador would be covered up using similar techniques: unlike at the Río Sumpul, the San Salvador Embassy sent a delegation, which reported that *something* deadly had occurred. For El Mozote, the White House had to intervene directly with *The New York Times*. Both stories were denied and then dropped *after* being “broken” and confirmed in the news; there was even some risk for the Administrations—had an Embassy found confirming evidence of a massacre at the Río Lempa or in El Salvador, that itself would be a scandal if revealed.

What the Tegucigalpa Embassy faced in May 1980 was not the challenge of debunking an incident over the short term. The consensual representation of reality in the U.S. media had to be prevented from shifting—that the Salvadoran Army *massacred*, that it was not a *rumor* or *un-*

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<sup>73</sup> Warren Hoge, “Slaughter in Salvador: 200 Lost in Border Massacre,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 1981.

<sup>74</sup> Magnus Isacson and Sandra Pentland, “Priest Tells of Second Massacre on Salvador Border,” *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, June 2, 1981.

*confirmed reports* or *Soviet smear campaign*.<sup>75</sup> And rumors and campaigns are more than simply frames: they are epistemic descriptions, prejudgments of a story's reputability.

### The Sumpul Massacre: The U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy under Amb. Jack R. Binns was impelled to act 1. by the story about Salvadoran state crime exploding in the Honduran press and becoming international through media and Church networks and 2. Honduras's place in Central America as a bulwark in a counterrevolutionary project that the Carter White House felt obliged to back in the absence of Somoza. The Embassy provided a more sophisticated denial than the anticlerical campaign mounted by the FF.AA. (Chapter 9). Binns's autobiography pointedly insists on *not* seeing for themselves without FF.AA. supervision, and explicitly denounces the visiting Congresspersons for going to the site instead of placidly accepting the Embassy's word.

Sharon Sullivan warns that "Rather than oppose knowledge, ignorance is often formed by it, and vice versa": knowledge has an inevitable tacit aspect, so factors—such as how it was produced or how sources are categorized as reputable or not—can easily remain hidden, unaddressed.<sup>76</sup> Other epistemologists say that pathological false "investigations" can be used to excuse declaring a case "closed" and refusing all further discussion of the subject, which is clearly at work in Binns's Embassy in 1980.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 99. J. Angelo Corlett, *Analyzing Social Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996): 3, 28. William P. Alston, "Belief-Forming Practices and the Social," in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 30. Robert K. Merton, "The Sociology of Knowledge," in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 49-51, 58. Michael Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Allen and Unwin, (1979) 1992): 115. Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996): 22, 86. E. Doyle McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 2.

<sup>76</sup> Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance* 2013: 294. Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* 1992: 90.

<sup>77</sup> Stehr and Meja, section introduction, *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 31.

The U.S. Embassy's initial position was already to accept and retransmit what its partner government asserted: the FF.AA. had told it that the Sumpul allegations were "based on reports of survivors who were presumed to have been closely associated with insurgent forces" and the Embassy wrote the State Department that Father Milla's reports "usually describe imaginary Honduran Army atrocities or assistance of [sic] the Salvadoran military."<sup>78</sup> Ambassador Binns praised the OAS observers as providing the best intelligence on the frontier, and the best avenue for bringing in Embassy personnel to those areas for investigations.<sup>79</sup> CODEH summarizes the Embassy—staying dependent on the FF.AA. for information—as spending the decade believing Hondurans were head-in-the-clouds rustics outright living in a world of superstition, as liable to fabricate complete and elaborate stories at the proverbial drop of a hat.<sup>80</sup>

The Embassy made a painstaking review of the tape recording of various Salvadoran witnesses. It had been made by Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) during a Congressional fact-finding tour to the refugee camps, recounting killings, rapes, bayoneting of pregnant women.

While Binns acknowledged that Salvadoran forces were committing gross violations,

we were not impressed. Three things seemed curious about the taped stories: similarities in descriptions of discrete events, particularly the use of the same phrasing by different people describing widely separate occurrences; the use of vocabulary that was uncommon in the speech of Salvadoran *campesinos*; and inaccurate translations of actual remarks (also on the tape) by the Unitarian interpreters. It was our impression that the testimony had been rehearsed and that the speakers had been guided in what they should say.

William G. Walker "had also lived in El Salvador for three years and was familiar with common speech patterns, vocabulary and so forth." He and Binns maintained that the tape was not credible, sparking an argument with the Congressional delegation.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, "The Honduran Church: An Overview," March 1981; box 1; Honduras Human Rights Collection, the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

<sup>79</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 14, 73.

<sup>80</sup> The Embassy used the same language and attitude against Honduran journalists and Members of Congress. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1989* (Somerville, Mass.: Honduras Information Center, 1990): 1-3.

<sup>81</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 81-82.

The Ambassador actually going to the border—even to rebut the Congresspersons—would signal “distrust” of the FF.AA.’s dominion over the border areas, leaving Binns in a bind: he was unable to search for defeating counterevidence<sup>82</sup> to support the FF.AA.’s frame, since that would undermine the FF.AA.’s assigned role as sole witness. He was reduced to quibbling over dialect and wording to try and maintain that only officials and officers had any warrant. Ordinarily, claiming that a speaker is outside the bounds of rational discourse is used to justify ruling that there is no need to engage further with them<sup>83</sup>—but these were members of *Congress*: they could not be marginalized or discredited, especially not by an official of the same political party. Incensed at the response that their interviewees were supposed witnesses who had been coached and trotted out for the U.S. foreigners, Rep. Gerry Studds (D-Massachusetts) told the press that the U.S. Ambassadors in Central America were discouraging the Congressional team from making their findings public.<sup>84</sup>

Binns criticized the Honduran “left wing”—like the scholar Dr. Juan Ángel Almeyda Bonilla—on the same terms as the antidemocratic pro-Somoza death-squad leader Ricardo Zúñiga and the hardline Sen. Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina), who were insisting that Binns was a dangerous leftist<sup>85</sup>—neatly splitting the difference between, what to him were two mirroring

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<sup>82</sup> Alvin I. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1999): 44.

<sup>83</sup> Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 36.

<sup>84</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 83.

<sup>85</sup> Sen. Helms was not inconsequential, connected to death squads whose leaders like D’Aubuisson and, with Lt. Col. North, numerous contacts in the far-right Argentinean-operated Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, the World Anti-Communist League’s Latin American unit and connected to Operation Condo and the 1980 Bolivian *narco*-coup. Helms’s associates were also fingered in the plots to kill U.S. Ambassadors Lewis Tambs and Thomas R. Pickering for their Drug-War roles and their interventions on behalf of the civilian officials of “façade democracy.” But here his extremist ties could be mobilized on behalf of the narrative of “fledgling democracies” beleaguered by two extremes, which were providing the cover for the counterrevolutionary atrocities in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 64, 215, 258. Amson, *Crossroads* 1993: 158. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticomunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 77-78. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 43, 53. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 56, 64, 87-89, 140. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 125. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, 1988: 40, 49, 102, 104. Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the*



sorts of anti-American extremists.<sup>86</sup> Binns denounced them all for going around the approved Ambassadorial and military gatekeepers and seeking unsanctioned knowledge, which he denounced not just as hearsay but as carefully-sown propaganda ultimately derived from the Kremlin.

Binns spent dozens of pages in his 2000 autobiography on debunking the massacre—even after specific confirmation by the UN Truth Commission for El Salvador 1993. He insists that the reports from the Sumpul River were proof only that the guerrillas had launched a sophisticated U.S.-targeted “disinformation campaign attacking both the Salvadoran and Honduran governments and military establishments, as well a U.S. activities in support of the Salvadoran junta.” After meeting with Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-New York) in July 1, 1981, Binns condemned him as a conduit for “virtually all of the disinformation that the Coordinator for Solidarity with the Salvadoran People had been peddling”—such as stories of FF.AA.–Salvadoran buildup on the border and joint anti-FMLN maneuvers, which were of course *true*.<sup>87</sup> Anything differing from the FF.AA. and the Embassy was propaganda from CISPES, which was itself framed as a mere FMLN front. The U.S. Embassy personnel shared Honduran government’s attack on the idea of testimony itself: only certain groups—military officers, Embassy officials—could be reliable eyewitnesses to what was going on at the borders. He jettisoned the whole scaffolding of

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*1980s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994): 30-31, 34, 268, 476. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard* 1998: 250-51. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 63, 76. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 12, 260. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 48, 144, 154-55. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, 1988: 86, 285.

<sup>86</sup> Binns’s careful twisting of Central American realities matches the automatic blame laid on “extremists of the left” for massacres and targeted killings, or Jeane Kirkpatrick’s claim of “false equivalence” between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in Latin America. He also undermined the Salvadoran Frente Democrático Revolucionario’s 1980 outreach to Tegucigalpa, warning Gen. Paz García and Chancellor Col. Elvir Sierra that that would just legitimate the FMLN. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 15, 22, 35, 43, 54, 56, 60-61, 87, 93, 111, 131-32, 151-2, 292, 294.

<sup>87</sup> Binns does not appear to have cited the widely-available UN Commission on the Truth for El Salvador report in his autobiography. In the absence of a targeted Freedom of Information Act filing we do not know what unrevealed knowledge the ambassador had, or what he refused to let himself know. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 214.

analyzing the testimony of another person—coherence, verification, falsifiability, corroboration.<sup>88</sup>

Two decades later, Binns’s memoir explicitly condemned the Congressional teams for wanting to see the site on their own: “They simply did not trust an embassy to give them a fair, balanced picture of what was happening and why. In that sense, they were much like their ideological opponents on the [Honduran] far right” and thus threats to seeking true knowledge. A few chapters after all but calling the Sumpul Massacre a Communist hoax, Binns duly records his shock at plenipotentiary Vernon Walters denying all Salvadoran state violence and blaming reports thereof as “entirely the product of communist disinformation.” Binns was upset that already in 1981 the CIA in the Embassy was hiding the CIA, FF.AA., and Argentinean ties to the Contras from him.<sup>89</sup>

Anticipating the next Administration’s attack on Witness for Peace, Amb. Binns condemned the very idea of seeing for oneself as prejudiced to begin with, as mistrustful of the government. The Congresspersons were end-running him, trying to debate his ability to discern what was true.<sup>90</sup> They were showing pathological skepticism, that they were badgering: epistemologists note that the definition of a “crank” is one who tests and probes and attempts to verify *too* much.<sup>91</sup> The figure of the crank undermines what has to be taken for granted to continue producing knowledge, and their challenge to the status quo is taken as proof that the institution was correct not to countenance any challenger or outsider observation: their evidence does not have to

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<sup>88</sup> Frederick F. Schmitt, “Socializing Epistemology: An Introduction Through Two Sample Issues,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 4.

<sup>89</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 13-14, 33, 41-42, 80, 164, 176, 215-16.

<sup>90</sup> Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* 1992: 84, 91-92.

<sup>91</sup> Jennifer Lackey, “Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others,” in Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 76.

be accepted or tested<sup>92</sup>—Goffman’s classic looping. Secrecy—or at least an appeal to secrecy—is often used to conceal disagreement within an institution from the public.<sup>93</sup>

Binns was not particularly un-self-aware or deceitful or burdened by a guilty conscience: he even condemns U.S. envoys who over-identify with their host governments and rely on their militaries for all their information. Binns’s autobiographical self-presentation is that of a democracy- and human-rights-minded official who did not rely on the word of his host generals, conducting due diligence if a massacre had indeed occurred.<sup>94</sup> He thought of himself—in both his Ambassadorship in 1980-81 and his 2000 memoir—as having an appropriate level of skepticism, in the original Greek etymology of seeking or investigating. He did not believe he was *denying* a massacre, because he was himself part of a system that operated by judging who and what could be considered reputable.<sup>95</sup>

The autobiography of one person, no matter how active at the time, is here useful for outlining the processes and assumptions used by the first denial of a Central American massacre. His stated actions are important because they reveal an early—pre-Reagan—effort to maintain an ideology, in the sense of an unrecognized distortion of reality for even the Ambassador working

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<sup>92</sup> Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* 1992: 85, 91.

<sup>93</sup> There appear to have been no orders from above from Secretary of State Zbigniew Brzezinski to quash the story of the Río Sumpul massacre: in ironic contrast, the San Salvador Embassy was much more curious about El Mozote under Reagan and Secretary Haig. Binns does not appear to have ever realized what his Democrat “vital centrist” ideology had led him to do. R.G.A. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Roy Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge* (Keele: University of Keele, 1979): 13.

<sup>94</sup> Binns noted that the U.S. MILGROUP in San Salvador was so involved it even helped plan the Salvadoran military’s 1969 attack on Honduras, much like how the British SS *Springfjord* was bombed by CIA agents 1954 on Anastasio Somoza García’s orders—not from Washington. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 64-66. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 112. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 121, 148.

<sup>95</sup> Such a similar process occurred for the 2009 coup: Binns had prided himself on resisting the “stovepipe” around Sen. Helms favoring Ricardo Zúñiga, but supported Suazo Córdova in 1981. Likewise Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Assistant Secretary of State Thomas A. Shannon, Jr., insisted that since the coup had replaced the elected Manuel Zelaya with a fellow member of the Liberal Party it was hardly a coup at all. In both 1981 and 2009 the State Department’s functionaries insisted that they had resisted pressure for a repressive outcome—while such pressure in fact had not been needed in the first place for Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Romeo Vásquez Velásquez’s goals. Daniel Beckman, “A Labyrinth of Deceit: Secretary Clinton and the Honduran Coup,” Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Apr. 12, 2017, <https://www.coha.org/a-labyrinth-of-deception-secretary-clinton-and-the-honduran-coup/>.

in the country. Ideology has to be active, productive, and flexibly meet challenges<sup>96</sup> rather than provide simple marginalization and denial. As analysts of Cold-War international relations also remind us, its definition also includes justifying the use of force against the planet's poorest.<sup>97</sup>

The Honduran massacres were successfully kept from becoming a controversy that might affect Congressional funding for the Salvadoran military, with President Carter cutting off and then reinitiating military aid. But on December 11, 1981, Salvadoran forces perpetrated a far larger massacre in neutral El Mozote, Morazán Department. Nowadays one of the most iconic symbols of the entire Civil War, "El Mozote" is also the most acute example of "unmaking" a news story from 1980s Central America, of the Reagan White House's unprecedented dominance over media coverage.<sup>98</sup> The Administration needed to prevent outrages like that over the December 1980 massacre of four Churchwomen, which had threatened Congressional military aid to the incoming Administration's top priority. It could not be denied or defused, Secretary of State Gen. Al Haig (ret.) and Jeane Kirkpatrick drawing Congressional ire for claiming that their vehicle had deliberately run a roadblock or the women had been FMLN activists.<sup>99</sup>

El Mozote, however, was successfully defused *after* being reported in the U.S. newspapers and being partially confirmed by the Embassy. Properly speaking, the story was dissuaded—rather than denied or "covered up" in the classical sense—by the forced transfer of *The New*

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<sup>96</sup> Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis* 1998: 162.

<sup>97</sup> Jonathan Joseph, "On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations: A Scientific Realist Account of Hegemony," in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 78.

<sup>98</sup> The massacre was mentioned in only 15 U.S. stories 1983-89, then 18 times in 1990-91 alone, and then became "a mandatory subject of moral outrage for every liberal daily in 1993" with the Peace Accords, forensic archeology, and UN Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 4.

<sup>99</sup> Reinforcing and maintaining this new frame (that the Churchwomen had some responsibility for their murders) required counterfactuals—which required too high a level of detail and allowing the press to object to or ridicule talk of gun-running, roadblock-jumping nuns. Arnsion, *Crossroads* 1993: 294.

*York Times*' Raymond Bonner away from Central American stories.<sup>100</sup> His forcible resignation drew comment at the time, and ran the risk of escalating the El Mozote story if survivors like Rufina Amaya were further investigated—potential becoming a story of a massacre by a U.S.-trained battalion *plus* White House pressure to bury the story.<sup>101</sup> But again while *nowadays*—since the 1992 excavation—“El Mozote” is one of the most iconic events of the Salvadoran Civil War, there was no real Senate debate or funding cutoff of the Salvadoran forces for twelve years. Despite the risks, the White House had successfully managed to make El Salvador a nonissue for Congress—whereas the two Boland Amendments cut off the Contras, leading to an explosive revelations after Hasenfus's shutdown. The reports of massacre were inverted instead into proofs of left-wing violence and a Soviet smear campaign against the “free world.” The refusal to acknowledge the Sumpul Massacre allowed a further success at El Mozote: the burden of proof had been shifted,<sup>102</sup> and all the assumptions of the Cold War itself would have to end before the dead could be acknowledged again, to reemerge from the silence imposed by two U.S. Administrations.

## Conclusion

Until 1983, the Reagan Administration's role in Central America was not entirely that of a protagonist: the Argentinean junta took on the cause of the Nicaraguan National Guard, which then lost the civil war and was forced to flee to Guatemala and El Salvador—which already had several far-right death squads. Counterrevolutionaries from Central America or the Southern

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<sup>100</sup> Michael Miner, “Changing Times: The Vindication of Raymond Bonner,” *The Chicago Reader*, Apr. 15, 1993, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/changing-times-the-vindication-of-raymond-bonner>.

<sup>101</sup> Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 92-94. Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 142. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 196, 199-201.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Turner, review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller. *Social Studies of Science* 19:2 (May 1989): 370-74.

Cone were the first to take initiative on even the larger slaughters that made headlines, and bridled when Washington presumed to send any “suggestions” along with its cash and ammunition. Taking a perspective from Honduras (rather than only Washington or Buenos Aires) provides an insight into how the riskiest stories had to be kept away from the press in the United States (Chapter 3).

Honduras’s FF.AA. fought the news of the 1980 Río Sumpul Massacre, but the new Reagan Administration had to fight staffers of the Embassy in San Salvador and *New York Times* reporters for the 1981 El Mozote Massacre by the new U.S.-trained and -equipped Atlacatl Battalion. Both massacres originated in the Salvadoran Civil War, but Honduras was the location where the techniques of denial were first exercised. The El Mozote Massacre had a direct tie to Washington, the White House took more direct actions and accumulated more risk: it was as impeachable as anything revealed in 1986-88. When analyzing the Río Sumpul Massacre as an incident, it quickly underwent all the stages of denial that Stanley Cohen laid out, to diffuse and complicate the reception of the story against the warrantors adding details from other witnesses.

Existing historiography of Central America’s revolution and counterrevolution have focused on the states in the region as conditioned by serving an oligarchy—even if the military could overpower its local creators—or serving as a surrogate for the regional hegemon in Washington—even if it could extort its supposed patron or exaggerate the “Communist” threat. 1980s Honduras is an example of how “warranting” and controlling news is inherent to the state: only the state could marshal an attack on the Church over the Sumpul Massacre—but ultimately had to find a rival Christian sect to have any effect (Chapter 9). So 1. Realist emphasis on state power and decision-making or 2. the Marxians’ repression as an outgrowth of class dominion are not *exclusive* explanations. The decision-makers in Buenos Aires, Washington, or San Salvador were

driven by a need to repress the working class and by sheer opportunism, but were also operating in the wake of the Vietnam War and the Church Committee. States took on significant risk to themselves in order to conceal the El Mozote Massacre (see above, Chapter 3)—a success that built on the campaign by the Honduran and U.S. states to cover up the Sumpul Massacre.

Taryn Butler concludes that denial had worked *against* Reagan, forcing him into a defensive position against discoverable fact ever since the Sumpul Massacre—before he was even elected. Since 1981 there were numerous shoot-downs, criminal connections, and massacres that would have fatally damaged his Presidency—unless Central American witnesses were discredited and U.S. journalists fired. This view contrasts with other media analysts’ assumption of the Cold Warriors as brilliant, masterful controllers of the press—the organist on the proverbial “mighty Wurlitzer,” in direct command of newspaper headline and retraction alike.<sup>103</sup> The significant efforts required to cover up the stories, and their near-failure, showed that Reagan never had *full* control over the U.S. media, instead relying on intimidating editors and firing reporters (Chapter 3) as much as on his personal charisma, restoration of national narratives, or general Cold-War hegemony.

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<sup>103</sup> Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Mark Hertsgaard, Edward A. Lynch, etc., do not focus on the “near misses,” only on the outcomes that *did* occur—regardless of contingency. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 77.

## Chapter 5 Two Secret Wars

### Introduction

Over the 1983-86 period the Reagan Administration ran into several interlocking dilemmas: 1. a legal prohibition on its involvement in Nicaragua, 2. having to deny that the Contras were on Honduran territory, and 3. heightened demand by CIA Director William Casey and Contra leaders for media-friendly military successes. Despite the initial enthusiasm of Reagan, Casey, and early White House hardliners that Central America was the first place the supposed expansion of world Communism would be stopped,<sup>1</sup> by 1983 the consensus in the White House,

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<sup>1</sup> Nicaragua was seen as a particular opportunity for the incoming Administration—less established than Cuba and thus believed more vulnerable to undermining by the enforcers of the former, *somocista* regime; figures from Al Haig to Bud McFarlane to President Reagan insisted that “We had to win this one,” “I don’t want to back down,” and “Central America is the most important place in the world for the United States today,” a war to “win” the Cold War itself. In other words, the Administration believed in 1981 that if it failed in Central America, the whole “Third World” arena was ultimately lost. The only question was whether to attack Cuba first (Haig), Nicaragua (Casey), or El Salvador (Kirkpatrick). This fundamental category error helps explain CIA Director William Casey’s *lack* of the caution he could show when planning the operations in other global regions. Raymond Bonner, *Weakness and Deceit: U.S. Policy and El Salvador* (New York: Times Books, 1984): 212. Jeremy M. Brown, *Explaining the Reagan Years in Central America* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995): 255. Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007): 68. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 338, 343. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 112-14, 187. Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993): 271. Joseph Andrew Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War: A ‘Neat Idea’ and the Reagan Doctrine,” M.A. thesis (Tufts University, Medford and Somerville, Mass., 2016): 84-85. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 57-71, 80-81. Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011). Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 88. Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987): 224-28. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 30. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 263. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 508. David Ryan, “The Peripheral Center: Nicaragua in U.S. Policy and the U.S. Imagination at the End of the Cold War,” in Bevan Sewell and Maria Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 292. Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, “Reagan and the Evil Empire,” in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War: The Rhetoric of Hearts and Minds* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018). James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 160-62. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 379. Philip E. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base* (Washington: Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action Task Force, 1982): 28-29. Robert E. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” in Craig Eisendrath, *National Insecurity: U.S.*



Langley, and the Pentagon was that the Contras could not militarily defeat the *Ejército Popular Sandinista* (EPS) and cause the fall of the Sandinista government without the U.S. Marines landing.

The presence of the *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense* (FDN) in Honduras was consistently denied from 1980 to 1985 in order to 1. present the Contras as a Nicaraguan uprising that could potentially be granted international recognition and legitimacy if it captured territory and 2. to deny Managua's claims to self-defense and reframe the EPS's strikes as the acts of an irrational, aggressive, expansionist regime. This was all a knowing lie by the Reagan Administration and the Honduran military and government. The frontier situation was repurposed as proof of a Nicaraguan smear campaign against the civil-military governments of Honduras and El Salvador—theyself reframed as “fledgling democracies” after the elections of 1980-82.<sup>2</sup> This is

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*Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 52. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 171-72.

<sup>2</sup> The classic “managed transition” focuses on Southern Cone militaries’ political and economic handoff to politicians of the pre-*golpe* parties they temporarily displaced, in exchange for impunity, effective control over the military budget and “national security” concerns, and really the ultimate say in any action by the civilian government. No matter the international or domestic pressures, the impetus of each transition was in the hands of the military and its factional struggles. Even in 1991 the Honduran Congress did not *know* the FF.AA.’s exact budget—perhaps L150 (FF.AA.), L247 (Ministry of Economy), or L500 million (including U.S. aid, which reached US\$30-90 million in the 1980s, the number-two recipient of U.S. military aid in the continent after El Salvador). Argentina 1958-66 and 1983-99, Guatemala 1966-70, and Uruguay 1971-85 were marked by a new hybrid “civic-military regime” where elected officials kept the impunity, autonomy, and emergency powers that the armed forces requested. Honduras’s 1980 and 1981 elections and 1981-84 dual regime under President Roberto Suazo Córdova and Commander-in-Chief Gen. Gustavo Álvarez Martínez provided the first Central American example of such *democracia de fachada*. 1970s reformist candidates who had had their elections stolen by the most regressive officers—José Napoleón Duarte in El Salvador 1972 and Efraín Ríos Montt in Guatemala 1974—would provide the public face for cyclonic military brutality in the next decade. Honduras from 1981 to the present fits Alfred C. Stepan’s definition of the least democratic transition: a military with unpunished human-rights violations, a deciding role in crises of state, setting its own budget and choosing its missions, lack of subordination to the elected President. True democratization requires that there be no space outside the law, no secret prisoners. Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 162, 271, 404, 416, 421. David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012): 56-57. Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador’s Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000): 197. Noam Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 58, 60. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 102. Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York: Vintage, 1994): 25. Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985): 315. James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988): 362, 375-76. J. Samuel

Erving Goffman's classic "looping," where resistance to punishment is used to justify further punishment. However, this arrangement also depended on keeping key factors hidden from the U.S. public and Congress as the ultimate "target audience": media analysts conclude that such occlusion of news stories was to maintain a certain burden of proof.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. Congress progressively constricted military and CIA presence in the war with the 1982 and 1984 Boland Amendments.<sup>4</sup> After the forcible deposal of the Contras' Honduran

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Fitch, "Military Attitudes Toward Democracy in Latin America: How Do We Know if Anything Has Changed?" in David Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 62-64. Michael D. Gambone, *Small Wars: Low-Intensity Threats and the American Response Since Vietnam* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013): 28. Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984): 99-100, 105-07, 114, 139-40, 157, 161, 167-68, 193. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 51, 58, 73-75, 85, 88, 101, 110-11. Peter Kombluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan's Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 38. Gilbert M. Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies," in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 27. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 88. Fernando López, *The Feathers of Condor: Transnational State Terrorism, Exiles and Civilian Anticommunism in South America* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016): 9, 61. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 78, 144. Juan E. Méndez, *Truth and Partial Justice in Argentina* (New York: Americas Watch, 1987): 67-69. Andrea Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992*, Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2016): 55-58, 104, 138, 151, 214-17, 228, 280-83. Paul Ramshaw and Tom Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial: The New York War Crimes Tribunal on Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1987): 36-38. Leticia Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1997): 79. Holly Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 48, 106. William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996). Harold A. Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela," in Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America* 2001: 178-80, 183. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 38. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 117.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 111.

<sup>4</sup> One of the rationales for the Boland amendments was in fact to *protect* the CIA from another explosive story, preventing it from too deep an involvement that would be exposed and traced right back to the Agency, like the mining of ports, bombing of airports, and the "murder manual" had been 1983-84. The 1982 amendment had sought to put a goal down in writing. Langley's establishment also had a need to build a base of support on Capitol Hill and with the intelligence committees, which had made explicit efforts to be respectful of the Agency and appear "responsible" on their secrecy. But William Casey simply went around all oversight and deceived the committees, eventually creating what Lt. Col. Oliver North described as an "off-the-shelf, self-sustaining, stand-alone entity," securing foreign (and cartel) funding to conduct operations too controversial to entrust to even covert procedure. In other words, Casey set up "the Enterprise" so that even Langley could not scrutinize it, ostensibly to shield the CIA. Christopher Dickey concludes that the Contra War was doomed since 1982: an undeclared, open-ended, backdoor war not planned to last beyond 1983 was bound to be exposed. Taryn Butler, "How Low Can Transparency Go? Secrecy in the Iran-Contra Affair as an Effect of Power," M.A. thesis (Normal, Ill., Illinois State University, 2017). Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 64. Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration's Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly

co-founder Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez (1981-84), the *Fuerzas Armadas* of Honduras deliberately exposed the Contras' presence in Tegucigalpa and the Nicaraguan frontier November 1985. For half the decade the U.S. and Honduran governments had not just denied the Contras' presence but cited the claims as part of "Communist" Managua's cruel global media hoax against its own victims. The Contras' enduring presence in Honduras was now being repeatedly broached in international news<sup>5</sup>: Presidents Suazo Córdova and Azcona still denied them regularly (almost annually)—because every one of the Contras' excursions into Nicaragua 1983-88 were beaten back.

The FF.AA. under Gen. Walter López Reyes (1984-86) had replaced Gen. Alvarez Martínez and exposed the Contras: the Commander-in-Chief was replaced precipitously in January 1986 by the new President José Azcona, with the hardline Gen. Humberto Regalado (1986-90). With the Honduran Church and press not under control, the FF.AA. was left as the only observer on the Nicaraguan frontier that the White House had "warranted" on news of the Contras or the EPS. While the FF.AA. had exposed itself as covering up a Contra force as large as itself, at the same time the half-decade cover-up had given them a gatekeeper position on any stories about the frontier Contras. This gave the Honduran state the leverage needed to deny the highly-

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Press, 1987): 107. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 100. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008): 34-35, 304. Lindsey A. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 54-56. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 297, 302, 407, 418, 514. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 437-38, 497, 517-57, 637-38. Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (New York: New Press, 2015): 1-3, 178-79, 190. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 169-70. Karen Tumulty, "Significant Iran-Contra Questions Not Answered," *The Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 13, 1987. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 382, 415. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 64, 148, 176, 237, 240, 252, 320-21, 326.

<sup>5</sup> Before Eugene Hasenfus's October 1986 shutdown all the fund-diversion conduits were already public—and restricted to scattered stories in the back pages of newspapers. The Iran deal was briefly covered sixteen months before it was "exposed" by *ash-Shira'a* Nov. 3, 1986—both "halves" of "Iran-Contra" could be pieced together, but only if one had the inclination and contextual expertise. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xiv. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 302, 306, 314-15, 322-23. Linas J. Kojelis, Otto Reich, Ronald Hinckley, and Robert Parry, interviewees, "Public Diplomacy: Seeking Public Support for Contra Aid Policy," in Richard Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy Over Contra Aid* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993): 162. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 24, 290-91. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 3.

exaggerated stories of Nicaraguan invasion in spring 1986 and 1988 that the White House needed to get Congress to vote to reinstate lethal funding for the Contras.

The two Holy Week incidents have been framed by some as embarrassments which nearly let Azcona cut the Contras off completely,<sup>6</sup> while others have cited them as the moments when Reagan won legislative legitimation of the Contra War after the Boland Amendments—over US\$100 million dollars, despite years of publicized Contra atrocities and the 1986 shootdown of Eugene Hasenfus, which threatened the Presidency itself.<sup>7</sup> Leticia Salomón cites this open secret, where each revelation further discredited the Honduran government, as feeding rising public and press ridicule against the state; she credits this factor as greatly reducing the civil-military state's ability to intimidate the Honduran popular movement as the decade ended.<sup>8</sup> But as we will see there is still a power in reinforcing and reiterating claims that are publicly known to be false.

Whether enforcing regional U.S. dominion, crushing the agro-export rural proletariat, or running a grift, the Contra War required some constant measure of ensuring control over news (if not full secrecy). There have been many news-centric analyses of “Iran-Contra,” as a scandal or as an example of how far a media-oriented White House could go by deliberately targeting the media (via the press itself) to maintain a narrative (Chapter 3). Directly examining how news stories were “made,” “broken,” or blocked and prevented brings Honduras into the Iran-Contra story in a new way.

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<sup>6</sup> Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Lynch, *The Cold War's Last Battlefield* 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1992): 114. Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1993): 11. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 27, 94, 120, 147.

The Honduran state manipulated the news, allowing the White House to continue pursuing that war, but this also gave Tegucigalpa leverage over Reagan's need for funding to keep the Contras alive. At the same time, this power over the White House was simply borrowed, or, more properly, originated in the process of both states keeping the war (which both states agreed to pursue) sufficiently secret. Honduras's internal politics was still determined by the internal politics of the patron Superpower, as expressed through tremendous outside funding for both the FF.AA. and the Contras.<sup>9</sup>

Witnesses' credibility and warrant had to be undermined; U.S. soldiers and contractors' deaths were whitewashed. Illiterate campesinos in the most remote parts of impoverished Central America could still initiate stories that would reach *The New York Times*, or the FF.AA. could noisily deny the "Great Communicator's" announcement of an incursion of hundreds of EPS soldiers onto Honduran soil. Stories such as the Sumpul and El Mozote massacres or reports of U.S. government protection and involvement in running drugs were "explosive," thus requiring significant effort to cover up—and nearly failed. And it was the Sandinistas, not U.S.-backed forces, who were the ones to get their "smoking gun" foreign pilot.<sup>10</sup> Bruno Latour insists that ideas can be impelled by their truth and power to rupture existing narratives, rather than simply being conditioned by power<sup>11</sup>: but the contrasting interpretation is that the facts do not "speak for

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Gill, "Epistemology, Ontology, and the 'Italian School,'" in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 31.

<sup>10</sup> Hasenfus seems to have genuinely believed he was a contractor for the CIA (Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 27, 219-22; Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 322). In any circumstance was "not CIA" only on a sheer technicality, Casey setting up everything about the Enterprise to end-run around the law while the Director of the CIA remained as its head (Persico, *Casey* 1990: 529).

<sup>11</sup> Dick Pels, "Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?" in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285. John Schwarzmantel, "Introduction: Gramsci in His Time and in Ours," in Mark McNally and John Schwarzmantel, eds., *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2009): 9. Note that this isn't the Kuhnian "paradigm" model, where contradictory evidence and backstage pressure among academics builds up until there is a "release" and the older is discredited *in toto* as though it had never existed (Barry Barnes and Donald MacKenzie, "On the Role of Interests in Scientific Change," in Roy Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge* (Keele: University of Keele, 1979); Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 24).

themselves,”<sup>12</sup> news stories subject to denial of those originating and transmitting them, and framing and saliency to those receiving them.

The continuation of the Contra War, and Tegucigalpa’s continued cooperation, was not explicable by Honduran anticommunism (Chapter 8) or financial self-interest alone. An emphasis on news control also puts doubt on any notion of the White House, CIA, or FF.AA. being absolute and masterful manipulators of the press.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the focus is on how state officials grappled with a war that they knew could not be won and which Honduran generals after Alvarez Martínez did not want on their soil. The White House was trapped by Tegucigalpa, and the Honduran state trapped itself in a cycle of self-discredit and loss of fear by the civilian public, because of the epistemological maneuverings required by the Salvadoran military and the Nicaraguan Contras on Honduras’s frontier. Even in the face of their own discredit, there was a power for the state in continuing to assert what was or was not true.<sup>14</sup>

#### Alvarez Martínez: The Pivot to Nicaragua

The 1980-82 period had been marked by a focus on preventing Salvadoran revolution: the Salvadoran military’s war against the FMLN and the *campesinato* was “professionalized” to the conventional Army and Air Force rather than paramilitaries, its earlier massacres successfully covered up. By 1983 the Salvadoran Civil War was characterized by rural land and aerial warfare, which was less “photogenic” and potentially newsworthy than large-scale massacres like

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<sup>12</sup> Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992): 119.

<sup>13</sup> Though if we go by the analyses of Noam Chomsky or Mark Hertsgaard, the new Administration both 1. had carefully subdued TV and print media and 2. relied on it to maintain Reagan’s “Teflon” and supposed record-breaking approval ratings.

<sup>14</sup> This goes against “social-capital” analyses, where the state builds up and deploys reputability to make its “case” in a contentious (but relatively open) public sphere.

Sumpul and El Mozote.<sup>15</sup> The Contras could never undergo such an alleged “reform,” “training,” or “conventionalization.”<sup>16</sup>

Since 1984 the Salvadoran Civil War was successfully “disappeared” from U.S. media and Congressional debate: with civilian President José Napoleón Duarte installed in 1982, both Democrats and Republicans quietly appropriated \$6 billion in military and economic assistance by 1989 with little discussion: El Salvador was off the agenda until the Atlacatl Battalion’s 1989 massacre at the Central American University.<sup>17</sup> The White House had successfully made one front in the Central American counterrevolution into a “forgotten war,” and hoped to repeat or maintain the silence on the Honduras-Nicaragua frontier.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> CISPES described the conventionalization as nothing more than a camera-friendly shift to “flying death squads” instead of urban slaughter: the indiscriminate bombing and ground sweeps were ten times more lethal than the death squads after 1981, but not receiving the international attention that the 1980 slaughter did. Once El Mozote was not followed up (Chapter 3, “El Mozote”) and thus not part of the El Salvador “story,” all deaths could be attributed to the general war; the 1980 massacres could be framed as fighting between “extremists” that Duarte kept in check thanks to the U.S. funding: “Just a few years ago some argued in Congress that U.S. military aid to El Salvador would lead inevitably to the involvement of U.S. combat troops. But the opposite turned out to be true. Had the United States failed to provide aid then, we might well be facing the final Communist takeover of El Salvador and mounting pressures to intervene. Instead, with our aid [and that of Congress], the Government of El Salvador is winning the war, and there is no prospect whatever of American military involvement.” Now the Salvadoran Civil War was a dispute for academics, activists, and think tanks—not a moral outrage as it had been in 1980. As in Guatemala, Duarte was praised for replacing the formerly-praised Brig. Gen. José Guillermo García with Brig. Gen. Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova (a D’Aubuisson associate who was no better than “Blowtorch Bob”). But even the notorious Lt. Col. Domingo Monterrosa could tell the U.S. press of “hearts and minds” rather than 1932-style scorched earth. Nevertheless by 1983-84 the FMLN had almost cut the country in half and reached 9-12,000 guerrillas, even if outnumbered and unwilling to engage with units composed of forced recruits. Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” June 24, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-united-states-assistance-nicaraguan-democratic-resistance>. Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety* 2012: 241. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 158, 165, 168, 185. Anne Laurent, ed., *On a Short Fuse: Militarization in Central America* (Washington: Caribbean Basin Information Project, 1985). Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 256. Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: 5-6, 17-23. White, *The Morass* 1984: 9.

<sup>16</sup> Though there were attempts in 1983 to publicly present them as an increasingly-professionalizing force capable of aerial and amphibious assaults and with a new manual of political doctrine rather than simply raids and mayhem. This only generated Congressional anger and led to the second Boland Amendment the next year.

<sup>17</sup> Arnson, *Crossroads* 1993: 231. Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 142.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Siegel and Joy Hackel, “El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited,” in Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988): 130, 133.

Secretary of State Gen. Al Haig (ret.) favored a direct U.S. military embargo of Cuba and intervention in Central America, but he was replaced in July 1982 as the Oval Office opted against “boots on the ground.” As with all other U.S. covert interventions, that meant 1. reduced control and chances of military success and 2. the possibility of exposure. The Contra War was “covert” in the sense that crucial factors were hidden to deceitfully obtain Congressional support: the Contras’ failure to leave Honduran territory and the CIA’s direct involvement in attacks on Nicaragua. Those facts became known 1983-84 and defeated the explicit case that the White House and Casey had made to the Intelligence Committees: Congress passed the Boland Amendments as conclusive bans on further U.S. government involvement in Nicaragua—in part to protect Langley from the projects of even its own Director.

The most significant change on the Honduran side of the regional counterrevolution was Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s decision to pivot from counterinsurgency in El Salvador to pro-insurgency in Nicaragua. The FF.AA. illegally protected the *ladino* FDN in El Paraíso and Choluteca Departments since the end of 1980, and the predominantly-Miskito MISURA in Gracias a Dios Department since December 1981.<sup>19</sup> It provided conventional air and artillery support for Contra guerrilla raids against the town Militia of northern Nicaragua, and then supported their increasingly-large-scale fights against the EPS, especially its unique *Batallones de Lucha Irregular* or *Ligeros Cazadores* composed of experienced Sandinista guerrillas from the 1970s war

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<sup>19</sup> The Miskitos’ long-standing tensions with “Pacific” Nicaragua and their demands for autonomy could “align, however contingently, with the broader framework of U.S. imperialism,” Joe Bryan notes. Americas Watch, *Human Rights in Central America: A Report on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua* (New York: Americas Watch, 1984): 17-25. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 136-37. Joe Bryan, “Trust Us: Nicaragua, Iran-Contra, and the Discursive Economy of Empire,” in Carole MacGranahan and John F. Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018): 364. Martin Diskin, “The Manipulation of Indigenous Struggles,” in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987): 80-96. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 513. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 100-04. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 28-29.



against Somoza.<sup>20</sup> This meant a shift in the target of secrecy and discredit, which the White House depended on the Honduran state to provide as much as it did reinforcements and infrastructure for ground and air combat.

Colonel, and then general, Alvarez Martínez intended to use the Contra counterguerrillas not to march into Managua *per se* but to provoke its government into making attacks on the Honduran military, in order to overtly involve U.S. forces.<sup>21</sup> Several Contra commanders likewise proposed luring an EPS strike—or faking one—to allow a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua, a repeat of 1926.<sup>22</sup> However, the White House and Honduran officers opposed what Gen. Alvarez Martínez saw as his obvious mission<sup>23</sup>: a direct FF.AA. attack to drive back the EPS to give the U.S. Marine Corps time to make its landings, which he nearly launched in 1982.<sup>24</sup> In a parallel to the CIA and FF.AA. working behind Ambassador Jack R. Binns’s back, Amb. John Negroponte and the FF.AA. colluded around the nominal *de facto* head of the Honduran state—“backstage” activity shielded by the secrecy of Honduras’s military-dominated state.

Gramscian theorists of international relations distinguish forcible U.S. *dominion* over Cold-War (and earlier) Latin America from consensual *hegemony*. Under this interpretation, Washington just gave the militaries ideology, protection, training, logistics, and materiel to crush

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<sup>20</sup> Lt. Col. North especially cautioned the Contras against these up-armed Sandinista guerrilla units. Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 299-301. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 77, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Alvarez Martínez’s January 1989 promotion was illegal and nearly spurred a coup against Suazo Córdova: the new President had broken all the rules to promote the colonel to brigadier general and to make him Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief (a title formerly belonging to the presidents before the 1982 Constitution). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 115. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 160, 203.

<sup>22</sup> Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 20. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 164.

<sup>23</sup> Even as a paid Pentagon “consultant” in self-imposed U.S. exile, former Gen. Alvarez Martínez was constantly vocal about his disappointment by the half-war that Washington insisted on directing, instead demanding a full, overt, and conventional joint U.S.-Honduran invasion of Nicaragua. Ronfeldt, *U.S. Involvement in Central America* 1989: 19, 25-35, 39-48, 51-52.

<sup>24</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 148, 159-61, 168.

the majority of the populace.<sup>25</sup> But Gramscians also note that a total police state like Pinochet's Chile or Videla's Argentina—its populace passive and atomized, its press fettered and its legislature padlocked—offers the new regime little avenue to even attempt to insist on their interpretation of events or to justify the repression.<sup>26</sup> Even Gen. Videla had to present the fiction that *nosotros argentinos somos derechos y humanos*, not *secretly murdering their prisoners* (Chapter 6). Force signaled a breakdown—not of the state, but of its hegemony, of its ability to find a justification for the violence. The state was unable to find a “project” that surpassed the interests of any single social group or class, that let its generals speak for society.<sup>27</sup>

Even the most stringent, short-term dictatorship requires a certain amount of hegemony to remain flexible, to engage with challenges.<sup>28</sup> Gramscian analysts conclude that the Latin American coups of 1973-76 marked a turning point, because the armies were no longer backing even the pretense of the Liberal state that had existed since the 19th century—elections, legislatures, press.<sup>29</sup> However, the military regimes of Central America entered into a “managed transi-

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<sup>25</sup> This goes against any strong theoretical division between “hard” vs. “soft” power; after 1989-91 the sole remaining superpower—or, under a slightly different interpretation, the sole hyperpower since World War I—had less need to use direct force against states showing exclusive political and economic independence. Siba N. Grovogui and Lori Leonard, “Uncivil Society: Interrogations at the Margins of Neo-Gramscian Theory,” in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 173. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 13. Hyug Baeg Im, “Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci,” *Asian Perspective* 15:1 (Spring-Summer 1991): 138.

<sup>26</sup> Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis* 1998: 126. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, trans. Pedro Sette-Camara (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012): 186.

<sup>27</sup> The Gramscian analysis of the state defines it not as the instrument of any one single group or class, but positioning itself as representing all “society” (with the Foucauldian exception of those severely criminalized, in Argentina's case as violent “terrorists” or social “subversives”). Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 129. Robert Bocoock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 28. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 47, 52. Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis* 1998: 154-56.

<sup>28</sup> Nico Stehr, “Knowledge Societies,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 307.

<sup>29</sup> For this reason human-rights figures distinguish the *movimiento popular* from *sociedad civil*, a term more suited to political societies in Northwestern Europe. “Civil society” can easily include a *golpista* bourgeoisie, or suit the National Security Doctrine's task of determining who does not “belong” to the body politic or must be kept out of the social “community.” Marvin Barahona and Víctor Meza, interviews by author, Tegucigalpa, August 2012. Coutinho, *Gramsci's Political Thought* 2012: 173. Darío A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Holman, “International-

tion” to electoral democracy 1980-85, Honduras beginning the process with the 1980 Constituent election. Honduras under Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s dominion has been described as a “façade democracy,” with formal elections and civilian President and Congress—the first in a decade—existing only to give a fig leaf to the Contra War and Battalion 3-16’s secret murders. But Honduran historians emphasize the real opening that allowed freer investigation by the press and members of the Honduran Congress, especially after Alvarez Martínez’s 1984 ouster. Eventually civil society could question the FF.AA.’s dominion and forced the civilian government toward the peace process.<sup>30</sup> The Honduran state was more open than the Southern Cone at the time, in part due to the Carter and Reagan Administrations’ pressure to hold elections to maintain the frame of “fledgling democracies”—and on the more material U.S. assumption, that that might relieve popular pressure.

The Honduran and U.S. governments used EPS strikes against Contras attacking from Honduran territory to discredit the Sandinistas on the international stage, to give plausibility to calling Managua the aggressor against a U.S. ally and against international law in Congress.<sup>31</sup> This gambit depended on preventing certain stories from becoming regularly reaching the U.S. press: confirmation of the Contras’ presence in Honduras and their violent raids targeting civilians would have to be controlled. The facts of Contra camps and incursions were not compatible with the narrative of Managua’s inexplicable, intractable aggression—which was cited to support the Contras.

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isation and Democratisation,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 227. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 155.

<sup>30</sup> A *democracia de fachada*, particularly descriptive of the “civic-military” regimes of Uruguay 1973-85 or El Salvador 1979-91. Leticia Salomón, “El caso Matta: (Radiografía de la violencia),” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 52-69. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 27.

<sup>31</sup> Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 366.

Denying the Contras was central not only to keeping the civil war going next door, but to declaring—in hot outrage on the international stage—that Honduras was under unprovoked attack from Managua’s massive and expansionist military machine bent on conquering its neighbors from Guatemala to Panama.<sup>32</sup> Naturally any contradiction or denial by Managua was only further proof of its perfidy: stories from FSLN territory were not credible, in the same way that the El Mozote massacre was put into doubt because it was reported from FMLN-held land.<sup>33</sup> If the Contras’ position was widely known and recalled, Managua’s actions might become rational, explicable, even justifiable.

Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega complained to the press of *somocistas*’ cattle theft and attacks on EPS patrols—backed by FF.AA. helicopters—launched from Choluteca Department since November 1980.<sup>34</sup> Honduras’s Chancellor—the minister of foreign relations—announced July 1982 that Managua was simply attacking Honduras for its democracy and smuggling guns “to introduce subversion and terrorism in Central America.”<sup>35</sup> The Reagan Administration and its proxies also mocked the idea that the Contra raids were to start a war between the United States and Nicaragua. This all still fits within Chomsky’s analysis of the Cold-War *episteme* formulated by the 1980s to counter the supposed “Vietnam Syndrome”: charges against a predesignated enemy state need no substantiation, and any factual correction was “apologism” for dictators.<sup>36</sup> Maintaining this neoconservative system of credit and

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<sup>32</sup> “Nuevas agresiones,” *Patria* 5:218 (Aug. 15, 1981).

<sup>33</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 59-62, 130, 171. Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* 1994: 117, 126-28, 135, 137, 139, 274.

<sup>34</sup> ACAN-EFE, “Curándose en Salud: El sandinismo denuncia incursiones contrarrevolucionarias desde Honduras,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 12, 1980. Jack R. Binns, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, July 25, 1990, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (1998), <https://adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Binns,%20Jack%20R.toc.pdf>: 26-27.

<sup>35</sup> “Con su campaña del desinformación: Nicaragua busca justificar a agresión armada de gran magnitud: Cancillería,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, July 24, 1982.

<sup>36</sup> Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 9. Epistemologists note that there are few instances of prejudice or marginalization that do not directly condemn the

discredit required Goffman's concept of "looping"—the logic of punishing even reflexive self-defense with further aggression<sup>37</sup>—transmuting Contra attacks against Nicaraguan civilians into a Communist "disinformation campaign" instead.

Despite the counterrevolutionary project's broad need for stories of Nicaraguan attacks on Honduras, the EPS could also not be baited into any retaliation that would outright disrupt the Contra project. The first major clash directly between the FF.AA. and the EPS came mid-May 1981, after the FDN was driven back from Jalapa, Nueva Segovia. The battle between regular forces occurred just after *The Washington Post* first reported that the FF.AA. was preparing for war with Nicaragua—the issue was salient in U.S. news.<sup>38</sup> A near-war between the two countries broke out in August 1982, the FF.AA. put on Red Alert and Gen. Alvarez Martínez terrifying the Embassy by saying "Be prepared to go to Managua. This is our chance." The Contras' raids intensified and Hondurans provided air cover and heavy artillery.<sup>39</sup>

This tactical publicity was unwanted, prompting a shift in rhetoric: now the framing of the events was of Honduran forbearance against yet another Third-World bully (Chapter 2, "The

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trust, reliability, and credence of the targeted group. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* 2007: 32, 45. Alvin I. Goldman, "A Guide to Social Epistemology," in Goldman and Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology* 2011: 21.

<sup>37</sup> Frankly anything could be ascribed to Cuba, Russia, Iran, Libya, North Korea—and any request for proof only further evidence of the supposed enemy state's worldwide campaign of doubt and deception. The ostensible target of this "counter-" campaign was a state government which is not usually considered marginalized: but the Administration's intent was to discredit witnesses of its secret wars and the journalists and experts who warranted them, and so it does count as "epistemic injustice." Elliott Abrams and J. Edward Fox, interviewees, "Public Opinion and Reagan Policy: Administration Commentaries," in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 115. Amson, *Crossroads* 1993: 286. Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts* 1986: 15. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 48. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 93. Saul Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine: National Security and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988): 140. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 6.

<sup>38</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 167, 179.

<sup>39</sup> Leyda Barbieri, "Key Concerns Regarding the Impact on Honduras of U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua" (Washington: Washington Office on Latin America, 1986). Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 113. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 24. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 117. James A. Morris, "Government and Politics," in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 201-04. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 112.

Neoconservatives”),<sup>40</sup> replacing the earlier asserted narrative of U.S. collective self-defense against a would-be conqueror threatening even Mexico.<sup>41</sup> Cols. Leonidas Torres Arias and Alvarez Martínez repeatedly stressed “Honduran moderation in the face of Nicaraguan provocations” and denied they were helping the Contras or acting as U.S. proxies. Col. Torres Arias, Amb. Binns writes, was “lying through his teeth. In sum, most everything he said was a con, but I couldn’t say that” at the time.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile Managua could not simply invade Honduras to clear the Contra camps, which launched constant cross-border raids: it needed to maintain a relationship with Tegucigalpa, in order to secretly negotiate any cease-fire with the Contras. Both governments had a mutual need for deniability: Managua helped maintain Honduras’s denial of Contra and FF.AA. attacks on Nicaraguan civilians. In 1986 the Honduran press reported that Managua regularly kept Tegucigalpa in touch about the EPS’s border operations, to avoid direct clashes with the FF.AA.<sup>43</sup>

Austin Carson’s *Secret Wars* applies Goffman to covert warfare: his thesis is that most wars involve a large share of ongoing contact and negotiation between the combatant states, no matter how vicious the fighting or rhetoric. Here secrecy plays a legitimate role to prevent escalation, to keep it at a certain level of conflict, especially when the combatants are allied to Powers which themselves are in conflict, such as Washington and Havana.<sup>44</sup> For four years Teguci-

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<sup>40</sup> Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 48. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 33. Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002): 35.

<sup>41</sup> Casey favored the extremist Constantine Menges and Brian Latell, who were convinced since 1981 that Mexico as well as Central America and the Panama Canal were targeted to “fall” to the Red wave, overruling analysts at all levels to produce intelligence that Mexico was “on the brink of revolution,” with a 50-50 percent chance of becoming “the Iran next door”: “Look for the Ayatollah” figure, he urged skeptical analysts. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 84, 137. Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984): 153. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994: 265. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield* 2011: xviii, 305. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 318, 386-88. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 138, 189, 339-45.

<sup>42</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 168.

<sup>43</sup> Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Republic for Rent,” press release, Sept. 26, 1986. Morris, “Government and Politics,” in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 202.

<sup>44</sup> The most common reasons cited for secrecy are 1. to preserve a “backstage” for negotiations, covert operations that are immediately underway, movements of armed forces—ostensibly to save lives in the end; 2. the inherent,

galpa denied all the Contras on its soil, but Managua in turn denied fighting Contras on Honduran soil, in order to avoid reports of direct combat between their armies—for the sake of the Contras neither military institution supported.<sup>45</sup> Honduran soldiers engaged with Nicaraguan government forces and Salvadoran guerrillas, but also faced off against Contras and Salvadoran soldiers, their avowed “allies” against revolution.<sup>46</sup>

Goffman has described opponents tacitly setting rules of engagement and escalation: these negotiations are marked in a way that they are to be publicly “disattended,” or via back-channel messengers. This therefore runs the risk of exposure, to escalate the situation by moving to expose the hidden relationship<sup>47</sup>—which did not happen during the FF.AA.-EPS relations. Carson’s thesis held true in this situation: the EPS would preserve its relationship with the FF.AA. (and would not be given credit in the U.S. media on the Contra presence anyway) even at the cost of not smashing the FDN, and the FF.AA. was trapped by its role protecting Contra secrecy.

In order to fulfil the regional anticommunist goals that the Central American generals had agreed to 1978-80, the Honduran state now had to handle a news-generating second army in Honduras itself—which at the same time it could not admit was in Honduras for half a decade.

Analysts of ideology have long accounted for such contradictions and counterproductive, self-

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routine practice of state authority; and 3. to thwart dissent, to deceive, to keep control of the important decision-making in the hands of a self-selected elite. Oñate-Madrazo, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016 notes that patron politics—which introduced concerns relating to hyperpower Washington or midrange Powers like Cuba and France, and with the FMLN and the Salvadoran state’s reputation on the international stage—moved them towards negotiations and even convergent military strategies. Butler, “How Low Can Transparency Go?” 2017: 4-5. Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez was certainly enthusiastic about attacks against the EPS, but faced 1. all the other Honduran officers’ refusal to enter a hot war with either neighbor, 2. U.S. officials’ refusal of any direct involvement of U.S. combat troops abroad, and 3. the tendency of even the most zealous Contra officers to favor a steady funding stream to supply their men. Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Bordering on War,” press release, Apr. 1, 1986.

<sup>46</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 154-55.

<sup>47</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 210, 222-23, 234, 255. A. Javier Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 36.

defeating behavior as caused by “false consciousness”—a fundamental and fatal misinterpretation of the reality around them.<sup>48</sup> A more Goffman- or media-oriented analysis would put it down to “impression management” or maintaining a reputation—a synonym for epistemic validity, for honesty and/or accuracy.<sup>49</sup> After Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s desposal it was the FF.AA. itself that would be crucial to exposing the Contras in Honduras in 1985, sacrificing some news control to put more pressure on Washington.

For most of the decade the FF.AA. concealed the standing presence of 15,000 Contra fighters plus 40,000 dependents: Gen. Alvarez Martínez imposed a blanket denial 1980-85, and then the 1985-88 Commanders-in-Chief had to make a semi-annual denial as the EPS repulsed the FDN every time. The total was divided between 30-35,000 Miskito Nicaraguans throughout Gracias a Dios Department and 8-12,000 *ladino* Nicaraguans in eastern El Paraíso Department under the Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense.<sup>50</sup>

Tegucigalpa covered up prolonged attacks on its own citizens to maintain official denial of the Contra presence; the ex-Guardsmen were notorious for devastating civilian life and infrastructure in Nicaragua even before they formed the FDN. The Contras’ attacks into Nicaragua caused border incidents, retaliation, and crossfire, always threatening to drag the FF.AA. into conflict with its neighbor and constantly impacting local populations. The FDN and MISURA—with full FF.AA. cooperation and protection—traded arms and drugs, restricted Honduran citizens’ movements, destroyed plant and animal life, used up water wells, induced food shortages, hired themselves out to death squads and landowners, and stole from, extorted, kidnapped, raped,

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<sup>48</sup> Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 34.

<sup>49</sup> Mike Hepworth, “Deviance and Control in Everyday Life: The Contribution of Erving Goffman,” in Jason Ditton, ed., *The View from Goffman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980): 83. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* 1992: 34. Treviño, “Introduction,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 36.

<sup>50</sup> “Hundimiento económico en la zona dominada por los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 14, 1985. “Una vez recibidos los suministros: Los ‘contras’ se irán de Honduras,” *El Tiempo*, June 28, 1986.



and murdered Honduran campesinos. The FF.AA. helped with their forcible recruitment among Nicaraguan refugees, and barred public access to the camps, even Honduran Congressmen.<sup>51</sup> Open criminality especially contradicted the state's talk about "law and order," even if it was restricted to remote areas unvisited by the press.<sup>52</sup>

The 3,000 *somocista* National Guardsmen who arrived from Nicaragua or Guatemala in 1979-80 had never been intended by Gen. Paz García or Col. Alvarez Martínez to remain in Honduras.<sup>53</sup> The Contras' concealment seemed to have been a much lower priority for Paz García's government than it would be under his civilian successors: presumably his regime believed a permanent return to Nicaraguan territory was imminent. His regime used Contra violence to blame leftist guerrillas and intimate that the Revolution was spreading to Honduras as well as El Salvador, a threat to the planned transition to electoral democracy. This was in 1979-80, before there was any organized left-wing political-military activity.<sup>54</sup>

Binns recounts how his position as Ambassador also obliged him to disavow Christopher Dickey's reporting of the Contras' presence in May 1981: "in retrospect, Dickey's was an excel-

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<sup>51</sup> Efraín Mondragón, "Comandante Moisés," admitted that over 60% of the FDN's ranks were kidnapped and that most raids were to seize young men to bolster their numbers. Philip Jacobson, "Hostility Grows as Contras Seize Land," *The Times*, London, Sept. 27, 1986. Chris McGillion, "Reagan's Legacy in Central America: New Tensions and Old Conflicts," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct. 5, 1988. Julia Preston, "Honduras Feels Impact of Contra War: Government Cedes Border Strip to Nicaraguan-Rebel Fighting," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 11, 1986. Cynthia Brown, editor, *With Friends Like These: The Americas Watch Report on Human Rights and U.S. Policy in Latin America* (New York: Pantheon, 1985): 144, 152. Matías Funes, *Los deliberantes: El poder militar en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymurás, 1995): 323. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua 1987*: 39. Stanley A. Nuccio, *What's Wrong, Who's Right in Central America?: A Citizen's Guide* (New York: Facts on File, 1986): 55. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 170-71. Steven Volk, "Honduras: On the Border of War," in Martin Diskin, ed., *Trouble in Our Backyard: Central America and the United States in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon, 1983): 239.

<sup>52</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) examines the inherent criminality and extralegality underlying "drastic measures" taken to "protect" national security defined as superseding any constitution, government, or internal social "peace." Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 35.

<sup>53</sup> Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 56.

<sup>54</sup> The largest guerrilla group was the Frente Morazanista para la Liberación de Honduras, with only 100 men; only the Movimiento Popular de Liberación "Cinchonero's" audacious hijackings and sieges made headlines—sternly opposed by Managua and Havana, and only starting March 1981 and ending September 1982. Millett, "Historical Setting," in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 48. Morris, "Government and Politics," in *ibid.*: 192. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005. Wheaton, *Iron Triangle* 1981: 23.

lent example of solid, in-depth reporting, although at the time we considered it quite exaggerated,” and few of its facts could be disputed. But to maintain the image of Honduran innocence required by the war, Binns recounts how he told the press that Dickey’s stories were “irrational and incorrect.”<sup>55</sup> While Dickey was more knowledgeable than Binns, he did not have the warrant that a U.S. official did: the validity of Dickey’s knowledge could be inverted by the contrary word of an Ambassador.

The Contras were an “open secret” in Honduras ever since the first Guardsmen to flee across the Honduran border in 1979. As early as May 1981 *El Tiempo* and other periodicals were freely publishing the locations of five camps in El Paraíso Department.<sup>56</sup> *Patria* noted that the military authorities denied their presence, despite the fact that anyone nearby could see the men and their stockpiles of illegal weapons.<sup>57</sup> The Honduran Congress, recently restored by the FF.AA. after nine years, pointedly refused to investigate, drawing further comment in the press.<sup>58</sup> This 1980-82 phase of public discussion within Honduras visibly ends in the archive: the progressive *El Cronista* and *Patria* ceased and *Presencia Universitaria* was taken over. Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s fingerprint is visible on the University library’s shelves (Chapter 8: “The Militarized Media”). Despite any clichés that covert warfare is never a secret to target countries, Hondurans not in the immediate area did not have sustained newspaper coverage between 1982 and 1985: the *olanchanos* and *paraiseños*’ eviction was kept out of the four main newspapers.

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<sup>55</sup> The FF.AA.’s continued claims of innocence against Sandinista attack, while aiding the Contras, were possible only because the ultimate decisions were made in Washington, not Managua. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 168-9.

<sup>56</sup> “Sí hay campamentos,” *Patria* 5:207 (May 16, 1981), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 12, 1981. “Honduras cuartel general de la contrarrevolución nicaragüense,” Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos, *Boletín Internacional* 1:10 (November 1982).

<sup>57</sup> “Editorial: Basta de somocistas,” *Patria* 5:207 (May 16, 1981).

<sup>58</sup> “Honduras and Nicaragua: How Close to War?” CAHI, *Update* 2:14 (June 30, 1983).

From the beginning, any local in El Paraíso and Choluteca Departments who objected to the occupation was accused of being a Sandinista collaborator. In 1982 *El Tiempo* reported that nobody was safe going to the press or the authorities. Students, organizers, and popular movements were particularly vulnerable.<sup>59</sup> Contra forces beat rural Hondurans under FF.AA. officers' eyes on accusations of being Sandinista *orejas* ("ears"—secret informants),<sup>60</sup> suspecting that more frontier campesinos would "turn" and begin actively fighting the Contras or back the Nicaraguan Revolution.<sup>61</sup> Until the end of the 1980s civilians could only travel with safe-conduct permits from a Contra *comandante*. Hondurans were stopped on the road by Contras and even the Honduran Army to show their papers.<sup>62</sup>

In spring 1982 a thousand Contras crossed the border with the goals of securing a portion of land to declare "liberated territory" and give Washington legal basis to break off relations with Managua and recognize a provisional government<sup>63</sup> in Nueva Segovia Department<sup>64</sup> or Puerto

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<sup>59</sup> "Los 'contras' nicas siembran el terror en la zona Sur," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1982. Francisco Valeriano, "En zona fronteriza: 'Contras' ponen en fuga a diez mil hondureños," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 16, 1986. "ACNUR denuncia presencia de 'contras' en los campamentos," *La Tribuna*, June 3, 1986. "Promete Azcona a cafetaleros de El Paraíso: Van para fuera los 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, Nov. 11, 1986. "La carta de un 'contra' amenazando a hondureño," *El Tiempo*, Nov. 17, 1986. "'Contras' siembran terror en la frontera," *El Tiempo*, Jan. 8, 1987. "COFADEH: 'Ola represiva,'" *El Tiempo*, Mar. 7, 1987. CEDOH, "Desplazados de la guerra hondureños," *Cronologías* 10 (October 1988).

<sup>60</sup> "Según cafetalero que habló a Radio América: Son los 'contras' quienes minan la frontera entre Honduras y Nicaragua," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 17, 1986.

<sup>61</sup> "Hundimiento económico en la zona dominada por los 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 14, 1985.

"Mientras Contras se dan la 'gran vida': Se mueren de hambre campesinos desplazados," *El Tiempo*, Feb. 23, 1987.

<sup>62</sup> *Honduras Update Special* 1 (May 1987): 31 (translation of CODEH, *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987)). Ramón Custodio López, "Editorial: Más intervención, más represión ..." *CODEH* 4:25 (June 1986). Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 86-87.

<sup>63</sup> "La coyuntura entre la paz y la guerra," *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 46, 2nd epoch (June 1986). Alfonso Chardy, *The Miami Herald*, translated Jacobo Goldstein, "Islas del Cisne: Nueva ruta para los 'contras,'" *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Oct. 24, 1986. Miguel Pineda, "Un gobierno de 'contras' en Honduras," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 23, 1987. International Court of Justice, *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America): Affidavit of Edgar Chamorro* (The Hague: International Court of Justice, 1985): 180. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 178.

<sup>64</sup> Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012 documents how the Sevogias (Nueva Segovia, Estelí, and Madriz Departments) provided as many National Guardsmen as it did Sandinistas, and letting the Contra forces operate from a position of strength in El Paraíso across the border. White, *The Morass* 1984: 61-62.

Cabezas<sup>65</sup> instead—clearly conceptually modeled on the attempt to “liberate” Cuba twenty years before, using the tiny *émigré* landing force as a diplomatic fig leaf to cut off Havana. Throughout 1982, Honduras’s Chancellor Col. César Elvir Sierra (ret.) categorically denied that paramilitaries were organizing in Honduras to destabilize Managua.<sup>66</sup> The FDN proclaimed more land seizures in March-May 1983, sending 1,500 to seize some Nicaraguan land to obtain international recognition as a rebel government, but were beaten back; and they claimed 8,000 square kilometers December 1983—but again failed to hold anything for more than a few days.<sup>67</sup> The Contras continued to fail against half-trained *segoviano* Militia members and then the EPS, repeatedly and brutally, for the next eight years. As in Laos, infantry failures meant the U.S. stepped up its airpower—heavier, but still “covert.”<sup>68</sup>

Gen. Alvarez Martínez became Commander-in-Chief January 1982 and launched his crackdown against the press, especially the smaller-circulation periodicals, but *El Tiempo* was still able to send reporters to the Contras’ camps deep in the Honduran countryside. The San Pedro Sula daily reported in July that Concepción de María in Choluteca was being terrorized by Col. Enrique Bermúdez’s FDN—backed by the Honduran 8th Battalion. Locals reported that they could clearly see the Contras crossing the frontier and fighting in Nicaragua. They imposed a climate of terror that spurred a mass meeting at Danlí to denounce them. But while the newspaper was able to interview the locals, the residents also added that had not been able to denounce the Contras because they were afraid of being murdered.<sup>69</sup> Even the right-wing *El Heraldo* re-

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<sup>65</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 549.

<sup>66</sup> “La contra en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 7 (April 1987).

<sup>67</sup> Luis Alonso Gómez, “Tras cruentos combates: FDN libera territorio en Nueva Segovia,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 20, 1983. Ludovico Sánchez Turcios, “En el norte de Nicaragua: FDN libera 8,000 kilómetros para establecer un gobierno provisional,” *La Tribuna*, Dec. 7, 1983. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 173, 209-10.

<sup>68</sup> The Contras themselves got three O-2A Skymasters written off as surplus by U.S. states’ National Guards, piloted by Cuban *émigrés* (see Chapter 2, “Iran and the Contras,” n111). Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 347.

<sup>69</sup> “Los ‘contras’ nicas siembran el terror en la zona Sur,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1982. “La contra en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 7 (April 1987).

ported in August 1982 that Honduras was full of government-protected clandestine anti-Sandinista camps.<sup>70</sup> However, the number of such stories dropped sharply as Gen. Alvarez Martínez tightened his control over the press (Chapter 8, “The Militarized Media”): he imposed not the press censorship found in previous regimes, but an unprecedented, Argentinean-model reign of terror that murdered professors, government workers, refugees, and children (Chapter 6).

In February 1983 Antoine Blanca, France’s itinerant ambassador-at-large for Latin America, announced to the Honduran press that locals had seen Contra camps in El Paraíso.<sup>71</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez insisted it was only hearsay and offered to fly the ambassador out over the frontier, so he could see for himself. The supposed “witnesses,” the head of the military concluded profanely, were only proxies of the campaign of obscene “*jodidas*” by Communist foes of Honduras, their libels about Contra camps tailored to isolate the government internationally and destroy the economy<sup>72</sup> (Chapter 3).

In April 1983 Tegucigalpa again denied the presence any anti-Nicaraguan forces on Honduran soil and that reports of invasions from out of Honduras were a fable—a temerarious smokescreen for Managua, “who, while they present themselves as victim of imaginary aggressions,” were building up the EPS for an invasion of Honduras.<sup>73</sup> *La Tribuna*’s journalists reported Contras training in San Marcos de Colón, Choluteca, but Fuerza de Seguridad Pública (FUSEP) Maj. Marco Antonio Matute blamed all the terror, desperation, violence, and unrest on

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<sup>70</sup> Gregorio Armando Meraz, “Habla un Combatiente de la Democracia: En campamentos clandestinos entrenan los guerrilleros antisandinistas,” *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 28, 1982.

<sup>71</sup> “Blanca: Me voy convencido de que aquí hay campamentos de ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 18, 1983. Danilo D. Antúnez Ayala, “Cuando tenía un pie en el estribo: Antoine Blanca desenvaina mosquete contra Honduras,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 18, 1983. “Cafetaleros de El Paraíso ya no aguantan a los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, Oct. 11, 1985.

<sup>72</sup> “El General denuncia amenazas incluso contra su familia: Quieren matarme los comunistas: Alvarez,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 23, 1983 (identical to “Amenazan con matar al general Alvarez,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 23, 1983).

<sup>73</sup> “Desde territorio hondureño: Una ‘fábula’ invasión de 3,500 ‘contras,’” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 27, 1983.

the frontier on EPS raids to spread global communism.<sup>74</sup> If the Contras were in Honduras, he said, FUSEP and the Army would be the first to know.<sup>75</sup> In other words, the FF.AA., not the press, campesinos, or Managua, were the only warranted witnesses, and anyone who insisted on Contra presence was discredited by it—Goffman’s looping, to assert the regime’s control over the transmission and interpretation of facts that contradicted its declarations and undermined its own “warrant.”<sup>76</sup>

While the FDN presence in Tegucigalpa and El Paraíso Department was eventually admitted in 1985, the further distance and isolation of the Gracias a Dios Department increased the secrecy around the Miskito Contras. In 1983 Commander Steadman Fagoth even ordered settlements to pull up and move, to hide Contra deployments from foreign journalists.<sup>77</sup> Lt. Col. Luis Alonso Discua Elvir of the department’s 4th Battalion insisted to *La Prensa* in 1985 that “here the only ones who have arms are us”<sup>78</sup> and that the Army maintained the strictest control over the entire Atlantic frontier.<sup>79</sup> The refugee Nicaraguan Miskito received less Honduran media attention than the smaller FDN and Gracias a Dios was under better Army control than the back-and-forth occurring in El Paraíso.

### Alvarez Martínez: Borders and Reporters

Gen. Alvarez Martínez was able to shutter the critical small periodicals that had exposed the Salvadoran border massacres and Contra camps 1980-82, and successfully intimidated Hon-

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<sup>74</sup> Danilo D. Antúnez Ayala, “Mayor Matute: Falso, no hay ‘contras’ en San Marcos de Colón,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 11, 1983.

<sup>75</sup> “Asegura Marco Antonio Matute Lagos: Ni violadores ni antisandinistas hay en la frontera con Nicaragua,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 18, 1983.

<sup>76</sup> William J. Talbott, review of *Knowledge in a Social World* by Alvin I. Goldman, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (January 2002): 201-04.

<sup>77</sup> “Según funcionario del ACNUR: ‘Nicas’ refugiados en La Mosquitia serían utilizados por los ‘contras,’” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 31, 1983.

<sup>78</sup> “Dice comandante militar: No hay ‘contras’ en La Mosquitia,” *La Prensa*, June 21, 1985.

<sup>79</sup> “No hay ‘contras’ en la Mosquitia,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 21, 1985.

duras's four main newspapers. It may be a cliché that covert actions are only covert from the U.S. public, not the locals, but the Honduran Army successfully kept Honduran journalists and politicians from the Contra zone until the FF.AA.'s own 1985 admission of the presence of thousands of Contras—with bases even in Tegucigalpa itself.

The FF.AA. and the Reagan Administration worked to restrict physical access and control information at Honduras's frontier with Nicaragua. At the same time, the zone was also crisscrossed with U.S. and Western European journalists, mercenaries, and even U.S. servicemen on unacknowledged missions. Control over news of the Contras attacking from Honduras was essential to maintaining the White House's insistence that Managua was only faking that it was under attack and threatened with invasion.<sup>80</sup> During the 1983-84 period between the two Boland Amendments, Casey and FDN commanders launched operations intended for press publicity, to make the Contras seem like a viable military force even after the Congressional cutoff. The second Boland Amendment was passed directly because of the use of CIA assets posing as Contra commandos, to make photogenic aerial bombardments and naval mining of ports—deceiving and manipulating the Intelligence Committees to the outrage of even Sen. Goldwater and leading to complete cutoff.

International reporters in the border zone could pose the threat of witnesses whose stories would be well-warranted—but also provided opportunity. Despite allegations that the Sandinistas and FMLN were (at least potentially) deceiving international observers like Raymond Bonner and Witness for Peace (Chapter 3), it was the Contras who routinely deceived international journalists, employing their mere physical presence as part of the pervasive deception required to continue the Contra War. This pro-media 1983-85 phase of the Contra Wars saw the FDN taking

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<sup>80</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 51.

the press along with them the same way the Cuban exiles did in the early-1960s operations against Cuba.

It was a common Contra tactic to take journalists through the Honduran countryside, and then falsely confide to them that they were infiltrating Nicaragua: Edgardo Chamorro writes that the reporters “made to feel they were discovering unexplored territory,” carried to the “Nicaraguan” camps on CIA planes under an aura of intrigue and of being taken into government confidence while put under (seeming) danger. This buttressed the denials that there were any Contra fighters on Honduran territory. The CIA judged the publicity vital enough to continue bringing U.S. journalists to keep covering the “Nicaraguan Resistance,” even if the resulting stories were negative.<sup>81</sup> One Contra sign read “Welcome to the New Republic of Free Nicaragua”—while still within El Paraíso Department.<sup>82</sup> This all mirrored the repeated FDN claims it was “in-country” while stuck in Honduras and never holding Nicaraguan soil. In 1983 the Contras and the FF.AA. had a *need* to be at least seen on Capitol Hill as taking Nicaraguan territory; the practice of stunt-doubling was to obtain funding to achieve the (avowed) goal of actually *take* Nicaraguan territory at last.<sup>83</sup> FDN camps were hidden from even delegates sent by the FDN’s ostensible headquarters, the Directorate in Miami.<sup>84</sup>

*The Los Angeles Times*’ Dial Torgerson and photographer Richard Cross were killed by landmines on June 21, 1983, near Cifuentes, El Paraíso. The Honduran civil government and

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<sup>81</sup> Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation* (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 27-28, 33-34.

<sup>82</sup> “Aprobación de ayuda a ‘contras’ preocupa a caficultores de aquí,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 28, 1986.

<sup>83</sup> Gospel Crusade’s *The Truth About Nicaragua* (1986) endorsed the Contras as fighting a holy war against godless persecution “deep inside Nicaragua” ministering to the Contras and providing humanitarian assistance—but accidentally showing a Honduran government vehicle driving through the camp being filmed. Alberto Alvarez García, *Honduras: Contradicciones internas ante la estrategia norteamericana en Centroamérica* (Havana: Centro de Estudios sobre América, 1989): 1, 68. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994: 258. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections, Honduras: Directory and Analysis* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1988): 44. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 74. Morris, “Government and Politics,” in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 196-97. Ropp, “National Security,” in *ibid.*: 209. Sieder, *Elecciones y democratización en Honduras desde 1980* 1998: 22, 27.

<sup>84</sup> Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 242.



FF.AA.—before knowing any of the specifics—took the opportunity to immediately declare that EPS soldiers had killed them with a rocket-propelled grenade launched across the border from Nueva Segovia.<sup>85</sup> The state narrative had been confirmed: U.S. citizens had just been murdered by the unrelenting Communist perfidy against Honduras—and Nicaragua dared to play the victim! The most obvious propaganda was transmuted into the most sober news (at least until the retraction in the back pages). *El Tiempo*, the largest critic of the Honduran government and the Contra War editorialized that “warmongering” Nicaragua must cease its “misinformation” and “provocations” on the border.<sup>86</sup> President of Congress Efraín Bú Girón damned CODEH and PI-NU for remaining silent on the “murder.”<sup>87</sup> As with the demands against human-rights supporters to condemn guerrilla actions (Chapter 8, “Marches for the Fatherland”), the pressure was meant to get nonconformists into visibly endorsing a hegemonic story, regardless of whether that story would be retracted later.

FND’s “Comandante Suicida” Pedro Pablo Ortiz Centeno expressed satisfaction that now U.S. civilians “are going to feel in their own flesh what we are suffering. ... Now they might open their eyes” about the war for Nicaragua.<sup>88</sup> Before Torgerson and Cross’s deaths, the FND-aligned Fernando Chamorro in Costa Rica had allegedly even “planned to take some journalists to the border area, have them killed, and then capture headlines by announcing that they had been murdered by the Sandinistas.” Once U.S. and Honduran investigations concluded that that they had been killed on Honduran soil by a Contra mine type, Tegucigalpa insisted instead that

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<sup>85</sup> Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 236.

<sup>86</sup> “Colegio de Periodistas: Prensa norteamericana debe reflexionar en amenaza sandinista,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 28, 1983.

<sup>87</sup> Leticia Salomón, “La Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en Honduras: Análisis de la caída del General Gustavo Álvarez Martínez,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 11 (May 1984).

<sup>88</sup> Some Contras already openly “speculated” that the death of a journalist *à la* their own 1979 execution of Bill Stewart would cause an uproar if it could be pinned on the EPS (even if the story was later contested). Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 31, 33. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 232, 235-6.

the EPS had planted the mines across the border as a “false flag” against the FDN.<sup>89</sup> Once it was known that Contra-laid mines had killed them, Torgerson and Cross’s deaths actually posed an extreme degree of danger to the Contras rather than the Sandinistas, the way that ABC cameraman Stewart’s 1979 execution had permanently ended any U.S. support for the Nicaraguan National Guard. But this emphasis on what happened in a specific incident still relied on the assertion of too much real *detail*—inimical to ideology. A classic false-flag incident simply conceals the responsible party for a sufficient amount of time<sup>90</sup>: even if retracted later, the initial claims bolstered not just a specific narrative but the FSLN’s supposed disrepute.

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<sup>89</sup> Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 31-32. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994: 12.

<sup>90</sup> Some recognized and analyzed staged attacks was the bombing by Japan to blame Chinese forces in Manchuria 1931; Germany against Poland and the Soviet Union against Finland 1939; the 1940 Katyn Massacre of Polish officers by the NKVD; false “Communist” bombings in Tehran, Cairo, and Saigon in the 1950s, in Italy 1969-80, and in Argentina 1973-76; the United States against Cuba after 1960 (or even blaming John Glenn’s potential death on Cuban interference); “making martyrs” out of FDN Contras killed in internal purges or massacring villagers and telling the adults returning from harvest it was the EPS’s doing. Note that another famous example, the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident, was not even *simulated* by the U.S. hawks, but was instead conveniently free of any assertion or allegation that could be verified or falsified. Whether simple or intricate, such false flags perform Goffman’s role of a “frame-up,” like police planting a “drop” gun on the victim they had killed. This reverses a situation by using the very same techniques that normally guard *against* falsehood, especially a reliance on material evidence. For this reason, a first strike has the advantage of being confounding: the perpetrator can reframe true revelations as mere “counteraccusations” to the initial knowing lie: the mere facts could be left up to the historians. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018). Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993). Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 123. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 107. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 33. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 52, 58. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 371-72. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 94-96, 535. Guido Giacomo Preparata, “A Study in Gray: The *Affaire Moro* and Notes for a Reinterpretation of the Cold War and the Nature of Terrorism,” in Eric Wilson, ed., with Mark Findlay and Ralph Henham, *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex* (Burlington, Vt.: Routledge, 2012): 213-71. Michael Reed-Hurtado, “Killing Through the State in the Colombian War and Getting Away with Murder: An Exploration of Organisational Crime and its Denial,” in Roland Moerland, Hans Nelen, and Jan Willems, eds., *Denialism and Human Rights* (Cambridge, U.K., Intersentia, 2016): 285-314. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 43-47. Ramón Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman: The Structure of His Sociological Theory Revisited* (London: Routledge, 2016): 180, 190. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 300. Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008): 177.

## López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial

The field of secrecy and publicity in Washington had been rapidly rearranged between 1982 and 1984: as detailed in the above section, this was not a simple, linear preference for either *more* or *less* news about the Contras—in contrast to counterinsurgency in El Salvador, this was *pro*-insurgency.<sup>91</sup> The complex interrelation between discrediting witnesses and revealing the FDN also underwent a development within the Honduran state 1984-85. Air Force Gen. Walter López Reyes personally deposed Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez at gunpoint, and the new Commander-in-Chief publicly revealed the Contras in Tegucigalpa, closed CREM, scaled back joint exercises, and intercepted the nonlethal aid that Congress had approved. Largely this was simply to extract more U.S. cash, but his new May 1985 accord decisively scaled back the FF.AA.'s commitment to aid U.S. regional military policy against Nicaragua or El Salvador.<sup>92</sup>

Since 1980, the Contras were present in Honduras but unable to leave, leading to a need to hide that presence—in order to maintain justification for their funding, and to deny any talk that the FF.AA. was sheltering and backing them. But this phase of the Honduran-Nicaraguan conflict came to an abrupt end. Gen. Alvarez Martínez was deposed on March 31, 1984, and Reagan signed the second Boland Amendment October 12 of that year. Admitting that the Contras had been in Honduras for five years, while Tegucigalpa had played victim of a “smear campaign” saying the Contras were in Honduras, left the state with little warrant for its cyclical 1985-88 claims that the FDN had departed.

Revealing or concealing the Contra presence was not solely a matter of preventing media access or discrediting witnesses: the Nicaraguans posed a material—and well-armed—challenge

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<sup>91</sup> “Pro-insurgency” is an important conceptual departure from “counterinsurgency,” requiring not just a suite of new tactics by the proxy forces, but fighting against U.S.- and internationally-recognized states.

<sup>92</sup> Frederick P. Hitz and A.R. Cinquegrana, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report of Investigation: Selected Issues Relating to CIA Activities in Honduras in the 1980s (96-0125-IG)*, Aug. 27, 1997: 7, available at [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000283031.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000283031.pdf).

to FF.AA. generals who supported them against Nicaragua, as well as those who wanted to expel or disarm them. By 1984-85 there were as many Contra fighters as there were FF.AA. soldiers. The Nicaraguan rebels had been given sophisticated heavy ground and anti-aircraft equipment: the Honduran Army was technically outgunned on its own territory.<sup>93</sup> El Aguacate Air Base had more Contra planes—blank, without any identification—than Honduran ones.<sup>94</sup>

The periodic 1981-84 assertions that the Contras had all moved to Nicaragua continued 1985-88—but now was regularly defeated by reports that the Contras had been beaten back across the border. July 1984 the FDN went to the foreign press, saying that Gen. López Reyes had told them to forget about staying in Honduras: now “85% to 90% of our forces are ‘in-country’ [*i.e.*, in Nicaragua] and we’re gaining terrain”—a boast that quickly proved hollow.<sup>95</sup> From then onward came a cycle of the FDN and/or the Honduran government announcing that those Contras had removed themselves *en masse* into Nicaragua, only to cover up their unceremonious expulsion, typically with EPS–FF.AA. collaboration.

With Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s ouster, *aldeas* in El Paraíso Department from Yapuwas to Catacamas were now free to report the attacks, armed raids, highway robberies, rapes, and the murder of entire families to the press. Even before the garrison coup, *La Tribuna* had reported in February 1984 that the Nicaraguan frontier had been abandoned.<sup>96</sup> Nearly 17,000 Hondurans in El Paraíso Department alone—one-quarter of the country’s coffee production—had been forced

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<sup>93</sup> “Honduras Promises to ‘Oust’ Contras,” *This Week: Central America and Panama* 8:19 (May 20, 1985). “El despertar de nuestro pueblo por la defensa de la soberanía y la dignidad nacional,” Partido Comunista de Honduras, *Voz Popular* 6:129 (June 1988). Barbieri, “Key Concerns Regarding the Impact on Honduras of U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua,” 1986. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 179.

<sup>94</sup> “Más aviones ‘contras’ que de la FAH en El Aguacate,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 10, 1986.

<sup>95</sup> “The *Contras* Move House,” *Mexico & Central America Report*, July 13, 1984.

<sup>96</sup> Luis Alonso Gómez, “Abandono en zona fronteriza con Nicaragua,” 1st part, *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 6, 1984. “Los refugiados en Honduras: 1980-1986,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 6 (October 1986). “Desplazados de la guerra hondureños,” *Cronologías* 10 (October 1988). Tegucigalpa: CEDOH.

to flee the Contras in 1984.<sup>97</sup> The civil government would admit the civilian flight in 1985—but initially blamed EPS aggression for the evacuation.<sup>98</sup> *The Miami Herald* reported that Green Berets were training Honduran special forces at La Venta, Morazán, and Ramón Custodio told the U.S. and Honduran press through 1985 that the death squads were Honduran, kidnapping and murdering across the Río Coco, treating captured young Nicaraguan girls as “sexual merchandise” to be “raped night and day.”<sup>99</sup>

In March 1985 the EPS launched attacks up to seven kilometers into El Paraíso Department against the Contra camps, and seven more communities were abandoned: the newest refugees reported to the newspapers that the FF.AA. had concealed and given cover to the thousands of Contras fleeing back into Honduras from their latest failed invasion.<sup>100</sup> In May 1985 the Honduran government officially admitted the Contras’ presence, with the exposure of safehouses in Tegucigalpa and the FDN’s Quinta Escuela headquarters just outside the capital. The exposure was in fact a deliberate move by the FF.AA., to embarrass the U.S. government over the Contras and their inability to leave, and of course to extort more cash for the FF.AA. “La Quinta” was also the site of tortures and covert burials,<sup>101</sup> the FDN carelessly letting CIA handler “John Kirkpatrick” overhear the torture of “Suicida” Ortiz autumn 1983, before the purged *comandante* was taken to Nicaraguan soil for execution (as a gesture to create the appearance of concern over FDN atrocities).<sup>102</sup> August and September 1985 the FDN mounted a flurry of ambushes and laid

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<sup>97</sup> “Por el ejército nacional: ‘Contras’ nicaragüenses expulsados de Olancho,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 20, 1984. “Los productores de Oriente están a merced de los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 15, 1985. “Señala obispo Santos: ‘Contras’ responsables de muerte de sacerdote,” *La Tribuna*, Mar. 25, 1986. Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Republic for Rent,” press release, Sept. 26, 1986.

<sup>98</sup> “El pueblo hondureño empieza a pagar la aventura de los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 14, 1985.

<sup>99</sup> McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 220.

<sup>100</sup> “La contra en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 7 (April 1987).

<sup>101</sup> Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 155. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 214.

<sup>102</sup> Comandante Encarnación “Tigrillo” Valdivia was selected to be the next international media star, but had raped numerous women in the FDN camps. “Kirkpatrick” was also the Phoenix Program veteran who wrote *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare* (1983)—as noted, ironically to rehabilitate the FDN’s image (Chapter 3, “De-

Claymore mines that killed over a hundred Nicaraguans by the end of 1986. But by 1986 the Contras were in their worst condition since their foundation, none of them in Nicaragua and effectively having ceased to fight the EPS.<sup>103</sup>

The post-Alvarez Martínez FF.AA. openly promised to dismantle the Contra camps and expel the combatants, but the purpose of their disclosure was primarily to buy time and to pressure Washington for more aid.<sup>104</sup> The Honduran state paired denial with exposure in order to advance rival agendas among the generals themselves. Rather than a dramatic unveiling, civil and military officials during López Reyes's truncated term retrenched and reestablished Contra secrecy: rather than being maintained constantly, as in 1981-85, covertness would have to be restated periodically. The Honduran state had to maintain a minimum of "warrant" knowing it would have to withstand open exposure and self-contradiction. Rather than relying on *convincing* U.S. audience belief in Contra departure, the Honduran state worked on the frames and narratives that constituted any particular fact (such as those proving Contra presence), the saliency that made them "newsworthy" to the U.S. public and Senate, or not.<sup>105</sup>

In order to continue believably condemning the EPS's use of artillery against Contra camps in Honduras, the Foreign Ministry insisted in summer 1985 that the 8,000 FDN Contras in

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bunked by Being Right). Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 35, 55. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 251, 255-56. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 519. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 177.

<sup>103</sup> Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 204.

<sup>104</sup> "No permitiremos presencia de grupos armados asegura el gobierno," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 16, 1985. "En reunión de Contadora ... : Honduras acepta desmantelar los campamentos de 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, May 16, 1985. "Gobierno no permite la existencia de grupos armados en la frontera," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 16, 1985. "La infraestructura médica paralela de los contras en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 103 (November 1989). Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 105.

<sup>105</sup> Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 86. Robert M. Entman, "Framing Media Power," in Paul D'Angelo and Jim A. Kuypers, eds., *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* 2015: 332-33.

El Paraíso Department had all departed.<sup>106</sup> Throughout 1985 Honduran journalists noted that that the FF.AA. *de facto* admitted not just FDN presence but that the Contra-ruled border area was no longer “Honduran.” Coffee growers were arrested for guiding three foreign journalists through New Nicaragua.<sup>107</sup> Numerous Honduran and international journalists—even from Voice of America—were arrested trying to get any information about the frontier, including trying to make interviews outside the control zone.<sup>108</sup> By the end of 1985 the FDN was expelled from the Sevogias and the Miskito from northern Zelaya Department—back into Honduras. The Contras languished without boots, ponchos, or hammocks until Azcona restored their deliveries through the FF.AA. in January 1986. Their food, medicine, and bullets still arrived on the backs of mules or forcibly-recruited elderly men, the FDN mounting nothing more than an ambush or two against the EPS and devastating lightly-defended villages.<sup>109</sup> Despite U.S. and Contra efforts to block the negotiations, Managua’s 1986-87 agreements with the Miskito to turn Zelaya Department into the Autonomous Regions of the North and South Caribbean Coasts ended MISURA as a fighting force: the Nicaraguan Miskito returned *en masse*, leaving only the *ladino* FDN in the fight.<sup>110</sup>

Keeping away observers had let the pragmatist Gen. López Reyes keep his position on the Contras flexible: he insisted in January 1986 that he saw none of the Contra camps that the media and Nicaraguan government claimed existed: *he* had physically been to the border, he

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<sup>106</sup> “Denuncia,” *CODEH* 4:21 (October-November 1985).

<sup>107</sup> Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Republic for Rent,” press release, Sept. 26, 1986. CODEH, *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 5. in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987:

<sup>108</sup> Ramón Custodio López, “Editorial: Más intervención, más represión ...” *CODEH* 4:25 (June 1986). CODEH, *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 33.

<sup>109</sup> The EPS had decisively relieved the local Militia which had borne the brunt of Contra attacks. 138 pickers had been killed in Nicaragua’s 1984-85 coffee harvest, and zero for 1985-86. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 184. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 310. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 551.

<sup>110</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 534.

pointed out.<sup>111</sup> The Liberal technocrat José Azcona took the oath of office January 27, 1986, firing Gen. López Reyes as Commander-in-Chief within days: the general had overseen Azcona's peaceful election in the face of Suazo Córdova's *continuismo*, proposing a new Constituent Assembly and succeed himself as President for another term. The replacement of the more pragmatic (or at least bottom-line) Gen. López Reyes with Gen. Humberto Regalado was not exactly a model for civilian control over the FF.AA.: Azcona had fired him for threatening to cut off the contras, and the new Commander-in-Chief was a firm Cold Warrior.<sup>112</sup>

But Honduras's new civil and military chiefs of state faced the same problems. By 1986 the Contras had displaced 6,000 Hondurans from their land and the Honduran military had ceded control of 70 miles of the border to the Contras. In 1986 Gen. Regalado sent troops to guard the FDN camps—to dissuade the Contras from raiding their Honduran neighbors, which both threatened to generate international headlines, and was humiliating within Honduras itself.<sup>113</sup> In April 1986 the FF.AA. began to regularly withdraw Army troops whenever fighting broke out, and evacuated another 1,000 Honduran civilians from the frontier that November.

With the previous level of secrecy from the U.S. press—or at least denial—no longer possible, the state was reduced to repeatedly claiming Contra departure, followed by almost-instant discrediting. President of Congress Carlos Orbin Montoya proclaimed El Paraíso cleared in April 1986—despite the camps, stockpiles, and iron rule over 450 square kilometers of Hon-

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<sup>111</sup> “Stuck with the Contras, Like it or Not,” *Central America Report* 13:3 (Jan. 24, 1986).

<sup>112</sup> Not Constitutionally eligible for reelection, Tiburcio Carías had also handpicked the 1936 constituent assembly, which chose him as its President with a term to 1943 (further extended to 1949). Cols. William Thomas Said Speer and Héctor Aplicano Molina moved against Gen. López Reyes during the crisis, but failed against Gen. Regalado and were sent into diplomatic exile. *Honduras Update* Special 1 (May 1987): 5. Barbieri, *Honduran Elections and Democracy* 1986: 20-25, 34. CODEH, *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 7. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 113-15. Millett, “Historical Setting,” in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 29. Schulz, *How Honduras Escaped Revolutionary Violence* 1992: 9. Max Velásquez Díaz, *El golpe de Estado de 1972: Antecedentes y consecuencias*, CEDOH, *Boletín Especial* 80 (July 1998).

<sup>113</sup> “La coyuntura hondureña,” Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Informaciones* 4, 2nd epoch (August-September 1986): 1-25.



duran land.<sup>114</sup> When Managua pressed its suit against Tegucigalpa at the Hague's International Court of Justice in July 1986, Chancellor Carlos López Contreras declared that Honduras was so open and unpoliced on the Nicaraguan border that "clandestine groups can move through"<sup>115</sup>: Azcona's position story was always that the Contras were in Honduras only because there was so little FF.AA. presence.<sup>116</sup>

Azcona's first year heavily reemphasized the idea that there *was* no war (other than the inexplicable aggressions coming from Nicaragua): his response to the International Criminal Court suit was that Honduras was "an oasis of peace, where there is less violence than in any country in the world, with the possible exception of Switzerland and Costa Rica."<sup>117</sup> In June 1986 the Contras announced that three-quarters of their fighters had crossed over into Nicaragua: this announcement lasted about a week.<sup>118</sup> Citing the FF.AA., Chancellor López Contreras denied any Contra remnants in Honduras<sup>119</sup>—which Azcona's own representative Arturo Rendón deemed nonsense.<sup>120</sup> López Contreras then denied that that government had ever systematically denied the Contra presence!<sup>121</sup>

In August 1986 Azcona said that "there do not exist in Honduras hidden bases" and that the whole country's territory was open to the free travel of any citizen, to see for themselves

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<sup>114</sup> "Con buenos ojos mira Montoya entrenamiento de 'contras' aquí," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 4, 1986.

<sup>115</sup> "Por prestar su territorio a la 'contra': Nicaragua demanda a Honduras en La Haya," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 29, 1986. López Contreras repeated this later ("Contras operan desde Honduras," *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 8, 1988). "Admite comandante del XVI Batallón: Hay contras lisiados en El Aguacate," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 7, 1988.

<sup>116</sup> Associated Press, "Reconoce Azcona: Los 'contras' tienen campamentos en Honduras," *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 19, 1986.

<sup>117</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 103.

<sup>118</sup> Sam Dillon, *The Miami Herald*, "La Nueva Nicaragua de los contras está en el territorio hondureño," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 13, 1986.

<sup>119</sup> "Ratifica Cancillería: Antisandinistas no usan territorio hondureño," *La Prensa*, Mar. 7, 1986. "Canciller no cree a caficultores sobre presencia de los 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 14, 1986. AFP, "Ministro Rendón Pineda: Negando 'contras' canciller quiere tapar sol con un dedo," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, July 10, 1986.

<sup>120</sup> AFP, "Ministro Rendón Pineda: Negando 'contras' canciller quiere tapar el sol con un dedo," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 11, 1986, from *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa.

<sup>121</sup> "López Contreras: No hemos dicho que los 'contras' no estén aquí," *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, July 26, 1986.

what was there.<sup>122</sup> In December the President reiterated that the Contras were leaving Honduras and would soon all be in Nicaragua, but by that point that declaration seemed more wishful thinking than manipulation of the news.<sup>123</sup>

The Chancellor denied any Contras at El Aguacate, refuted by *La Tribuna* which visited Catacamas in October and found a strong presence still intimidating local residents into silence.<sup>124</sup> Only in 1988 would López Contreras admit to any Contras in Honduras, still denying all state involvement.<sup>125</sup> In October 1986 Honduran soldiers and officers in El Paraíso told *El Tiempo* they were vocally against the continued Contra presence, but ruefully concluded that Washington was the one making their orders.<sup>126</sup>

Besides the cycle of denial and grudging admission by the top officers and officials, the Contra presence generated a constituency of Hondurans with access to the local media, including unpolitical or even conservative observers.<sup>127</sup> Nationalist Party leader Ricardo Zúñiga Agustín's son, Maj. Ricardo Zúñiga Morazán, was murdered in 1985 for pressing for their expulsion in Washington (Chapter 7, "The Perpetrator-Victims"), and right-wing Nationalist leader Nicolás Cruz Torres was almost expelled from the party for demanding the Contras' departure in 1986, on grounds of being a "recalcitrant leftist and dangerous agent of the conspiracy of international

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<sup>122</sup> "Denuncian desplazados: 10 mil contras ocupan la 'Nueva Nicaragua,'" *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 5, 1986.

<sup>123</sup> "Azcona: No estamos apoyando la 'contra,'" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Dec. 6, 1986.

<sup>124</sup> "Manuel Zelaya Rosales: Honduras vive zozobra por los contras y ataques sandinistas," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Oct. 20, 1986.

<sup>125</sup> "Canciller: Hay contras pero sin autorización," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 11, 1988.

<sup>126</sup> "Zona Oriental convertida en ring de Contras y sandinistas," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 30, 1986.

<sup>127</sup> "Hondurans Seek Removal of Contras from Their Country," CAHI, *Update* 5:44 (Dec. 12, 1986).

Communism.”<sup>128</sup> Meanwhile *suazocordovista* Liberal officials and Congressmen often simply repeated the same denials as they had before 1985.<sup>129</sup>

The Contra-support project was dealt a near-fatal blow when Eugene Hasenfus’s October 5, 1986, shootdown exposed the pseudo-private separate arrangements that the White House and CIA head William Casey had set up under the National Security Council to end-run the law. The techniques to conceal the ownership of airplanes and origin of funds and weapons were less intricate than the relationship of the White House or Honduran state to the press, but required active concealment and close cooperation by U.S., Honduran, and Contra militaries, to prevent a cascading scandal. Contra support was a scandal that went to the World Court; but *continued* Contra support (especially with Iranian ransom money) threatened even Reagan—here it took only one mercenary surviving his shootdown.

#### Conventional Military Deception: Nicaragua

The covert presence of U.S. soldiers, mercenaries, and CIA agents on the Honduran-Nicaraguan frontier imposed different requirements for “preventing news” than the Contras’ more-visible inability to leave. Mercenaries had been used since 1982 to disguise Pentagon and CIA involvement in the war and provide the cover of plausible deniability—but the involvement

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<sup>128</sup> Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, “Todos contra la Contra,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 5, 1986. “Sucia campaña contra diputado que pidió la expulsión de los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 7, 1986. “Indemnización para Honduras por daños de los ‘contras,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1990. “Indemnización para Honduras por daños de los contras,” *CODEH* 62 (March 1990).

<sup>129</sup> It was the Liberal Suazo Córdova who forsook the party’s long anti-militarist legacy and agreed to have the Commander-in-Chief run the country. The FF.AA. overthrew the democratic President Ramón Villeda Morales in 1954 and 1963; Suazo Córdova took over the populist Modesto Rodas Alvarado’s faction, but betrayed all principle in exchange for Gen. Paz García not cheating to make Ricardo Zúñiga Agustinus president. Marcia McLean, “Honduras vs. Honduras,” *Honduras Update* 3:10-11 (July-August 1985). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 112. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 122. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 50. Millett, “Historical Setting,” in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 38, 49. Morris, “Government and Politics,” in *ibid.*: 194. Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 104. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 28. Manuel Torres Calderón, *Honduras, la transición inconclusa hacia una democracia, 1981-2009*, Observaciones y Advertencias (Tegucigalpa: Pastoral Social Cáritas de Honduras/Ediciones Subirana, 2011): 19-20.

of any U.S. citizen was increasingly proscribed by the U.S. Congress. In terms of controlling the news or other such epistemic conflict, the involvement of U.S. citizens in Contra combat and supply gave the Reagan Administration very little flexibility. Like the 1980-82 Salvadoran massacres, stories simply had to be prevented in the first place. The advantage of this grade of deceit was that the only immediate witnesses were the participants, U.S. and Honduran officers and the Contras. Unlike the Río Sumpul or El Mozote, there simply *were* no outside observers to discredit, no journalistic warranting process to undermine.

As in 1983, the deceit on the border was aimed at journalists, not to deny pro-Contra actions but to reframe them<sup>130</sup> by obscuring the location of reporters and servicepersons—Nicaraguan aggression or Honduran self-defense, independent volunteers or CIA agents, Communist corruption of the U.S. youth and Contra and FF.AA. drug-smuggling. Rather than the “smoking Sandinista” that even the Carter White House sought, it was the EPS that was able to make the incontrovertible revelation of U.S. citizens still being organized and funded by the Reagan Administration, deliberately flouting the letter and spirit of the Boland Amendments. The entire operation was “blown” by Eugene Hasenfus October 5, 1986—though to less-than-dramatic result.

Historians of U.S. covert warfare have compiled a “package” of techniques developed by the CIA and Pentagon in Guatemala, Indonesia, Laos, and Cuba 1953-61 to directly involve themselves while maintaining a sufficient level of secrecy, deny immediate attribution, and increase the proxy forces’ independence from the third-party “host” states necessary for covert war against a target country.<sup>131</sup> Most of these techniques were redeployed since the start of the 1980s for the Contra War: most important was an independent, off-the-books “air force” of arms ware-

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<sup>130</sup> In other words, the approach of Stanley Cohen versus that of Erving Goffman.

<sup>131</sup> This meant *far* more direct involvement by CIA paramilitaries and Pentagon special forces than Iran 1953 or Guatemala 1954.

houses, preapproved funds, small planes, transports, and helicopters under proprietary “front” or “cut-out” operations, repainted in rebel colors or—against the laws of war—the Red Cross. Casey’s deployment of offshore “motherships” for seaborne attacks with speedboats and frogmen—heedless of damage to French or British ships—mirrors the damage to West European ships in the attacks launched against Guatemala, Indonesia, and Cuba a generation earlier.<sup>132</sup>

The covert Contra War used the same “body-washing” as the United States’ “Secret War” in 1960s and 70s Indochina: concealing the circumstance and location of U.S. deaths. To dodge the coroners, soldiers’ bodies would be shipped back home from Laos and Cambodia and the cause listed as a jeep rollover, or become some extra corpses added to those legitimately in the morgue after helicopter accidents. In the early 1980s false obituaries were pre-prepared for the illicit Pentagon agents in Central America—“crashed 23 miles offshore of Norfolk, Va.” U.S. soldiers on the Nicaraguan border had an unprecedentedly high fatality rate from what were recorded as “truck accidents.” In one 18-month period 1983-84, thirteen members of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment were recorded dying in “training missions” on the Nicaraguan border, out of a total of 35 deaths “in-country” in Honduras. Four were killed in February 1984 alone, plus two Navy SEALs in December. The U.S. military’s standard practice was to dress in civilian clothes and without identification. In reality they were coordinating the Contras and demolishing bridges and factories in Nicaragua.<sup>133</sup> The survivors’ association for the covert

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<sup>132</sup> By the mid-1970s the CIA had whole arsenals, airports, and airlines at their disposal, flying out of Opa-Locka, Fla., since 1954. The hardliners were vocally contemptuous of the damage to Western European vessels: “If Western ships were damaged, it was their governments’ fault for not supporting the economic sanctions against Nicaragua, reasoned Casey. Allies should not be allies only when it is financially convenient,” Melissa Boyle Mahle writes. Alliance with the United States was to be obeyed, not treated as flexible. Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 112, 125. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 62-69, 98. Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider’s View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004): 18. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 128-29. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 295. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 121, 148, 177.

<sup>133</sup> Eldon Kenworthy, “United States Policy in Central America: A Choice Denied,” *Current History* 84:500 (March 1985): 99. Frank Greve and Ellen Warren, “Secret U.S. Unit in War Zone, Next-of-Kin Say,” *The Philadelphia In-*

war in Honduras counts a total of seventy U.S. deaths in the Contra war in Honduras and Nicaragua under such pretense.<sup>134</sup>

For 1983-85 mercenaries like those of Civilian Military Assistance or *Soldier of Fortune* magazine were used as cover for the CIA, rather than as a distancing “front.”<sup>135</sup> Geographical disguise of the dead was sometimes not enough, requiring disposal of any postmortem physical features that might identify the U.S. involvement. On October 3, 1983, a DC-3 was shot down and the crew told the Central American press that they worked for the CIA Station in the Embassy in Tegucigalpa, and that their flight had been handled by Lt. Col. Ray Doty and “Major West” at El Aguacate. On March 24, 1984 a CIA plane crashed while resupplying arms through John Hull’s El Murciélago ranch in Guanacaste Province, Costa Rica, the main stop for supply—and drug-trafficking—flights from Ilopango. San José’s CIA Station chief Joseph Fernández ordered Edén Pastora to remove the teeth and jawbones of the pilot to prevent dental identification; the crew’s incriminatingly blond corpses were then burned. On September 1, 1984, two mercenaries from Civilian Military Assistance working under William Casey’s parastate “Enterprise” were killed after taking off from Danlí.<sup>136</sup>

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*quirer*, Dec. 16-17, 1984. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 263. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 523. Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: 91-94. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 154. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 150.

<sup>134</sup> U.S. Contra War, <http://uscontrawar.com>. The Nicaraguan counterrevolution is the last covert war whose U.S. veterans remain Federally unrecognized.

<sup>135</sup> Friends of the Americas’ fundraising letters called its Las Trojes clinic for FDN fighters and dependents an outpost “on the fringe of the Soviet Empire.” Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 29-31. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 14-16. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 166-67. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections, Honduras* 1988: 42. Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 32. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 61. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 546. Jack Terrell, with Ron Martz, *Disposable Patriot: Revelations of a Soldier in America’s Secret Wars* (Washington: National Press Books, 1992).

<sup>136</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 152. Cockburn, *Out of Control*, 1987: 219, 233. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 157. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994: 288. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 59, 61. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 522. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 164.

There were also decades of covert-war precedent for the most controversial revelations of the Contra War, which are historiographically well-trodden terrain: 1. the disingenuous “arm’s-length” practices of U.S. officers feigning to resign or retire and becoming “contractors” at proprietary fronts like Eugene Hasenfus’s Southern Air Transport, and 2. Hasenfus was shot down October 5, 1986, in the same C-123 that Barry Seal used to frame the Sandinistas for his own cocaine trade that was profiting the Contras (Chapter 8, “A Right-Wing Student Riot”).<sup>137</sup>

As *de jure* CIA and Pentagon involvement was forbidden by the second Boland Amendment and the non-CIA “Enterprise” took over, the 1985-86 Contra supply crews genuinely thought they were working for the CIA and “Max Gómez” out of Ilopango Airport, as Hasenfus damningly told the EPS soldiers who arrested him. This was Félix Rodríguez—a “retired” CIA agent and then CIA contractor legally between jobs and thus able to conduct his own “private business” in San Salvador<sup>138</sup>—had come back for the Salvadoran Civil War, applying the bombers-plus-helicopters method he had innovated in the Mekong but as a “contractor” now. At Ilopango he sported Che Guevara’s wristwatch as a trophy from when he had served as CIA liaison for the Bolivian military team that killed the guerrilla leader.<sup>139</sup> Other Enterprise overseers

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<sup>137</sup> The humanitarian-aid flights, under or affiliated with the “former” CIA fronts Air America and Southern Air Transport, were loaded with lethal cargo from third-party countries in El Salvador for the Ilopango–El Aguacate leg, and then continued southwards to Venezuela and Colombia for their “in-kind” payment. Going by the record, everyone involved believed they were still working for and/or sanctioned by the CIA. The plane’s sister C-123 is now refurbished into “El Avión” Restaurant in Quepos, Costa Rica. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 25, 41, 98, 172-73, 182-86, 241. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 162, 167. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 400-02, 411. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994: 397-98. Alfred W. McCoy, “Mission Myopia: Narcotics as Fallout from the CIA’s Covert Wars,” in Johan Lidberg and Denis Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security* 2018: 133. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 564. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 101, 166.

<sup>138</sup> This was typical of the “unilaterally-controlled Latin assets”—distance and deniability, not U.S. citizens and not CIA employees. Félix Rodríguez himself had been one of the first after his 1963 graduation from Fort Benning, the CIA’s Ray Cline giving him his orders by mouth and his payments in cash: this marked a turning point from U.S. soldiers and airmen falsely resigning and becoming “volunteers” as in Indonesia 1958, keeping U.S. citizens out of the field of battle. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 293-95.

<sup>139</sup> Hasenfus was known for his caution even in Laos, and was the only one with a parachute when the missile hit. He was *unaware* of all the factitious legal distinctions Casey had spent so much effort setting up, saying that the airplane, flight, and supervision were all under the CIA. He had been shot down by the Batallones Ligeros Cazadores, EPS units explicitly returning to the proven guerilla tactics of the 1960s and 70s. Elliott Abrams smoothly said “That would be illegal. We are barred from doing that, and we are not doing it. This was not in any sense a U.S.

working for Casey—as a National Security Council member, not as CIA Director—included Lt. Col. Richard Gadd and Col. Robert Dutton, and the USAF’s Maj. Gen. Richard Secord.<sup>140</sup>

While the White House launched constant claims of pervasive Sandinista gun- and drug-running, 1980s El Salvador and Nicaragua were crisscrossed with flight routes from every one of its neighboring countries—Ilopango from the west, El Murciélago to the south, El Aguacate and Tegucigalpa from the north—bearing arms and drugs for the Contras. Nicaragua and El Salvador were practically irradiated by radar coverage from sites like “Carrot Top” on Cerro La Mole or El Isopo near Tegucigalpa, with a radius of 240 miles, constantly feeding radio traffic to Fort Meade, Md., for analysis. The remotest valley was under infrared and satellite observation night and day, concentrations of body heat detected from miles above; even hang gliders could be detected over El Salvador and north Nicaragua. The White House even recruited the same presenter, John T. Hughes, who had explicated the Soviet medium-range ballistic-missile sites in 1962—except this time he was highlighting “Cuban-style obstacle courses” rather than MRBMs. Not so much as an EPS latrine went unmapped. “Intelligence officials claim they can ‘hear a toilet flush in Managua,’ ” one State Department official described. The Contra War forcibly re-

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government operation. None.” Much worse, a *New York Newsday* reporter went to the crew’s house in San Salvador and found phone records of calls to Lt. Col. North, Maj. Gen. Secord, and San José’s CIA Station Chief Joseph Fernández! Hasenfus’s other contact was the terrorist mass murderer Luis Posada Carriles. Jonathan Kwitny, “Dope Story: Doubts Rise on Report Reagan Cited in Tying Sandinistas to Cocaine,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 22, 1987, available at <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-00965r000403630001-8>. Ryan Grim, Matt Sledge, and Matt Ferner, “Key Figures in CIA-Crack Cocaine Scandal Begin to Come Forward,” *The Huffington Post*, Oct. 10, 2014. Mara Leveritt, “Who’s Afraid of Barry Seal?” *The Arkansas Times*, Sept. 28, 2017. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 197-99. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 219-23. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 305. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 293, 369-72, 376, 403. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 6, 82-84. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 4, 499-500, 523, 529. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 553, 564. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 282, 406.

<sup>140</sup> Maj. Gen. John Singlaub of the Western Goals Foundation and World Anti-Communist League was vocally irritated at the Enterprise’s unprofessionalism: standard procedure for airmen was to leave their wallets, logbooks, and other “pocket litter” at home instead of letting them fall into the Nicaraguans’ hands. Félix Rodríguez had similar reservations, and CIA officers would have been driven off the wall by the accounting and security practices used after 1984: the Enterprise was hardly a single united machine. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 198. Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan’s Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2014): 135, 140, 174-5, 177, 181. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 145, 360, 373. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard* 1998: 430-3, 502. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 560.



made Nicaragua not just into some abstract Foucauldian landscape of knowledge and punishment, but a place where true knowledge, false claims, and careful misrepresentations could be selectively circulated and contextualized by the Honduran and U.S. state.<sup>141</sup>

### Azcona: Two Holy Weeks

For years the U.S. and Honduran states had cooperated to weaken or lay conditions on the warrants of every potential uncontrolled observer of the Honduran frontiers: not clergy, not journalists, not members of Honduras's own Congress. President Reagan found himself dependent on President Azcona to keep the Contras alive, and his Administration was cornered into the same conundrum twice in three years. To rush the U.S. Senate, the White House exaggerated *two* routine Nicaraguan incursions in spring 1986 and 1988. While Reagan never would launch a large-scale overt invasion of Nicaragua itself, hundreds of U.S. forces were sent against routine EPS incursions in 1986 and in 1988, in part to "prove" that Nicaragua was a dangerous aggressor.<sup>142</sup> The White House found that it had put itself at the mercy of the Honduran government to obtain U.S. Senate approval of Contra aid. In both cases Reagan claimed an unprecedented and unwarned EPS invasion that required immediate U.S. backup. But years of effort discrediting and preventing witnesses left the White House with no warranted Hondurans to call on besides the FF.AA.—not the Church, unions, political parties, newspapers. And despite Gen. Regalado's

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<sup>141</sup> This evokes a morbid analogy: the White House and Pentagon as a Gulliver, declaring himself besieged from all angles by the countries of the developing world, hobbled and hamstrung by the international community, pins down Lilliput with crisscrossing lines of knowledge and force while loudly himself its victim. Arnson, *Crossroads* 1993: 275. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 87. Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988: 84, 89, 91-94, 151-52, 156, 228. Hackel and Siegel, eds., *In Contempt of Congress* 1987: 79. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 346. Kornbluh, "The Covert War," in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 29. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 145. Lamperti, *What are We Afraid of?* 1988: 61-64, 68. Laurent, ed., *On a Short Fuse* 1985. Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 68, 70. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 101, 220. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 514. Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: xii, 5-6. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 192.

<sup>142</sup> K. Larry Storrs and Nina Serafino, "The Reagan Administration's Efforts to Gain Support for Contra Aid," in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 144.

installation the Army did not support the Contra War with Gen. Alvarez Martínez's enthusiasm. It was dependent on the Honduran state not just for secrecy of the continued covert war after the Boland Amendments, but also to make false claims to allow overt intervention.

The same power of denial that had been whetted by the Honduran civil and military authorities to hide counterrevolution was deployed *against* the White House's need to fund the Contras. This was more than Azcona opportunistically blackmailing Reagan: Honduran officials had seized the power to prove or disprove the war's entire premises.<sup>143</sup> By 1986-87 Reagan had to shift how he used the news again: instead of denying U.S. involvement or arguing for Contra support, he was sending U.S. troops directly into what he described as a "combat zone." This required confirmation from the Honduran state, not denial and discredit.

The conventional explanations for Azcona's behavior would be financial and ideological. The counterrevolutionary project never had any committed backers other than Gen. Alvarez Martínez: Azcona and Gen. Regalado consistently opposed and condemned Managua, but the state also had numerous reasons to bridle at any continuation of Contra presence. Funding for the Contras—from Presidential reserve funds, third-party states like Saudi Arabia or Taiwan, or formally approved by the Senate—of course provided a convenient source of embezzlement for Honduran Presidents and generals, and of leverage over the White House, like Gen. López Reyes's October 1985 threat to completely cut off the Contras. But Gramscian analyses of the state consider intrinsic motives and needs of its own: it is not simply a "cutout" for elite interests or a proxy for distant Superpower patrons, but has to be institutionally pliable and resilient against crises—especially ones it causes.<sup>144</sup> Reagan was trapped by the Holy Week "incursions,"

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<sup>143</sup> Parallel to Gen. Alvarez Martínez creating and protecting Battalion 3-16, a unit that he so empowered with secrecy and denial that it could victimize *him* to prevent further disclosure (Chapter 7, "The Perpetrator-Victims").

<sup>144</sup> Michaela Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge: The Life and Work of Peter L. Berger*, trans. Miriam Geoghegan (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction Publishers, 2013): 24.

but the Honduran state was not—even if it disfavored the Contra presence and lost a large measure of its reputation both times.

The governments in Tegucigalpa and Managua also had found themselves colluding secretly over the Contras since 1980, mainly to avoid direct combat between the FF.AA. and the EPS as the FDN fired across the border to provoke war.<sup>145</sup> The FF.AA. was threatened by the FDN and highly ambiguous about their continued funding and arming, but it also denied both incursions because it was always careful not to engage with the EPS. The CIA and Pentagon also spent the decade secretly working with the FF.AA. and Contras to evade the Boland Amendments. The accumulation of plausible deniability—arranged between the U.S. and Honduran states—now cut both ways, now wielded against the White House. Maintaining a secrecy that benefited the White House also allowed Azcona and Gen. Regalado to tacitly use the EPS to whittle down the FDN rival army if it could not leave Honduran soil—but still able to blame the EPS in public.

In March 1986 Director Casey signed off on a National Intelligence Estimate telling Reagan the FDN was in terminal decline.<sup>146</sup> Keeping the Contras literally alive became first priority, before even maintaining the ability to conduct combat in Nicaragua. In January 1986 Reagan declared that diplomacy with Managua was over—upsetting even neoconservative staffer Donald Kagan—and first requested an unprecedented US\$100 million in military aid for the Contras in the name of giving the Contadora negotiations a chance to succeed.<sup>147</sup>

On March 24, 1986, the White House unilaterally announced a “massive invasion of the Sandinista Army” just as the Administration was seeking Senate approval of millions in Contra

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<sup>145</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 165.

<sup>146</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 555.

<sup>147</sup> Amson, *Crossroads* 1993: 200-06. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 174.

aid.<sup>148</sup> The entire Contra effort rested on a few interlocking paradoxes: Contra support was continually exposed, leading to further opposition, which undercut the multimillion-dollar Senate funding that was all that kept the Contras in existence.<sup>149</sup> Two EPS battalions had entered El Paraíso, but CIA analysts dismissed the move as routine and the FF.AA. turned a blind eye to the incursion. Instead of the Nicaraguan frontier's previous function, a place to maintain plausible deniability about U.S. involvement in the war, Reagan sent U.S. troops as a *fait accompli* to "confirm" the invasion for the Senate—but that required a *post facto* certification from the Honduran state, rather than discredit.

The Honduran press noted the ominous implications of U.S. soldiers being flown around the area, to make it look like a real invasion and to prevent the EPS from hitting the fleeing Contras. This was a calculated overreaction to a routine hot pursuit into Honduras—the sort of incursion that took place periodically without response by even the FF.AA.<sup>150</sup> The Reagan administration announced that the "invaders" numbered 2,000 ... then 1,500, then 800; the number of EPS soldiers killed went from hundreds, down to five.<sup>151</sup>

While the 1984 second Boland Amendment banned all Executive-Branch offices from assisting the Contras, the laws governing the conventional U.S. military's presence in Honduras required a request from the recipient of the military aid and ordinarily prohibited U.S. forces from coming within 20 miles of the Nicaraguan border—unless aiding the FF.AA. against an imminent EPS incursion. But Azcona refused to admit the EPS incursion: that would confirm the continued presence of Contra camps, against the narrative of Honduras's perpetual innocence.

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<sup>148</sup> Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 156.

<sup>149</sup> Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 96.

<sup>150</sup> "Bordering on War: Reaction to Nicaraguan Incursion Has Far-Reaching Consequences," *Washington Report on the Hemisphere* 6:14 (Apr. 16, 1986).

<sup>151</sup> Council on Hemispheric Affairs, "Bordering on War," press release, Apr. 1, 1986.

Reagan had jumped the gun by sending the troops, and now had to cajole Azcona into “requesting” the intervention *post facto*.

The White House had spent considerable effort undermining every witness in Honduras other than its military and the civilian regime (see especially Chapter 3). Therefore, President Azcona found himself with considerable leverage over President Reagan. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams’s Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William Walker shouted at Ambassador John Ferch’s deputy Shepard Lowman that “You have got to tell them to declare there was an incursion.” Lowman urged Azcona to send a letter acknowledging the raid and to request the U.S. helicopters in writing—and to tell Azcona’s press secretary Lizandro Quezada to stop denying the claims of hundreds of invading Sandinistas, to stop calling it “part of the publicity campaign by the Reagan administration to secure approval of the \$100 million” in Contra aid. The White House got increasingly nervous as Azcona refused to declare a state of alert all day; in the early morning of March 25, 1986, a feverishly-ill Amb. Ferch put on three sweaters and visited Azcona and told him “You don’t have a choice on this one.”<sup>152</sup> Only after US\$20 million in direct aid was offered to Tegucigalpa on March 25 did Azcona deign to say that had been an invasion: on the 26th he pointedly left for his Caribbean beach house, incommunicado.<sup>153</sup> Azcona and the rest of the Honduran officials remained conspicuously at the beach while 500-600 Honduran soldiers were taken to the “front” by U.S. helicopters—and picnicked as the two opposing Nicaraguan armies fought in the distance.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 322. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 569. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 162.

<sup>153</sup> “Invasion, Incursion or Invention on the Honduras-Nicaragua Border?” CAHI, *Update* 5:10 (Mar. 27, 1986). Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 69.

<sup>154</sup> The Honduran soldiers, with their cold rice and beans, could still see the U.S. “reinforcements” with their steak and cold beer. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 119. Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Republic for Rent,” press release, Sept. 26, 1986.

On March 27 Congress moved to vote on the \$100 million for the Contras, approved by the House in June and the Senate August—more than the FF.AA.’s budget for a whole year. The White House had to insist the Contras were “holding their own—despite their lack of significant outside support.”<sup>155</sup> Congress lifted all restrictions on CIA involvement, nor imposed any limits against regime change—“For the first time, U.S. legislators unequivocally endorsed the administration’s strategy of low-intensity warfare against the Sandinista government.” Finally the White House had weapons, ammunition, training, and guidance by the CIA and Pentagon restored, to resume in November. Reagan hailed it as “a new era of bipartisan consensus in American foreign policy. ... We can be proud that we as a people have embraced the struggle of the freedom fighters in Nicaragua. Today, their cause is our cause.” That month 70 Contras arrived at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and the CIA asset program was restarted—despite Hasenfus’s shutdown igniting an international scandal.<sup>156</sup>

The State Department’s counsel Abraham David Sofaer was still able to use the incident to claim that Nicaragua was an aggressor with no right to its claims of self-defense against Contra incursions. The EPS “attack” brought Managua’s reputation under attack from several angles in the United States, including House Speaker Tip O’Neill (D-Massachusetts), an opponent of Contra aid.<sup>157</sup>

The Honduran newspapers pointed out that the EPS incursion was similar to three hundred previous ones that Washington had *not* chosen to publicize, and that the CIA had concurred

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<sup>155</sup> This was intended to avoid any “more half-assed shoestring operations that would force them back to the Hill after a few months.” The Senate had voted for Contra aid five days after Managua accepted the Contadora Agreement—an act which was rejected by the White House. Arson, *Crossroads* 1993: 200-06. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 12. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 325. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield* 2011: 244. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 557.

<sup>156</sup> Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” in Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas* 1987: 35. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 176.

<sup>157</sup> Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 325. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 309.

that it was routine.<sup>158</sup> The FDN itself insisted there had been no EPS incursion into Honduras whatsoever. Hondurans were also particularly outraged that they had to read the truth about what was happening in their own country in U.S. newspapers. *El Tiempo*'s acrid headline was "The White House Says That Peace Has Returned to the Border."<sup>159</sup> Rather than preventing witness testimony from making its way from the Honduran press to the Senate floor, it was Reagan's confection of an invasion, refracted through a Honduran press mostly expressing its surprise, that threatened to escape Honduras and come back, altered, to the U.S. press.

In fact, the March 1986 incursion by the EPS, as well as another in May 1985, had been at the *request* of Tegucigalpa. The FF.AA. had warned Managua that Contra buildup and activity were increasing, in order to covertly build mutual confidence between the governments, in order to not confront one another directly for the sake of their shared headache the Contras.<sup>160</sup> But Tegucigalpa still managed to damage Managua's reputation with the "invasion," because key aspects of were kept secret—Tegucigalpa still able to reverse the reality on its frontier.

While it kept the Contras funded—rather than raiding Hondurans—the 1986 incident seriously damaged the standing of the FF.AA.: there was no more talk of the iron inviolability of the border, no standing left for complaints of Honduras's sovereignty violated by Nicaragua. Unable to fend off either Salvadorans or Nicaraguans, the FF.AA. publicly came under attack, its continued existence questioned—as it had been in 1963, when it overthrew the elected President Ramón Villeda Morales.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 163-65.

<sup>159</sup> "De la Casa Blanca nos indican que volvió la paz a la frontera," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 31, 1986.

<sup>160</sup> EFE, "Asegura periódico norteamericano: Honduras ha dado información a Nicaragua sobre la 'contra,'" *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, May 14, 1986.

<sup>161</sup> Villeda Morales had also threatened to dissolve the Army as a threat to democracy, following Costa Rica's 1948 model. "Latest Frontier Clashes are Sideshow to Contra-Gate," *This Week: Central America and Panama* 9:48 (Dec. 15, 1986). Kirk S. Bowman, *Militarization, Democracy, and Development: The Perils of Praetorianism in Latin America* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002): 168-70. Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras* 1993: 22.

In February 1988 \$105 million in further aid was voted down 219–211 in the House—a close vote despite being two years into the ongoing Iran-Contra scandal. The White House had already blamed a supposed wave of EPS aggression into Honduras on Congress’s cash cutoff in February 1988. But Tegucigalpa was visibly reluctant to see any more aid that would keep the Contras on its soil.<sup>162</sup> The next month the White House repeated its 1986 media maneuvers to overplay another EPS incursion on March 14, 1988. This was even more derided by the Honduran press—showing Salomón’s characteristic loss of fear that drove real democratization<sup>163</sup>; but at the same time the FF.AA. was still able to maintain its militarized domain over the Honduran frontier, and its *de facto* dominion of the Honduran state.

The White House claimed 1,500 EPS invaders and sent 3,200 U.S. soldiers in the name of defending Honduras’s sovereignty. *El Tiempo*’s headlines pointedly read “Complete Calm at the Frontier” and “Nothing New on the Front.” Tegucigalpa and Washington had to conceal a bigger dilemma in 1988: the EPS had smashed the Contras with Operation Danto 88 and were driving them back across the border, and the U.S. forces were there to keep them from getting dismantled completely.<sup>164</sup> Azcona’s letter requesting “effective and immediate assistance to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of Honduras had even arrived at the White House hours *after* Reagan ordered the deployment.<sup>165</sup> As in March 1986, Reagan had approved the deployment and the Pentagon geared up before Azcona’s “request” had been received.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 231-32.

<sup>163</sup> Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 571. Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras* 1993: 62-64. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 147. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 185.

<sup>164</sup> “Constata *Tiempo*: Completa calma en la frontera,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1988. “Sin novedad en el frente: La calma retorna a la frontera,” *El Tiempo*, Mar. 23, 1988. Leticia Salomón, “El caso Matta: (Radiografía de la violencia),” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 52-69.

<sup>165</sup> CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1988*: 6.

<sup>166</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 231-32.



Azcona also downplayed and dawdled, just as he had done two years earlier: if the Contras were unable to stay out of Honduras, then they had to be terminated as a military threat to their FF.AA. “protectors.”<sup>167</sup> In other words, the EPS’s tacit role was now to break the Contras alongside the FF.AA. while Tegucigalpa could still plausibly pretend to defend them. The White House was far more concerned than Tegucigalpa, fearing that the Contras were about to be eliminated and it would be left without any bargaining chip against Managua after the House of Representatives had voted down US\$36 million in lethal aid February 1988.<sup>168</sup> The near-obliteration of the Contras—for a second time—was what had to be kept secret.

Chancellor Carlos López Contreras and military spokesman Col. Manuel Enrique Suárez Benavides publicly denied that anything was happening—again the Honduran government and military resisted U.S. efforts to get them to act or acknowledge, pressuring the White House using the same status as warranted witnesses that the two states had worked together to monopolize.<sup>169</sup> In a repeat of the 1986 incident, Azcona stayed at his vacation on the Caribbean; locals at the border told visiting newspaper reporters that nothing had actually happened. Azcona then changed his story, saying that he had requested assistance from U.S. troops which were already in-country, so no approval by the U.S. Senate for the expeditionary force was needed in the first place.<sup>170</sup> Questions quickly mounted in the Honduran press record—why again was the FF.AA., so lauded by the civil government, unable to literally defend Honduran territory? Why were the Contras still being protected, especially now that everyone knew they were causing the EPS incursions that Tegucigalpa and Washington were so insistent on condemning?<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 222.

<sup>168</sup> Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 387.

<sup>169</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 230-31.

<sup>170</sup> “Invasion or Exercises?” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

<sup>171</sup> Leticia Salomón, “El caso Matta: (Radiografía de la violencia),” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 52-69.

On March 17 and 19, 1988, Honduran F-5s attacked EPS positions inside Nicaragua: despite Carson's backstage collusion between Tegucigalpa and Managua, the Honduran Army and Air Force were still necessary to save the Contras from imminent and catastrophic defeat. Ultimately the incident was a show to "demonstrate" that Honduras was a victim of Red aggression and to secure further aid: the Senate agreed to a new US\$48 million on March 31, but the Contras had already agreed to ceasefires and amnesties March 23.<sup>172</sup> June 9 the FDN was ordered to reject the ceasefire by the White House.<sup>173</sup> The open-faced nonsense could ultimately succeed in the short-run, even during a scandal about Contra support, as long as Cold-War narratives went without serious explicit or tacit challenge.

Before the 1988 "incursion" the Contras had marshaled and promised that a foray into isolated San José de Bocay in Jinotega Department would be—after years of unmet promises—their first territorial toehold. Instead, only direct and rapid intervention by the FF.AA. avoided the Contras' total destruction: the EPS was no longer holding back after Hasenfus. 48 hours after the Army had supposedly been alerted by the Contras to an EPS invasion, Adolfo Calero and Honduran officers announced that they had heard nothing from the frontier. The Army quickly withdrew from the press, insisting that bad weather was blocking communications with the eastern garrisons.<sup>174</sup> As in 1986, U.S. helicopters flew Honduran troops far from the fighting.<sup>175</sup> CIA support for the Contras ended and only the airlift prevented the FDN's annihilation as a force.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> "Honduras: La invasión desde Washington," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 83 (March 1988). Longley, "An Obsession," in Coleman and Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World* 2017: 230. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 388.

<sup>173</sup> Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 210.

<sup>174</sup> "Honduras: La invasión desde Washington," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 83 (March 1988).

<sup>175</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 231-32.

<sup>176</sup> Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua's Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 35. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 571.

In terms of continuing the Contra War, the Holy Week incidents can be counted as successes: Reagan was still able to fabricate a narrative of mass invasion by sending a massive “response,” and rewarded with millions in Contra aid from the Senate. And this maneuver worked twice: the second time, both houses of Congress voted to fund the same operations that the Tower Commission had spent months to uncover. Even the trick of fabricating a case for a proxy force’s strength was as old as Vietnam: exaggerate in order to get the funds to make the proxies as strong as promised before—to lie to make the lie no *longer* a lie.<sup>177</sup> Reagan Administration officials such as Edward A. Lynch later claim—well after the fact—that Reagan had simply *convinced* the legislative branch with his 1984-86 program. Critical historians, while coming from the opposite tack, also point out that Congress never opposed the revival of the Cold War across three continents and “took considerable care not to learn too much” about Casey’s covert network after Hasenfus<sup>178</sup>: this was the content for what had happened between the Honduran and the U.S. executive branches.

But denial and secrecy were not necessarily instruments of choice, intentionally wielded by figures like Reagan, Casey, or Gen. Regalado. The Honduran state’s role in blocking and undermining news from the Honduran press, combined with the gradual restrictions that the White House brought down on itself, left President Azcona as the only figure that could supply *post facto* corroboration the claims President Reagan had already made. In Bourdieuan terms, the Honduran President and FF.AA. had been granted the high ground over the news by the White

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<sup>177</sup> The Laotian Civil War was also marked by tacit exaggeration of forces in order to obtain the Senate funding that would (supposedly) let them match the exaggerated numbers, the reality now catching up to the promised illusion—not even a “white lie.” Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983): 83-84.

<sup>178</sup> (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare,” n63.) Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 64. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 231, 374-75.

House, and now the Hondurans could use their position on the media field against the U.S. Executive that had put them there.

Azcona twice exerted his leverage against Reagan—for the sake of a Contra force he was reluctant to maintain. However, the newspapers quickly revealed the shenanigans and the FF.AA.'s inability to protect Honduran territory from either Nicaraguan army—a reflection of the news of the high command's 1980-85 invitation of the Salvadoran forces. The Contras were a hostile armed force drawing invasions, all thanks to FF.AA. protection. The newspapers expressed derision from various walks of life, and the “loss of fear” described by Salomón after 1984 allowed even the Honduran Army's continued existence to be publicly questioned, but even public discussion of the dissolution of a Latin American military in the 1980s<sup>179</sup> showed that the stakes were higher for the Honduran state than simply “lack of fear” or a “crisis of legitimacy.”

The target of covert warfare could only be attacked if it held itself back to some extent, as with the North Vietnamese against U.S. Hmong proxy forces in the 1960s. Carson reiterates that this is not some deliberate backstage, state-to-state “collusion” to limit escalation, but a common feature to covert warfare itself, especially given its geographical distance from the sponsor Superpowers.<sup>180</sup> The White House and FF.AA. had to hide from the U.S. Senate that the EPS had repeatedly broken the FDN as a military force.

The pressure was on the FDN in spring 1986 to win any sort of victory that they could—to prove to the U.S. Senate that they were a viable force against the EPS. Col. Bermúdez even made the Republicans' probable loss of the Senate in November 1986 into a factor on the battlefield.<sup>181</sup> The Contras faced destruction by the EPS, the FF.AA. talk of the abolition of the Honduran military, and the White House impeachment: the 1986 and 1988 “invasions,” U.S. troops,

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<sup>179</sup> As in Panama 1994 and Haiti 1995, though those abolitions were conducted under full U.S. pressure.

<sup>180</sup> Carson, *Secret Wars* 2018: 32.

<sup>181</sup> Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 305.

and Senate votes for aid—ultimately, these were all desperate rearguard maneuvers, all that was keeping the fading Contras alive.

### Azcona and Gen. Regalado: The Final Phases

The U.S. Senate voted for nonlethal aid 1985, and lethal aid 1986 and 1988: this had had the effect of making the White House overconfident that, regardless of any particular objection, Congress ultimately backed it against Managua, regardless of the Boland Amendments—and that merely “bypassing” Congress in 1985 to bridge the gap was not serious. There was no Congressional dissent from the *goal* of “pressuring” Managua: Chomsky, William LeoGrande, Martin A. Lee, and Norman Solomon agree that the Cold-War consensus was maintained after Hasenfus with barely a hitch until “victory” with the December 26, 1991, dissolution of the Soviet Union. Congressional objection never turned into repudiation of the Central American counterrevolution.<sup>182</sup> There were no public controversies over the rest of the “Casey Doctrine,” like renewal of Angolan aid after 1985 or Operation Cyclone against the Soviet-backed Afghan government—continuing under President George H.W. Bush even after the Soviet pullout and the December 1991 fall of the Soviet Union itself. Administration officials dismissed the public polling against Central American intervention, saying they simply put out counter-polls reframing the issue and massage the polls.<sup>183</sup>

But any overconfidence the White House accumulated still had to deal with the October 1986 shutdown of Eugene Hasenfus that exposed that covert CIA and Pentagon aid to the Con-

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<sup>182</sup> Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 153-54.

<sup>183</sup> Despite ensuring the Sandinistas’ electoral defeat by threatening to continue the war if they voted the wrong way, Bush was not interested in the Contras or Nicaragua, ignoring Chamorro’s government and sending no aid nor making any restitution. Abrams and Fox, interviewees, “Public Opinion and Reagan Policy,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 106, 112-15. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 287.

tras was being continued, despite the legal ban from 1984. The shutdown was an “explosive” incident, which could not be covered up or its meaning reinterpreted: only Cohen’s implicatory denial was left—what to *do* about what was revealed. While Reagan himself came in danger of removal, the scandal instead turned an investigation that lasted into the Presidency of former CIA Director Bush, who pardoned those few government agents who had received sentences in December 1992.<sup>184</sup>

Hasenfus’s shutdown began the last phase of the Contra War, which lasted until the 1990 election and the FDN’s repatriation to Nicaragua. Despite a system of false leaks, suppression of news, reinterpretation, and “spin,” the ground had been prepared for one explosive incident like Hasenfus’s downing—in some ways a repeat of the 1983 revelation of the mining of Nicaragua’s ports (Chapter 2, “Iran and the Contras”).<sup>185</sup> The FDN patrons had ideological and financial interest in continued Congressional funding, and succeeded 1985-88—but would never have gotten it had the true extent of the criminality and deception been known: the lack of massive arms flow through Honduras and the Gulf of Fonseca, the CIA bombing and mining of Nicaragua, direct involvement in disappearance and murder, and deliberate circumvention of explicit law.<sup>186</sup>

On March 5, 1987, tens of thousands of Hondurans marched on Tegucigalpa in solidarity with frontier citizens displaced by the Contras, but the Azcona government deemed them a noisy

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<sup>184</sup> David M. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005): 181. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 60, 338. Robert Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 2012): 155. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 568.

<sup>185</sup> Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 147.

<sup>186</sup> Kojelis, Reich, Hinckley, and Parry, interviewees, “Public Diplomacy,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 163.

“anti-democratic minority.”<sup>187</sup> The President belittled the expelled coffee-growers of Español Grande and Las Trojes: “they do not represent even a half of one percent of coffee growers in Honduras,” insisting that most Hondurans remained squarely behind the Contra presence.<sup>188</sup>

In February 1987 the FF.AA. had relocated the Contra forces east from Capire to Yamales, El Paraíso, for an eastward push across the Río Coco into the Bocay Valley in Nicaragua’s northern Jinotega Department, bringing several journalists along. Numerous Contras remained in Capire and the other *aldeas*—obvious to locals, foreign reporters, and visiting members of Congress like the Liberal Manuel Zelaya (President 2006-09), who was met with a dozen bullets

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<sup>187</sup> “1987 in Review,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988).

<sup>188</sup> Miguel Ángel Pavón, “For the People: President Azcona’s Disdain,” *Honduras Update* 6:5 (February 1988), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 28, 1987. In order to provide justification for the war against Nicaragua both before and after the second Boland Amendment—to serve the human half of the “centaur” of state—1985-86 the White House brandished polls by the U.S. Information Agency or Consultoría Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo claiming 89% of Hondurans saw Nicaragua as the number one or two threat to their country and that the populace supported the Contras’ presence and U.S. funding and believed Washington respected Honduras. A January 1987 CID poll claimed that 85% of Hondurans supported the U.S. presence in their country, and that 93% saw the United States favorably. But Hondurans’ beliefs about their own country was misrepresented for U.S. consumption. A 1986 UNAH poll 64.5% opposition to U.S. troops’ presence and 89.5% to the Contras’, and in 1987 Central American universities found 88% of Hondurans named the United States as the country meddling the most in the region’s internal affairs. Contrariwise, Elliott Abrams flatly dismissed polls altogether, as simple instruments of either the White House or its opponents. Central News Agency, Taipei, “Nicaragua a Threat to L. America: Survey,” Mar. 8, 1986. W. Dale Nelson, [“Ambassador Philip Habib, President Reagan’s new special envoy to Central America, said today Reagan’s proposal for aid to Nicaraguan rebels has strong popular support in the region”], Associated Press, Mar. 17, 1986. Helen Thomas, [“President Reagan said Monday that polls in Central America show his plan to give \$100 million in aid to the Contra rebels has the overwhelming support of the people in the countries closest to Nicaragua”], United Press International, Mar. 17, 1986. Gerald M. Boyd, “Habib Says Latins Back U.S. Aid Plan,” *The New York Times*, Mar. 18, 1986. Juan Ramón Durán, “Honduras: Rising Opposition to Presence of U.S. Troops, Contras,” Inter Press Service, Mar. 20, 1986. Associated Press, “Overwhelming Support for Contras, Ambassador Says,” Apr. 22, 1986. Paul Knox, “Honduras Grows Uneasy Over Contra War,” *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Nov. 25, 1986. Barbara Koeppe, “Just Say No to the U.S. War Against Nicaragua; Hondurans Say it Now,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1986. Noe Leiva, [“About 3,300 U.S. troops stormed ashore in a mock invasion of Honduras’s northern coast Wednesday”], United Press International, May 13, 1987. Robert Collier, “American Air Base in Honduras Looks Permanent,” United Press International, Oct. 25, 1987. Abrams and Fox, interviewees, “Public Opinion and Reagan Policy,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 106, 112-5. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 132. William Bollinger and Daniel M. Lund, “Gallup in Central America: Mixing Polls and Propaganda,” *The Nation* 426:18 (May 7, 1988): 335-38. Kenneth M. Coleman and Lee Sigelman, “The Polls—A Review: The 1985 USIA Central American Surveys,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 52:4 (Winter 1988): 552-56. Funes, *Los deliberantes* 1995: 318. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 216-17.

from a FF.AA. soldier when he visited in April.<sup>189</sup> Gen. Humberto Regalado was in a high dudgeon over the reports: the FF.AA. patrolled the border, therefore “I give you my word as a soldier” that there were zero Contras left in Honduras, he said April.<sup>190</sup> The need to make the news of displacees “go away” was so great that *paraiseños* were returned to their villages that month, so hastily that the Army had not even swept for Contra landmines. 26 *cafetaleros* were killed: since the FF.AA. controlled the border and its news, they blamed the deaths on the EPS.<sup>191</sup>

The Contras’ spring 1987 push into Nicaragua had been planned primarily to impress the U.S. Senate as the scandal sparked by Hasenfus unfolded in Washington, but the FDN was beaten away from Nicaragua’s farms and back into Honduras in May and June, and Congress cut them off again, causing a near mutiny.<sup>192</sup> Tegucigalpa resettled many FDN Contras in southern Olancho Department, which was less inhabited than El Paraíso Department, to avoid further violence against Honduran campesinos (and Congresspersons) that would draw attention. In September Col. Enrique Bermúdez embarrassed Tegucigalpa by announcing that he was holding thirty EPS soldiers prisoner at the FF.AA.’s own El Aguacate base.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> “Más de un millón de dólares mensuales cuesta a Honduras la ‘contra,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 11, 1987. “‘Contras’: Sigue su reinado en El Paraíso,” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 20, 1987. “Admite comandante del XVI Batallón: Hay contras lisiados en El Aguacate,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 7, 1988.

<sup>190</sup> “Jefe de las FFAA: Les doy mi palabra: ‘Contras’ están peleando en Nicaragua,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 30, 1987.

<sup>191</sup> “Zona Oriental convertida en ring de Contras y sandinistas,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 30, 1986. “Maniobras militares,” Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Informaciones* 7, 2nd epoch (March-April 1987): 1-27. *Honduras Update* Special 1 (May 1987): 29-30. Ramón Custodio, “Who Are the Honduran Subversives and What Do They Want?” *Honduras Update* 5:8 (May 1987). CODEH, *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 30.

<sup>192</sup> “Con buenos ojos mira Montoya entrenamiento de ‘contras’ aquí,” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 4, 1986. “La ‘contra,’” Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 4-8. “‘Contras’: Sigue su reinado en El Paraíso,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 20, 1987. “Major Contra Offensive Beaten Back to Honduras,” *This Week: Central America and Panama* 10:20 (May 25, 1987). “Regresan los ‘contras’ y los problemas crecen,” *El Tiempo*, May 29, 1987. Noé Leiva Bardales, “‘Contras’ tiran la toalla,” *El Tiempo*, June 29, 1987. “Contras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987). Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 12. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 35. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 182.

<sup>193</sup> ACAN-EFE, “Gobierno hondureño pide a contras que guarden silencio,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 10, 1987.



The *Asociación Hondureña de Productores de Café* had started denouncing the Contra presence to the press in 1981; AHPROCAFE's Mauricio Santiago Hernández told *El Tiempo* February 1987 that while the Contras insisted they had all crossed over to Nicaragua, Hondurans see them with their own eyes on this side of the border.<sup>194</sup> Ramiro Figueroa, the Honduran government's legal counsel for the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, requested that AHPROCAFE leaders not go to Washington to criticize the Contra War:

Groups and associations not necessarily identified with the problems of Honduras [...] take advantage of these occasions for their own benefit. Local, and international press, intellectuals and academics, don't waste [any] "controversial" facts and news to stimulate the demand of their publications, prestige, profits, etc. [...] International Communism, which is currently bringing a campaign of misinformation against our country to a head, would take advantage of the situation to sponsor an environment adverse to Honduras on the part of the U.S. people, who would pressure their legislators to adopt tougher positions.

To take the issue abroad was to let themselves be "used by the enemies of liberty and progress," and put Tegucigalpa's credibility and capacity to represent the Honduran people into doubt.<sup>195</sup>

Hasenfus's shutdown was the incident that allowed the Contadora process to finally end at Esquipulas, Guatemala, with the signature of all the Central American states—to the White House's consternation. President Azcona had promoted the UN–OAS Independent Verification Committee (*Comisión Internacional de Apoyo y Verificación*, CIAV) arranged for by the August 1987 Esquipulas Agreement—until the Committee determined that *his* government was not carrying out its duties. They were blocked from the Honduran side of the agreed ceasefire zone, and then were declared *persona non grata* after the Holy Week incident of 1988. Contemporary writers noted that this was all in order to continue a war that Azcona did not want and to protect the

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<sup>194</sup> "Cafetaleros de El Paraíso ya no aguantan a los 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 11, 1985. "12 comunidades bajo control de 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, Feb. 6, 1987. "Presidente de Asociación de Caficultores: 'Contras no se han ido,'" *El Tiempo*, Feb. 20, 1987. "Cafetaleros demandarán a los EE.UU.," *CODEH* 66 (July 1990).

<sup>195</sup> "Piden a cafetaleros no ir a EE.UU. a desprestigiar administración Reagan," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 30, 1987.

Contras that he wanted out of the country.<sup>196</sup> In January 1988 Douglas Montes drew the CIAV frustratedly asking the President “Are or are there not Contras?” while Azcona whistled casually, several legs visible under his tailcoats.<sup>197</sup>

The fate of the CIAV was similar to that of the Contadora process earlier in the 1980s, or the 1984 Nicaraguan election: these acts of “looping” by the White House required a certain level of non-coverage of prior demands and compliance in the U.S. press, in public discourse. Managua had complied with White House demands and brought in internationally-recognized credible witnesses—Latin American presidents, European and U.S. poll observers.<sup>198</sup> Daniel Ortega accepted the frontier inspectors, so the U.S. and Honduran officials who had spent years demanding neutral outside observers were forced to make a visible about-face to keep these warranted observers with media access from reporting U.S. Contra support during a major Administration scandal. In the end, Central America’s other presidents had to be outright blackmailed by Elliott Abrams and Colin Powell to abolish the CIAV—especially since it had formally condemned Tegucigalpa and Washington for breaking the Agreement while finding Managua *most* in compliance, based on what they were able to see for themselves on the Honduran border.<sup>199</sup>

The FF.AA. had guided the publicity over the FDN’s departures, but by March 1988 Capire was “Managüita” again.<sup>200</sup> In April the Contras’ “final offensive” was repelled by the EPS’s

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<sup>196</sup> Tegucigalpa had earlier rejected any observers whatsoever, while Esquipulas substantially boosted Managua’s international legitimacy: the White House was sabotaging what it itself had been asking for a month before. ACAN-EFE, “Porque es ‘necesaria’: Rechaza Honduras solicitud de observadores en frontera,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, May 17, 1985. “¿Moros en la costa?: *Non grata* para Honduras comisión de ONU que inspeccionará frontera,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 23, 1988. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 12. Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy* 1988: 355. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 86-87.

<sup>197</sup> Douglas Montes, “¿Hay o no hay contras?” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 9, 1988.

<sup>198</sup> Brown, *Explaining the Reagan Years in Central America* 1995: 262. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 222. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 117, 139-41. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 310-11. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 513. Walter C. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality: The Caribbean Basin, 1953-1992* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2001): 133-35.

<sup>199</sup> Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 91-93, 234-35. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 190. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 386.

<sup>200</sup> “En desbandada a Honduras vienen otra vez ‘contras,’ ” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 18, 1988.

Operation Danto 88—a crushing blow (with tacit FF.AA. approval) that nearly terminated the FDN as a standing military force. The entirety of the 12,000 Contra fighters were pushed back across the border once again, saved from breaking rank and from ultimate dissolution only by a mass paradrop of U.S. forces (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”).<sup>201</sup> Azcona still denied all Contra presence until December 1988, when López Contreras admitted they were keeping Nicaraguan prisoners on Honduran soil—again.<sup>202</sup>

The FF.AA. was already warranted in the international press, but visibly expelling the international and impartial CIAV observers did not reinforce any supposed FF.AA. monopoly on credibility but instead ruined it by expelling several other warranted observers (and the repeated denial/acceptance of the Contras). In general, 1980s were characterized by the Honduran public losing its 1982-84 fear of the Armed Forces, though Commanders-in-Chief still threatened journalists on the frontiers. The FF.AA. was still able to forcibly assert itself over the press despite its warrant collapsing with each Contra regression. A line of analysis following that of Bourdieu would reveal a state expending all its social capital; analysis following a more Foucauldian tack, of power and knowledge, would show a process of expelling “warranted” journalists as well as campesinos, followed by their assertion visibly collapsing.<sup>203</sup> Together, these analyses can join Gramsci—that the state had its own needs, and was able to use the moneyed classes of Central America or the anti-Nicaraguan press of the United States for its own ends.

The new U.S. President Bush was more pragmatic than Reagan—but hardly a “dove,” continuing Salvadoran aid after the FMLN burned the Air Force at Ilopango and seized several blocks of San Salvador in November 1989—prompting the Atlacatl Battalion to massacre six

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<sup>201</sup> “El regreso de los contras al territorio hondureño,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 25, 1988. Perla, *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion* 2016: 35, 208.

<sup>202</sup> “Una cuestión sin importancia y los secuestros de la Contra,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Dec. 27, 1988.

<sup>203</sup> Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 279.

Jesuits, a housekeeper, and her daughter at Central American University. The country was “making news” again.<sup>204</sup> In December Bush invaded Panama to seize its *de facto* leader Manuel Noriega, who had worked with the CIA, Contras, and traffickers but also maintained relations with the guerrillas of the isthmus. Noriega was the only one to serve a prison sentence for helping the Contras in the 1980s, Bush pardoning North and the others in December 1992.<sup>205</sup> The Contras remained in Honduras until the FSLN lost the February 1990 elections—swung largely by economic austerity, a decade of war and conscription, the Bush White House funding the opposition campaign and threatening to continue the Contra support and the embargo imposed May 1985 to punish Nicaragua for voting for Ortega, if the Nicaraguan people voted the “wrong way” again.<sup>206</sup>

## Conclusion

Raymond Bonner could be withdrawn and NPR threatened (Chapter 3), but that risked signaling that there might be something *newsworthy* to all the reports coming out of FMLN terrain. Bombing Nicaraguan air and seaports in 1983 for the media coverage while hiding the CIA’s involvement enraged even Sen. Goldwater and drew down a total ban the next year. The 1981-85 “spiking” of Embassy reports or Associated Press stories only led to a situation that

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<sup>204</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 136. Ryan, “The Peripheral Center,” in Sewell and Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 299. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 242-48.

<sup>205</sup> Byrne, *Iran-Contra* 2014: 87-88, 173, 229-31. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* 2005: 51. Emerson, *Secret Warriors* 1988: 110. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 170, 293-94, 317. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard* 1998: 150-51, 390-92. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield* 2011: 278, 297-98. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 117. Parry and Kornbluh, “Iran-Contra’s Untold Story,” *Foreign Policy* 72 (Autumn 1988): 12. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 404, 478-80. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 521. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 65-74, 78, 157, 169-70. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 423-25. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 233.

<sup>206</sup> Nor was there any compensation for destroying an entire country: the entire apparatus around Nicaragua was simply dumped once the regime fell, like 1990s Afghanistan or Cambodia or the Hmong and Kurdish proxy forces in the 70s.

gave Hasenfus's shutdown an unstoppable impetus, causing a scandal that in turn had to be diverted and diffused.<sup>207</sup>

States can express their power when they reinforce and reiterate claims publicly known to be false—but such power is not *hegemony*. Cruder forms of assertion and denial were deployed for those situations where the state would not be able to withstand fallout from the failure of a cover-up—funding massacres, making deals with cartels, negotiating with terrorists, obstructing the investigations.<sup>208</sup> Stanley Cohen uses denial as an index of democratization: in his theorization Latin America's "democratic transition" of the 1980s and early 90s can be gauged by shifts in denial. Authoritarian regimes rely on first-degree "literal denial," against the incident itself and its observers' "reliability, objectivity and credibility." This was used in the events that were most crucial to the Honduran and U.S. states to conceal, and quickly—the Sumpul and El Mozote Massacres, or, in modified form, the Holy Weeks.

Cohen's second degree, "interpretive denial," is more favored by civilian states—acknowledging an events but keeping it from being understood accurately.<sup>209</sup> It includes reframing and softer deceits, such as justifying funding for the FF.AA. and FDN by blaming EPS "attacks," by hiding the important fact that the Contras were attacking from Honduras; or hailing the Contras' departure and then concealing each forcible return. Longer-term problems, such as campesino deaths in El Salvador after the El Mozote cover-up or the Contras' intractable presence in Honduras, allow for more advance planning of the media campaign.

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<sup>207</sup> This required Stanley Cohen's third degree of denial—once a state crime was proven and admitted, the arena moved to the question of what to *do* about it: the Senate and press were completely reluctant to launch another impeachment and investigation of the intelligence agencies in twelve years, nor—after Reagan's New Cold War—to threaten the fighting of the Cold War that had no end in sight in 1986.

<sup>208</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 51.

<sup>209</sup> (Introduction, "Ideology and Hegemony" and "An Anatomy of Denial.") Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 8, 110-11. John Kurt Jacobsen, "Why Do States Bother to Deceive? Managing Trust at Home and Abroad," *Review of International Studies* 34:2 (April 2008): 339.

Azcona trapped the White House during the Holy Week incidents, showing that Tegucigalpa could have more success at manipulating news than the Reagan White House. But while the Honduran state could withhold aid to the Contras or selectively publicize their presence, or even reduce a feverishly-ill Ambassador to begging at Azcona's door, its ability to force public compliance within Honduras had deteriorated rapidly after Gen. Alvarez Martínez's 1984 expulsion and the end of his forcible reshaping of the Honduran polity through "covert" state terror (Chapter 6). And this leverage over the White House was borrowed—or, more properly, originated in the process of both states keeping the war secret. Each assertion that the Contras had left increased the state's discredit to the public—and fed the loss of fear by popular society. It vocally denied reality to keep the war going—as Foucault would predict—but also damaged its credibility in the sense of Bourdieuan resource or social capital, while not wanting the FDN to remain a military force.

By interpreting denial and media manipulation as the inverse of consensus and hegemony, as a *weakness* rather than a strength in the state, we can expose crucial turning-points in the 1980s' war against Central America's *campesinato*—"near misses" that could have played a similar role to Hasenfus's shootdown, but before October 1986. Bruno Latour emphasizes the impetus of true knowledge, while Michel Foucault stresses the role of power in transmitting or blocking knowledge<sup>210</sup>: putting both these theories of knowledge together better illuminates the epistemic risks that the Reagan Administration took when it mobilized against high-salience stories.

Since 1982 the White House had to resort to threats and backstage manipulation because it was unable to make any case for Central American intervention despite a wide-ranging media campaign by the President at the peak of his popularity (Chapter 3). Secrecy and publicity were not two opposed and mutually-exclusive potential outcomes, but instead existed in mutual rela-

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<sup>210</sup> Pels, "Mixing Metaphors," in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

tionship to one another, factors accompanying one another, inherent in these incidents that the U.S. and Honduran states tried to interdict, discredit, and downplay.

Media analysts have emphasized that the media does not simply reflect and reproduce power relations, but also remains open to Gramscian counterhegemony: “warrantors,” as defined by epistemologists, are those who are able to give the grassroots power of the press, even if these witnesses are illiterate or otherwise marginalized.<sup>211</sup> Taryn Butler and other Iran-Contra historians have remarked on the sheer riskiness of the tactics conceived by Lt. Col. North (which, like Dewey Clarridge, had won him so much of Casey’s favor): using drug planes or trading arms for hostages left the White House with zero plausible deniability as a shield, no insulating “gray zone” between covertness and publicity.<sup>212</sup> Even if an incident was successfully covered up—for a decade, in El Mozote’s case—historical analysis can expose where the single global “hyper-power” was most vulnerable to stories originating even in the most isolated villagers, where the Cold-War “deep state” was weakest in its war against some of the poorest people in the world.

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<sup>211</sup> Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, “Introduction: Field Theory as a Work in Progress,” in Benson and Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* 2005: 9-10. Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in *ibid.*: 35.

<sup>212</sup> Note that covert action was “sold” as offering the most *minimal* risk to the President every time (Chapter 1). Cavender, Jurik, and Cohen, “The Baffling Case of the Smoking Gun,” *Social Problems* 40:2 (May 1993): 161. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 120, 163. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 413, 421-22. Peter Kornbluh, “The Iran-Contra Scandal: A Postmortem,” *World Policy Journal* 5:1 (Winter 1987/8): 140-43. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield* 2011: 214. Mahle, *Denial and Deception* 2004: 237. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 570. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 534. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 25. Woodward, *Veil* 1987: 324, 373-75.

## Chapter 6

### The Condor and the Eagle: Battalion 3-16

#### Introduction

Honduras had elections in 1980 and 1981 after sixteen years of military regimes, followed promptly by the organization of the Battalion 3-16 death squad. By all definitions Honduras was the first “show democracy” in Latin America after 1980, but also the first real “democratic transition” on the continent, the first “demonstration election,” as Edward Herman would put it, a *democracia de fachada*—continued military power under an electoralist façade behind two decades-old conservative political parties.<sup>1</sup> While Gens. Pinochet and Videla’s rhetoric did not have to go beyond “social survival,” “national security,” or the state as a family, national police chief Col. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez had to insist that all his actions were in the name of democracy and free society.

Under a restored civilian President and Congress, the FF.AA. decided to enact systematic, targeted forcible disappearance in March 1981. While Alvarez Martínez’s model and formal justification was known as the “Argentine Method,” he quickly assembled his professional murderers from the émigré Nicaraguan National Guard and Tegucigalpa’s Penitenciaría Central. This was conjoined with U.S. expertise from veterans of the Phoenix Program targeting South Vietnamese civilians when John Negroponte became Ambassador in November 1981 and Alvarez Martínez promoted to Commander-in-Chief of the entire military. The Nicaraguans were not necessarily tapped for the “plausible deniability” of using a neighboring country’s (former) armed forces, but simply for the available experience in murdering campesinos and students.<sup>2</sup> By

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<sup>1</sup> Mirna Flores, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, July 2012. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1992): 112.

<sup>2</sup> William Colby explicitly suggested a Phoenix-style program to dismember the FMLN’s “supporters” in El Salvador. The Phoenix Program is notorious in Cold War history, but the Saigon Station and the Langley headquarters were *irritated* that suspects were killed to increase the “body count” for the military, producing little intelligence.



the time Alvarez Martínez was ousted at the end of March 1984, Battalion 3-16 had “disappeared” and murdered a recorded 112 persons; afterward the death squad operated under new names, and its toll reached over 200 by the end of the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

Honduras had had political violence against *campesinos* (Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context”; Chapter 8, “False Guerrillas”) and against Churchpersons (Chapter 9, “Paz García: Persecution”) in the 1960s and 70s, but lacked the long-term militarist traditions of its neighbors Guatemala and El Salvador. It lacked any entity dedicated to political violence newer than Ricardo Zúñiga Agustinus’s *Mano Blanca*, first assembled for Oswaldo López Arellano’s 1963 coup; this was followed by the violence turned against Honduran campesinos in 1965, and the Salvadoran ones 1968.<sup>4</sup> The disappearances under Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Humberto Regalado were perpetrated by new, more professional units geared for political murder—the Nicaraguan Guard’s 40-man *Servicio Anticomunista*, including Lt. Ricardo Lau, the murderer of Archbishop Óscar Romero of San Salvador and keystone of Honduras’s Battalion 3-16, or Argentina’s Intel-

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The CIA in fact faced a dilemma: 1. they needed informants and sources in the National Liberation Front, but 2. could not share their name with the Program, or let them be killed by it, editing the death lists or recruiting targets in exchange for being allowed to live. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 99. Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration’s Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987): 102. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 206, 296-317, 493-94. Fernando López, *The Feathers of Condor: Transnational State Terrorism, Exiles and Civilian Anticommunism in South America* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016): 205-06. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983): 141-43, 193. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 16. Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 59, 256. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 363-64. Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Juan E. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras: Signs of the “Argentine Method”* (New York: Americas Watch, 1982): 4. Margarita Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy: Sociedad y crisis política* (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Documentación de Honduras and Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, 1987): 58.

<sup>4</sup> Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador’s Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000): 151-52. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 56. James A. Morris, “Government and Politics,” in James D. Rudolph, ed., with Kenneth Nolde and Mark Rosenberg, *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984): 167. Edgardo Antonio Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña en la década de los ochenta* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Elena, 2005): 42-43. Philip E. Wheaton, *The Iron Triangle: The Honduran Connection* (Washington: EPICA, 1981): 13-14.

ligence Battalion 601.<sup>5</sup> While death-squad founders like Zúñiga or Mario Sandoval Alarcón of Guatemala's *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* were crucial in reorganizing the fleeing Guardsmen into the "Contras," the Honduran–Nicaraguan death squad supplanted the older model of death squads. The state murders were perpetrated by a new generation of death-squad officers. Guardsmen, accustomed to violence against civilians arrived in Honduras starting 1979, but quickly had to adjust to the Honduran Armed Forces' needs before the international press, similar to what Chile and Argentina's murderous regimes had to deflect.

Washington's involvement in the Honduran state's murder campaign was a potential story threatening enough that U.S. Ambassador Binns was reprimanded and then recalled, replaced with Vietnam-War "hand" John Negroponte. The CIA Station at the Embassy was as tightly involved in Battalion 3-16 as the FF.AA. itself was, its officers reviewing Lt. Lau's death lists and visiting Inés Murillo after her father was able to make her abduction into an international issue in 1983, arranging for her release.

"Forced disappearance" in Latin America drew on previous repression and brutality in plazas and prisons, but as a named phenomenon<sup>6</sup> it drew international attention with Gen. Augusto Pinochet's 1973 coup in Chile. Histories and analyses of *desaparición* and the state violence of the 1970s and early 80s appear to break down more by whether they focus on the U.S. or Latin American halves of the equation, more than the cultural,<sup>7</sup> economic,<sup>8</sup> ideological,<sup>9</sup> or

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<sup>5</sup> Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 208-09, 226-27.

<sup>6</sup> Epistemologists call this "hermeneutical epistemic injustice": the simple absence of even a name specific to a phenomenon can prevent its social recognition and understanding. Kristie Dotson, "A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 33:1 (2012): 26-29.

<sup>7</sup> Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> This angle of analysis ties repression to enforcing a monetarist/neoliberal economics that minimized social spending and maximized the most profitable commodity—and military budgets. Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the

institutional<sup>10</sup> motives for these “dirty wars.”<sup>11</sup> Cohen summarized this rhetoric of denial as Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla’s position that “nothing happened, and they deserved it.”<sup>12</sup>

Political murder required obstruction of knowledge known to be true by those denying it—claims compounded into whole elaborate conspiracy theories of guerrillas, relatives, press, and human-rights agencies besieging defenseless military regimes (Chapter 3). This required precedent and infrastructure, which in Latin America was provided for other states by both the U.S. government and by regional powers—Argentina, Brazil, Chile. As with the failed cover-up of the Contras’ continued presence and FF.AA. support (Chapter 5, “López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial”), the successful defusing of Honduras’s “dirty war” also reveals the structures of concealment and exposure that extended between Central America and the United States, the covert and public processes that states and human-rights organizations engaged in.

Historians working from U.S.-based sources underscore all the training and coordinating infrastructure provided by the CIA, FBI, USAID’s Office of Public Safety, and the Pentagon’s

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Third World,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 134. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001): 152. Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 47-49, 125. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 10. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 1. David Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru* (Boulder, Colo.: Rienner, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> (See below, “Doctrines of National Security.”)

<sup>10</sup> Even Gen. Videla could be distinguished from the more *enthusiastic* hardline murderers and traffickers: Gens. Ramón Camps, Albano Harguindeguy, Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, Ibérico Saint-Jean, and Carlos Guillermo Suárez Mason, Adm. Emilio Eduardo Massera, Cmdr. Alfredo Astiz, and Miguel Etchecolatz. In this sense the divisions of Argentina’s 1976-83 military regimes repeated the military civil war between *azules* and *colorados* 1962-63. Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 84.

<sup>11</sup> Even the term “dirty war” or “state terrorism” have been critiqued as suggesting a state being forced to imitate the tactics of its attackers—that violating civilians with rats, dogs, and cattle prods was an unavoidable feature of a campaign against unconventional guerrillas. Ultimately this requires “re-subjectifying” not only active guerrillas but the state perpetrators (Chapter 7, “The Perpetrator-Victims”). Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 93.

<sup>12</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 82-84, 103. Willem de Haan, “Denialism and the Problem of Indifference,” in Roland Moerland, Hans Nelen, and Jan Willems, eds., *Denialism and Human Rights* (Cambridge, U.K., Intersentia, 2016): 15-17.

School of the Americas—intelligence, interrogation, “psychological warfare.” The Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford Administrations provided lists of “suspects,” database computers, and encrypted communications for Operation Condor, the South American militaries’ program of deniably murdering each others’ exiled politicians.<sup>13</sup>

The White House had given sanction and cover to coups and disappearances, but the 1975 Congressional investigations into the U.S. role in the 1970-73 efforts to overthrow Chile’s President Salvador Allende increased public concern over atrocities. The new President Jimmy Carter (1977-81) publicly made human rights a consideration in foreign policy, and Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Israel, Nicaragua, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, and Taiwan were cut off or refused further U.S. aid to at least some degree, spurring an autonomous effort in the late 1970s to share know-how, intelligence, and resources *without* having to rely on the U.S. superpower (Chapter 2, “A ‘Black International’ ”). Intelligence leaders from

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<sup>13</sup> The CIA and other U.S. agencies had provided arrest lists in Guatemala 1954 and Indonesia 1965, though derived from public sources. Fernando López does note that, regardless of the actual content, the U.S. programs were no less important for bringing together trainees from so many countries, creating a pan-American ideology based in violent anticommunism. Even the notorious case of Dan Mitrione, when taken as a specific case, still occurred in the general context of the assurance of unconditional U.S. partnership—and international impunity. Ariel C. Armony, “Producing and Exporting State Terror: The Case of Argentina,” in Cecelia Menjivar and Néstor Rodríguez, eds., *When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005): 305-31. John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: New Press, 2004). Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 105, 137. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 82-83, 98, 310, 312, 320-21. Heinz, “The Military, Torture and Human Rights,” in Crelinsten and Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain* 1995: 70. Manuel Hevia Cosculluela, *Pasaporte 11333: Ocho años con la CIA*, 2nd ed. (Montevideo: Tupac Amaru Ediciones, 1988). Jeremy Kuzmarov, *Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation Building in the American Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). Grace Livingstone, *America’s Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror* (London and New York: Zed Books in association with the Latin America Bureau, 2009). A.J. Langguth, *Hidden Terrors: The Truth About U.S. Police Operations in Latin America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 51. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005. Clara Nieto, *Masters of War: Latin America and United States Aggression from the Cuban Revolution Through the Clinton Years*, trans. Chris Brandt (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003). Warner Poelchau, ed., *White Paper Whitewash: Interviews with Philip Agee on the CIA and El Salvador* (New York: Deep Cover Books, 1981): 55, 68. Stuart Schrader, *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*, *American Crossroads* 56 (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019). Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 52. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 279. Compare also the U.S. role in the 1965 political genocide in Indonesia, Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington’s Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program That Shaped Our World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2020).

France to Saudi Arabia considered the United States “off” the Cold-War playing field after Vietnam, Détente, and Watergate.<sup>14</sup>

Operation Condor’s South American officers felt that no U.S. agency could be trusted entirely, working to maintain some independence of their own and confident they could reach as far as Paris, Miami, or Washington, D.C., itself. Langley in fact voiced objections to Condor—because it was too noisy, the plainclothes seizures and brutality too overt, such as the 1976 car bombing of Chilean Gen. Orlando Letelier and U.S. citizen Ronni Moffitt in the U.S. capital. Santiago blamed the Chilean left as planting the bombs to discredit Gen. Pinochet—getting the word out first to muddy the waters on the actual perpetrators.<sup>15</sup> Avoiding pressure from international journalism and U.S. state institutions was a large part of the motivation for the “Argentine Method” of *desaparición*.

Operation Condor was set up on the initiative of Chile’s Enrique Arancibia Clavel—the murderer of Gen. Carlos Prats in 1974—and Argentina’s Col. José Osvaldo “Balita” Riveiro,

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<sup>14</sup> Much of this late-1970s anti-Carter network, independent of the U.S. government and welcoming of disgruntled forcibly-retired CIA agents, such as Ed Wilson and Ted Shackley, would become the web of connections that became “Iran-Contra” across three continents. Israeli embassies supported Buenos Aires’s most radical (and anti-Jewish) agents in Bolivia and Honduras 1980-82; the Israeli government also provided specialized computer centers to the Guatemalan military lists in the 1970s and 80s, designed to monitor dissidents and compile and distribute murder. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 91. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 145-46, 149. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 81-84. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 147. Eva Gold, ed., *Invasion: A Guide to the U.S. Military Presence in Central America* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, National Action/Research on the Military-Industrial Complex, 1985): 10. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008): 261. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 72-73. Armin Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* (Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 61, 220. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 84-92, 123, 169-70, 217. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 446. James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 120-21, 126. Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991): 47.

<sup>15</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 322-23. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 157.

who was soon assigned liaison for the Guardsmen in Managua, and then Tegucigalpa.<sup>16</sup> Condor was the new institution where intelligence, kidnapping, and torture techniques were shared between the intelligence and operations services of a dozen countries: it was deliberately designed to overcome old rivalries—Chile vs. Argentina, Honduras vs. El Salvador—in favor of ideological warfare, and to distribute secrecy and deniability across the continent so any one state could avoid the stigma of state terrorism.<sup>17</sup>

Latin American analysts' motive for the innovation of forcible disappearance is the National Security Doctrine that evolved on the continent, in the penultimate phase of the continent's Cold War: it was not a simple imposition of anticommunism from outside. The Doctrine was a worldview first elaborated by the Brazilian military and which reached its apex with the Argentine Method, explicitly erasing declaring there was no such thing as a "civilian."<sup>18</sup> Unionists and students were redefined as "guerrilla infrastructure": peasant leagues, activists, and psychologists, not armed fighters, were those who were killed.<sup>19</sup> Anyone associated with economic libera-

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<sup>16</sup> Such circumstances allowed a "middle power"—Argentina, in this case—to have initiative over the U.S. Superpower, whose protection was what gave full rein Central America's decades-old military regimes in its "backyard." It was no simple outward "irradiation" from either Washington or Buenos Aires. Cuban exiles or Venezuela's *Dirección Nacional de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención* were also able to commandeer significant "force projection" capabilities under Condor's proverbial wings. Armony, "Producing and Exporting State Terror," in Menjivar and Rodríguez, eds., *When States Kill* 2005. Armony, "Transnationalizing the Dirty War," in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008. Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985): 115. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 372. Francisco Martorell, *Operación Cóndor, el vuelo de la muerte: La coordinación represiva en el Cono Sur* (Santiago: Lom Ediciones, 1999): 50-51, 56, 219. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 317.

<sup>18</sup> Armony, "Transnationalizing the Dirty War," in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 134-68. Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 56. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993): 141. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 285, 296. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005. Leticia Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1992): 40-41, 55, 57. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 85. William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996): 32-34. Argentina had some of the continent's lowest proportion of officers trained in the U.S. style of counterinsurgency. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* 1989: 81.

<sup>19</sup> Unlike any of the other 1970s neo-reactionary general-presidents, Videla and Massera had the advantage of being able to reuse nonofficial forces, such as the far-right Peronist Alianza Anticomunista Argentina, experienced in

tion was targeted<sup>20</sup>—remote Guatemalan hamlets became targets of a global counterrevolution that went from Indochina to Tierra del Fuego.

The Latin American Cold War also has been analyzed as a way to contest U.S. dominance of any “hemispheric” ideological fight, especially because hardliners perceived Washington as an unsteady opponent—not only Carter, but Reagan, who sided with London over Buenos Aires in 1982. In Gramscian terms, instead of a “war of position” to pressure elected civilians, the militaries could mount a “war of maneuver” and simply seize the state.<sup>21</sup> Interstate rivalry was also replicated on a smaller scale in Argentina’s Operation Charly to Somoza’s Nicaragua to train the National Guard against the Montoneros and other guerrillas assisting the Sandinistas there. “Charly” directly exported technicians of disappearance and torture to Somoza’s Managua, and they followed the Guardsmen to Guatemala City and then brought them to Tegucigalpa. Charly represents the middle stage between 1. the multinational Operation Condor aimed at high-level exiles abroad—Chilean generals, Bolivian presidents, Uruguayan senators—and 3. the “Argentine Method” aimed at terrorizing Honduran civil society. But officers of the Nicaraguan National Guard, El Salvador’s ORDEN, and Guatemalan death squads often had short shrift for either a *porteño* or a *yanqui* trying to micromanage forces that had decades of experience disposing of campesinos—Great Powers were only useful for sending bullets.<sup>22</sup>

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fighting the Montonero Peronists. 1973-75 José López Rega’s AAA was murdering a youth, labor, student, or union leader, journalist, or lawyer every 19 hours. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 82.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror* 1989 especially identify export economics as a key explanation for who was targeted by the Argentinean and Central American regimes—whether specific assassination or large-scale massacres based on class. Partido Socialista de Honduras, *Análisis de la situación nacional, 1978-79*, Documentos Políticos 1 (Tegucigalpa: Partido Socialista de Honduras, 1979): 20-23.

<sup>21</sup> Guillermo A. O’Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-73*, in *Comparative Perspective*, trans. James McGuire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) details how even “seizing” the state means more than simply taking the executive and legislative buildings: in 20th-century Argentina, the military acted as a parallel civil service, “desk officers” with experience in economic management or theological studies (Chapter 9, “Regalado: Theological Usurpation”) rather than combat. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 174.

<sup>22</sup> Over a thousand Nicaraguan Guardsmen joined their Salvadoran counterparts in 1979, plus some hundreds in Guatemala. (See Chapter 6, “Introduction,” n22; “Doctrines of National Security,” n67.) Stan Persky, *America, the*

The Argentinean military had a longstanding relationship with the French government, which taught scorched-earth counterinsurgency methods developed against the people of Vietnam and Algeria: noncombatants and supposed “fellow travelers” were seized, interrogated, those they named captured and interrogated, until by blind luck the “terrorists” would be found—or at least their network destroyed.<sup>23</sup> But forced disappearances were significant in the breakdown of the interstate alliance itself: while the “Argentine method” had been introduced 1976 to evade the sanctions brought after 1973 by Pinochet’s more open murder, eventually international attention caught on to the practice of “disappearance.”<sup>24</sup> International controversy from the disappearances was a significant factor in the Argentinean military’s decisions to turn against 1. the bordering Beagle Islands under Chilean rule in 1978—causing the momentum of the Condor cooperation to break—and then 2. the further-away Atlantic islands in 1982 that had been settled by Santiago’s longtime ally Britain (in the expectation that London would *not* take any action to the seizure of the Falkland and South Georgia Islands).<sup>25</sup>

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*Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 176-77. Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 53-4, 63-4.

<sup>23</sup> Both Juan Perón and his most violent opponents shared this relationship with the French. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 144, 150. James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988): 428-29. Bruno Groppo, “Traumatismos de la memoria e imposibilidad de olvido en los países del Cono Sur,” in Bruno Groppo and Patricia Flier, eds., *La imposibilidad del olvido: Recorridos por la memoria en Argentina, Chile y Uruguay* (La Plata, Argentina: Al Margen, 2001): 36. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 296-325. Heinz, “The Military, Torture and Human Rights,” in Crelinsten and Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain* 1995: 77. Gilbert M. Joseph, “What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 26. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 10, 20-21, 23, 25, 28, 49, 52, 206. Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984): 42-47. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 141. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 363-64. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 340.

<sup>24</sup> Pinochet himself confided to the Argentinean generals that the public executions of Sept. 11, 1973, had been his biggest mistake: so the Argentineans had to create something *new*. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* 1989: 71. Wolfgang S. Heinz, “The Military, Torture and Human Rights: Experiences from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay,” in Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995): 77.

<sup>25</sup> The 1976 junta’s campaign of persecution and murder extended to Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paris, Madrid, and Miami: it acknowledged no physical frontiers when it drew ideological boundaries—beyond the mere physical markers of cartographers, an illimitable conception of nationhood paralleled by its claims of “unjust mutilation of geographical



## The Honduran Context

Gen. Alvarez Martínez introduced forced disappearance in 1981 with the goal of concealing explicit state involvement: the perpetrators wore no uniform, and the abducted were held at no military base or police station. The forced disappearances quickly drew attention from political and human-rights organizations, who noted that the violence was unprecedented in Honduran history. Between 1933 and 1981 Honduras had had a civil government only seven years, while the Army itself had only been formally institutionalized a few years after Costa Rica's had been abolished 1948: beginning in 1986 there would be calls to even abolish the Honduran force. The current civilian government began with the elections of 1980 and 1981—even if it was continued in the form of a brutal *narco*-state after the 2009 military coup against President Manuel Zelaya. Survivors of forced disappearance were the key actors in the real democratization of Honduras in the decade, Leticia Salomón's requirement of losing the fear that the disappearances were designed to instill.<sup>26</sup>

The state violence that visibly exploded in 1981 is invariably described by Honduran writers in terms of its shock, of its newness in history. Honduras had avoided the civil wars and revolutions of its neighbors in Central America—tens of thousands were killed in each of Honduras's neighbors by 1980. The actions perpetrated by Battalion 3-16 were explicitly compared to President Tiburcio Carías (1932-49)—not since *La Dictadura* had there been such bloodshed, the *cariato* operating on the principle of *encierro, destierro o entierro*, “imprisonment, exile, or burial.” However, Gen. Alvarez Martínez's contemporaries explicitly contrasted that Carías had

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limits” in the antarctic islands. (See Chapter 7, “Introduction.”) Martorell, *Operación Cóndor* 1999: 171. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 183. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 77.

<sup>26</sup> Leticia Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1993): 62-64. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1997): 147.

never hidden his crimes—professors, unionists, and female protesters had been persecuted and even massacred, but never taken in the night to be secretly murdered and the corpses concealed.<sup>27</sup>

However, there were immediate precedents for the violence unleashed 1981-89: Oswaldo López Arellano's 1963 coup murdered the civilian police sleeping in their barracks and hunted down guerrillas; his 1968 mass expulsion of Salvadorans was marked by targeted brutality against even children and precipitated a sharp 100-hour war the next year, which caused at least 3,000 deaths.<sup>28</sup> At La Talanquera near Juticalpa, Olancho, six campesinos were gunned down 1972 during a peaceful land occupation. In a notorious incident at Los Horcones ranch, near Lepaguare in Olancho, two priests and ten campesinos were mutilated, murdered, and thrown in a well, which was then dynamited.<sup>29</sup> As lieutenant colonel, Alvarez Martínez personally led the forcible dissolution of the Las Isletas banana cooperative in Colón Department in 1977, marking

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<sup>27</sup> Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 99. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 116. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005:207. Bertha Oliva, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, August 2012.

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 4, "The Triangle of Iron," n18.

<sup>29</sup> The ranch belonged to Manuel Zelaya's father, who was convicted of the crime, but his son maintains that he was framed by the FF.AA. perpetrators. "Diócesis de Occidente excomulga a la Junta Militar de Gobierno," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 29, 1979. Introduction, *Honduras Update* 1:4 (1982). "Asegura Mel Zelaya ... : Mi padre fue otra víctima en caso de Los Horcones," *El Tiempo*, July 27, 1985. "Durante concentración: Hijo de 'Mel' Zelaya condena la masacre de 'Los Horcones,'" *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 3, 1985. Martin Francis, "The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization," *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985. René Cantarero, "Militares son los responsables en masacre de 'Los Horcones,'" *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 2, 1987. Eric Shultz, "Rising Tensions Between Church and State," *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). Leticia Salomón, "Honduras: Violencia y descomposición social," *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 23-32. Tony Equale, "Fighting Subversion—Honduran Style," box 22; collection DG 174 (Central American Historical Institute Records, 1980-1993); Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Penn. U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, "The Honduran Church: An Overview," March 1981; box 1; Honduras Human Rights Collection; the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988): 94, 96-97. Renato Camarda, *Forced to Move* (San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1985): 68. María García, *Historia de una iglesia que ha vivido su compromiso con los pobres* (Tegucigalpa: Ediciones Subirana, 2010). Anthony Gill, *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 4, 40, 44. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 62, 66-70, 80, 94. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 9. Richard L. Millett, "Historical Setting," in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 47. Morris, "Government and Politics," in *ibid.*: 177. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 54. Carlos M. Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995): 122. Wheaton, *Iron Triangle* 1981: 30, 43-46. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base* (Washington: Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action Task Force, 1982): 42.

the end of one of Latin America's most extensive (and military-led) Agrarian Reforms.<sup>30</sup> Gen. Policarpo Paz García's 1978 garrison coup, funded by his friend, Honduras's kingpin Ramón Matta Ballesteros, made Honduras the first *narco*-state two years before the 1980 Buenos Aires-backed coup in Bolivia brought cocaine traffickers such as Roberto Suárez Gómez or Col. Luis Arce Gómez to power.<sup>31</sup>

Before and after the Nicaraguan Revolution FF.AA. officers had little qualm about trafficking and money laundering—even selling arms to the Sandinistas and then the Salvadoran guerrillas.<sup>32</sup> Gen. Paz García purged many such neutralist or reformist officers in 1980: the main beneficiary of that process was Col. Alvarez Martínez, promoted to head of the *Fuerza de Seguridad Pública* (FUSEP), founding his Honduran death squad within the police force—the non-independent fifth branch of the FF.AA. But the force of the bestial half of Machiavelli's “centaur” was balanced by a nominal democratization to give a human face to Honduras's counterrevolution against all its neighbors.

Even in 1980-81 Honduras's political situation was significantly different from Argentina or Pinochet's Chile, entering into a period of democratization, rule by the Liberal Party, *and* visible state murder—a rare case of elections *before* disappearances. The Southern-Cone regimes dismantled the public sphere, shuttering press and legislature, banning union and academic activ-

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<sup>30</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 94. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 68-70. Mario Posas, *El movimiento campesino hondureño: Una perspectiva general* (Tegucigalpa: Guaymuras, 1981): 43-46. Daniel Slutzky and Esther Alonso, *Empresas transnacionales y agricultura: El caso del enclave bananero en Honduras*, 3rd ed. (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1982): 69, 84-85, 89.

<sup>31</sup> His contacts were Col. Leonidas Torres Arias, head of the FF.AA.'s G-2 military intelligence, and future FDN patron Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the kingpin of all unified Mexican cartels until his 1985 murder of L.Cpl. Enrique “Kiki” Camarena, naming Matta Ballesteros his heir. *Narco*-cartel members, of course, also had experience abducting and murdering a target. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 30-31, 88. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 44, 47, 54-55, 87, 109.

<sup>32</sup> Lamperti, *What are We Afraid of?* 1988: 60-65. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 50.

ity.<sup>33</sup> Analysts point to the 1970s as the period when South American armies gave up on backing the electoral state, finally shucking any civilian façade or figurehead in favor of the force that, to Gramscian analysts such as Carlos Nelson Coutinho, always underlies the usual mechanisms that states use to build legitimacy and authenticate their stated visions of society—and the incidents they would allege.<sup>34</sup>

By contrast, the 1980s would be marked by “democratic transition” from military rule—or, more accurately, a “managed transition” that maintained the old regimes’ military budgets, institutional power, and legal impunity for officers, under a newly-elected *de jure* civilian government.<sup>35</sup> Honduras’s Constituent Assembly was chosen by free election April 20, 1980, but itself tightly constrained against control over the FF.AA.—which Constitutionally was given a Commander-in-Chief separate from the President.<sup>36</sup> On November 29, 1981, Honduras held a simultaneous election for Congress and President, freely won by the Liberal Party because of its record of having fought military rule since the 1940s. However, the new leader Roberto Suazo

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<sup>33</sup> Gramscian and Bourdieuan analyses of the state and its relations to civilians qualitatively diverge from the “canonical,” “Habermasian” analyses of the culture of the English “public sphere” or the French salon uniting press and politics, created by the bourgeoisie and contrasted to simple, central, forcible imposition. The situation of the press in 19th-century Italy or 20th-century Latin America faced far less literate and politically-independent circumstances, but also civilian governments that were far weaker in the face of parties, militaries, or the church. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, trans. Pedro Sette-Camara (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012): 173. Daniel C. Hallin, “Field Theory, Differentiation Theory, and Comparative Media Research,” in Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005): 230-34. Otto Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratisation: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 227. Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought* 2012: 173.

<sup>35</sup> After being defeated by the British in 1982, the Argentinean junta promptly handed over nominal power to the winner of the 1983 election, Raúl Alfonsín, who then presided over both 1. the only significant trials of generals (1985) and 2. the Full Stop Law (1986) and the *Leyes de Punto Final* and *de Obediencia Debida* (1986-87) that put a firm brake on accountability. Gen. Pinochet was succeeded by Patricio Aylwin (1990-94), who played a similar role for Chile. In most countries democratization went through transitional figures: Gen. João Figueiredo (1979-85) and José Sarney (1985-90) of Brazil; Gen. Gregorio Álvarez of Uruguay (1981-85); Álvaro Magaña (1982-84), José Napoléon Duarte (1984-89), and Alfredo Cristiani (1989-94) of El Salvador; and Vinicio Cerezo (1986-91) and Jorge Serrano Elías (1991-93) of Guatemala.

<sup>36</sup> The FF.AA.’s conditions for a civilian Presidency were 1. no investigation into corruption (which “would play into the hands of the enemies of the country”), 2. veto over Cabinet appointments, and 3. no civilian interference in military affairs, including “national security.” Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 81.

Córdova had jettisoned this legacy of 1950s-70s Liberal leaders Ramón Villeda Morales and Modesto Rodas Alvarado, in exchange for military backing and being permitted to take office.<sup>37</sup>

Suazo Córdova favored Col. Alvarez Martínez, to the point where the FUSEP head was able to illegally skip the rules of promotion from colonel to full general. Figures from across the political spectrum, even the orthodox Communist Party of Honduras, met with Gen. Paz García to discuss a coup to prevent the Suazo-Alvarez ascendancy, but the White House was firm that the 1981 election and civilian transition continue to ensure Senate aid.<sup>38</sup> Both the Carter and Reagan administrations insisted on a civilian state in order to allow overt aid to the only counterrevolutionary military in the Northern Triangle not itself engaged in a civil war. While conditioned by the needs of Honduras's parties and FF.AA., and while initiating the genuine democratization of the state, these fit Edward S. Herman's definitions of "demonstration elections," like that of El Salvador in April 1982: it was 1. impelled by the U.S. executive branch to 2. enable its frames and narratives to be used at the U.S. legislature, in order to 3. fund the local military to repress real or supposed revolutionaries.<sup>39</sup>

Paz García, Suazo Córdova, and Alvarez Martínez repeatedly deemed Honduras an "Oasis of Peace" and democracy in the isthmus. As FUSEP head he put on a show of protecting the "Marches for Freedom" (Chapter 8) and mandatory elections with elaborate "security" 1980-81, and surrounding the Congress building with soldiers in 1983 when "explaining" to the legislature that Salvadoran forces would be trained in Honduras. The inauguration of January 27, 1982, ended sixteen years of military regimes<sup>40</sup>—and saw the most brutal and terroristic period of internal violence in its history. Democratization was coupled to repression, rather than one process

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<sup>37</sup> Chapter 5, "López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial," n129.

<sup>38</sup> Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 143-44.

<sup>39</sup> Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> Interrupted only for an undistinguished 18 months by President Ramón Ernesto Cruz Uclés (1971-72).

succeeding the other. A state that has made the transition from military regime to civil can have several advantages over any police state's supposed control of information<sup>41</sup>: less scrutiny or saliency in the international press, less contradiction with White House narratives of "defending democracy," and state condemnation of criticism as an unfair, bad-faith "badgering" of a "fledgling democracy."<sup>42</sup> Rather than a shift towards the more sophisticated and abstract of Cohen's categories of *denial*, but a developing *hegemony* that grew fast enough for Gen. Alvarez Martínez to exploit.

"First we will kill all the subversives; then we will kill their collaborators; afterwards their sympathizers; right after that, those who remain neutral; and, finally, we will kill the fainthearted."<sup>43</sup>

—Argentinean Brig. Gen. Ibérico Saint-Jean, 1977

### The Argentine Method

Contemporary Honduran historians and analysts often remarked on the state terrorism that began in 1980 as shockingly *new*, as "un-Honduran." Ramón Custodio and Leticia Salomón comment on the "foreignness" of the doctrines adopted in the 1980s—the U.S. doctrine of low-intensity conflict or the South American National Security Doctrine. Gen. Alvarez Martínez candidly described the "Argentine Method" to Ambassador Jack R. Binns February 1981.<sup>44</sup> COFADEH and CODEH record that his 1981-84 dirty war forcibly disappeared 112 men, women, and children: they were preponderantly Honduran and Salvadoran opposition figures, campesino and labor unionists and organizers, refugees, students and teachers. The recorded total from 1980 to 1994 is 184 disappeared or assassinated, but estimates range to about 200 for the decade.<sup>45</sup> On

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Boccock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 28.

<sup>42</sup> Fourie and Meyer, *Politics of AIDS Denialism* 2010: 200.

<sup>43</sup> "Primero mataremos a todos los subversivos, luego mataremos a sus colaboradores, después a sus simpatizantes, enseguida a aquellos que permanecen indiferentes y, finalmente, mataremos a los tímidos."

<sup>44</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 93, 104. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982.

<sup>45</sup> Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos: Informe preliminar sobre los desaparecidos en Honduras 1980-1993* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1994). Leo Valladares Lanza and Susan C. Peacock, *In Search of Hidden Truths: An Interim Report on Declassification by the National Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras* (Honduras: CONADEH, 1998).

occasions he personally selected Battalion 3-16's victims. They were murdered as supposed FMLN sympathizers, but they represented policies, organizations, and analyses that the general wanted to make impermissible in his new order.<sup>46</sup>

The militaries of Latin America, especially Central America and the Southern Cone, perpetrated a wave of political mass murder in the Cold War, developing and eventually sharing techniques of forcible disappearance, torture, public denial, and cooperation with U.S. agencies and with other states—especially to evade accountability. Guatemalan students, mayors, and Labor Party members were forcibly disappeared during the 1966 White Terror: the country's most senior death-squad leader, Mario Sandoval Alarcón, would be crucial in the formation of the Nicaraguan Contras and Honduras's Battalion 3-16. As early as 1954 the CIA arranged for a death squad under Col. Carlos Castillo Armas, creating a "Committee of Defense Against Communism" to purge the disloyal and hunt down adherents of the 1944 Revolution, inside Guatemala or in exile. The FF.AA. simply had less practice with systematic internal repression, and so many of the death-squad members were seasoned Nicaraguan Guardsmen.<sup>47</sup>

Before their 1973 coups, Uruguay and Chile had both been pluralistic democracies for decades<sup>48</sup>: now prison murder, cross-border assassination, and forcible disappearance were

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<sup>46</sup> "Igual que Suazo y Azcona: Flores y Callejas también son responsables por desaparecidos," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 16, 1989. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 216.

<sup>47</sup> The CIA was intimately involved in torturing and murdering supporters of the 1944-54 governments, democrats, reformists, professors, campesinos, and Maya. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 48. Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 115. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 82-83, 98, 105-06, 109. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 72. Armin Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* (Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 47. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 116. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 97.

<sup>48</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 72. Communist and Socialist parties participated freely—implying to many analysts that the Nixon White House perceived the true threat to be not a seizure of power and annihilation of opposition, like Hungary and Czechoslovakia 1947-48, but instead a left wing that took power democratically and then stepped down at the end of the appointed term—the "threat of a good example" for the new generation of "Eurocommunist" parties in Italy and Iberia. The 1973 coups drove 10% of Chileans—1 million—and 20% of Uruguayans into exile. Stephen Gill and David Law, "Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital," in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 100. Gilbert M. Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin

aimed against civilians, a departure from the 1940s-60s military takeovers and the large-scale campaign against guerrillas that dominated 60s counterinsurgency on the continent.<sup>49</sup> But soldiers and police seizing civilians, murders in custody and the National Stadium, the reappearance of corpses in the streets was highly visible, bringing boycott and severing of trade and recognition down on Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

However despotic they were, the Southern-Cone regimes were also news-conscious and their deceit was aimed at a global audience. If we understand states—especially one where a few officers had seized power without institutional consensus even inside the military—to have a need for legitimation and hegemony as well as force and control, the seeming contradiction dissolves. The 1976 Argentinean junta explicitly retooled the practice of *desaparición* with the international audience explicitly in mind. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard says the technique was developed by the junta with the goal of maintaining the image of normality, and to avoid the international sanctions that had hit at Pinochet's open repression. Argentina's model of plain-clothesmen, unmarked cars, and denial by authorities had been tailored to eliminate people without immediately compromising the country's image abroad—even if Argentineans could clearly see it was the police and Army.<sup>50</sup>

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America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 4. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 62, 75, 216. Luis Roniger, “Olvido, memoria colectiva e identidades: Uruguay en el contexto del Cono Sur,” in Groppo and Flier, eds., *La imposibilidad del olvido* 2001: 152.

<sup>49</sup> Armando Acosta y Lara, Gens. Pinochet, Sergio Arellano Stark, Antonio Domingo Bussi, and the “hardliners” under Videla murdered only civilian captives, after the actual guerrillas of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, Montoneros, and Tupamaros had been long destroyed (half a year before the Mar. 24, 1976, coup, in fact). Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 140, 147. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 137. Heinz, “The Military, Torture and Human Rights,” in Crelinsten and Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain*: 68, 76-77 López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 99, 103, 146, 180-81, 184. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 119. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* 2004: 97-100, 106. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: 50-51, 311. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 431. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 316.

<sup>50</sup> Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 24, 30.



By 1983 30-50,000 Argentinean civilians had been abducted by plainclothesmen, secretly imprisoned and murdered, and their bodies secretly buried, burned, or thrown into the ocean—oftentimes alive and drugged.<sup>51</sup> As with Operation Condor, assassinating politicians, disappearance was targeted not against militants and guerrillas but civilians. The Argentinean junta was also motivated by swings in White House policy caused by U.S. electoral democracy: whereas Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had told them to hurry things along in 1976, the new President Carter denounced Latin America’s military dictatorships in the strongest of terms 1977-80.<sup>52</sup> The White House reversed again 1981: candidate Reagan personally praised Argentina’s “counterterror” as a successful model<sup>53</sup> and “bought in” to its Nicaraguan Guard project in Honduras—but then reversed once more, siding with London against Buenos Aires in 1982.

Battalion 3-16’s techniques were directly adopted from Argentina and swiftly identified as the “Argentine Method.” Most of those disappeared in Honduras were seized from their homes by heavily-armed plainclothesmen with tinted windows; some were machine-gunned in

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<sup>51</sup> George A. López, “National Security Ideology as an Impetus to State Violence and Terror,” in Michael Stohl and George A. López, eds., *Government Violence and Repression: An Agenda for Research* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986): 73-95.

<sup>52</sup> Against his own Amb. Robert C. Hill, Kissinger advised the junta to conduct its “measures” as quickly as possible, while knowing that clergy and U.S. citizens were being tortured and murdered. The disappeared were murdered *en masse* 1979 before the arrival of the OAS’s Inter-American Commission on Human Rights delegation—even registered official prisoners—in order to take the pressure off: there would be no more *trail*. The generals and colonels were surprised by the toughness of the delegation’s frontwoman Patricia M. Derian, Carter’s Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, and her refusal to accept any of their denials. F. Allen “Tex” Harris of the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires also interviewed hundreds of victims’ relatives 1977-79, influencing the Carter Administration’s approach—but his report detailing 9,000 of the disappeared was kept secret until 2002. The CIA quickly accumulated a list of Condor’s potential targets, including exiles in Paris and Lisbon—but refused to warn them, including the soon-to-be-murdered Orlando Letelier. (See Chapter 7, “Mothers Versus the Pater Patriae,” n69.) Duncan Campbell, “Kissinger Approved Argentinean ‘Dirty War’: Declassified U.S. Files Expose 1970s Backing for Junta,” *The Guardian*, Manchester, U.K., Dec. 5, 2003. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* 1989: 68. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 289-90, 324. Carlos Osorio and Kathleen Costar, eds., “Kissinger to the Argentine Generals in 1976: ‘If There Are Things That Have to be Done, You Should do Them Quickly,’” Electronic Briefing Book 133, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Aug. 27, 2004, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB133>. Osorio, ed., “A Human Rights Hero: The Legacy of Franklin Allen (Tex) Harris (1938-2020),” Briefing Book 698, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Mar. 10, 2020, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/2020-03-09/memoriam-tex-harris>.

<sup>53</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 105.

broad daylight.<sup>54</sup> In the clandestine prisons, Battalion 3-16 and their U.S. trainers favored hooding, stress positions, sleep deprivation, rats and roaches placed in the cell, and electrical torture, techniques that the Southern Cone had chosen so as to not leave marks on the body, living or dead<sup>55</sup>: this contrasts to the more blatant violence of the Nicaraguan Guard leveling cities or Pinochet's executions in stadiums.

Argentina had carefully built up techniques to maintain a plausible deniability—no uniforms, no official paperwork, no bodies. Unlike hiding an entire war, disappearance has a few perpetrators target one or two victims at a time. *Desaparición* was adopted in Honduras for the same reasons that U.S.-trained elite battalions replaced brazen urban slaughter and large-scale roundups that attracted press attention. Like the near-failure at El Mozote (Chapter 3), Honduran death-squad deniability failed as well, Col. Leonidas Torres Arias revealing the first clandestine cemetery in 1982 or corpses from the PRTC-H appearing in the Río Patuca the next year.

At the same time, forced disappearance is not about correctly identifying and arresting true threats to the state, but an active intervention in politics, controlling the public atmosphere, asserting boundaries on what could be said even in private, and punishing those who had no fear of reprisal. Emilio Crenzel characterizes dirty war as not “a period of rationally directed state terror against an identified enemy who was also willing to kill to change the system of government”: it is a matter of state terrorism and murder, not “a story about police and guerrillas,” in

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<sup>54</sup> “CTH condena muerte de Herminio Deras,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 1, 1983. Amnesty International, “Honduras: Still Waiting for Justice,” 1998, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/152000/amr370041998en.pdf>. Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos. *Honduras: The Facts Speak for Themselves: The Preliminary Report of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights in Honduras*, trans. James L. Cavallaro, Jr. (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> Sgt. Caballero recalled being flown for training in Texas with about 25 others without any U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service paperwork. Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power: Human Rights Violations in the 1980s* (London: Amnesty International, 1988): 4, 18, 36. Ronald D. Crelinsten, “In Their Own Words: The World of the Torturer,” in Crelinsten and Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain* 1995: 50. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 6.

survivor Inés Murillo's words.<sup>56</sup> Any actual guerrillas—Peronist Montoneros and the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo in Argentina or the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos—Honduras—were crushed by the regular army, whereas disappearance was extended specifically to noncombatants. From Ushuaia to Olancho, the “crimes” for which people were disappeared included offering education or medical treatment to the working class, unionizing, setting up cooperatives, and human-rights activism.

In Argentina the streets were filled with infantry and armored vehicles, congregations of more than three were arrested, and power was cut to whole city blocks during roundups: the goal was to paralyze civil society and to take over the news and public spectacle by force—to atomize any potential resistance to a regime that intended to stay in power for a few decades.<sup>57</sup> Because of this dual purpose—to 1. covertly attack dissidents and 2. overtly intimidate society in general—the “deniability” of disappearance and the “secrecy” of secret police are not simple: people had to be “seen not seeing,” to draw their curtains and turn up their record players against their neighbors’ screams.

But justification was still needed for deeds, even if civilians were not allowed to talk about them publicly. The Argentinean tools and techniques were limited to repression, censorship, and disarticulation—the iron hand underlying social consensus,<sup>58</sup> but they were not able to supply any ways to build hegemony—a sign of weakness, or at least of brittleness.<sup>59</sup> Pressured

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<sup>56</sup> “For the Record: Inés Murillo Responds to LeMoyné,” *Honduras Update* 6:9-10 (June-July 1988). Emilio Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances: The Political History of Nunca más*, trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Routledge, 2012): 95. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 89.

<sup>57</sup> See below, “Conclusion,” n178-79.

<sup>58</sup> James Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 126.

<sup>59</sup> Gramscian theorists note that civil society is *weaker* in weak states, against the Liberal assumption that either the state or civil society dominates at the expense of the other. The Latin American bourgeoisie simply lacked the necessary independence and strength of its British or French counterparts. Chapter 3 showed which issues forced the U.S., Honduran, and Salvadoran states to strike the hardest at stigmatic stories—but in Argentina's case the perpetrators were unseated only by their 1982 military defeat, and not by the Madres drawing attention to the disappeared.

by permanent economic crises and international attention to the issue of disappearances itself, Buenos Aires sought legitimation in sloganeering such as *los argentinos somos derechos—y humanos*, the World Cup, and rallies for war with Britain.

Southern Cone-style death flights were adopted in Honduras, as in Argentina and Chile, to obscure both crime and victim. Amb. Binns recounted how some members of an FMLN arms network—and their relatives—captured by Battalion 3-16 in April 1981 were tortured by the Salvadorans. The disappeared “were too brutalized to be released without serious political repercussions.” “They had exited the aircraft en route” to Ilopango. One of them was Óscar Romero’s secretary Nora Trinidad Gómez de Barrillas and her family, except for two small children and one grandmother.<sup>60</sup> Bodies were also thrown from helicopters into the Río Sumpul “to make it look like the Salvadorans [whether the Salvadoran state or guerrillas] did it. Before dumping them, we would remove all ID and put Salvadoran coins in their pockets,” a 3-16 member recounted.<sup>61</sup> Half of the total disappeared by Battalion 3-16 in 1981, were Salvadorans, often handed over to ORDEN for execution.<sup>62</sup>

Forcible disappearance in Honduras combined the Central American and the Southern-Cone traditions of state murder, represented respectively by Cols. Ricardo Lau and José Osvaldo Riveiro. Honduran state crimes were not dependent only on the Southern Cone: Guatemala and El Salvador’s paramilitaries also used plainclothes abductions in the 1970s and 80s to maintain the plausibility of the narrative of “right-wing extremists” besieging a moderate government

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This 1. started a Domino Effect of sorts, but of democratization, across South America, and 2. forced William Casey to step in as the main provider of a state fig leaf (after Gen. Ariel Sharon’s recall back to Israel). Otto Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratisation: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 227.

<sup>60</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 194.

<sup>61</sup> Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 127.

<sup>62</sup> Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 59.

headed towards democracy: these frames were central to the upkeep of U.S. aid during and after the most brutal wave of paramilitary violence. The White House needed to be seen defending a “vital center,” and not assisting one side to win a civil war over the other. Disappearance of the victims when dead as well as when living was crucial the interpretive denial that the larger crime depended on—the ability to transfer from denying an event to denying the perpetrator, in this case.<sup>63</sup>

The practices of *desaparición* developed by Latin American militaries go beyond state kidnapping and secret murder: “disappearance” is also defined by an elaborate apparatus of direct denial and supposition—denial of the death squads’ existence, denial that any military or police facility was holding any of the supposedly seized, denial that many of the named even existed. There are no judiciary orders or warrants, no prison or police paperwork.<sup>64</sup> The state’s attempts to control discourse went deeper than just lies, denial, doubt, and rewriting of history. The relatives of the “disappeared” faced a struggle greater than even having to testify to the truth—but Argentina would provide a model for resistance as well as disappearance.

“two concepts of ways of life are at stake [in El Salvador ...] on one hand, respect for the dignity of mankind—God’s creations—and on the other, terrorism, men at the service of an atheistic, omnipotent state”<sup>65</sup>  
—Argentinean Gen. José Antonio Vaquero, 1982

### Doctrines of National Security

1980s Honduran state attacks on the domestic and international press drew heavily on anticommunist beliefs and narratives developed in both the United States and in Latin America,

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<sup>63</sup> Cold Warriors such as Fred Iklé and Maj. Gen. John Singlaub (ret.) blamed all the deaths by El Salvador’s death squads on Congress, their restrictions on cash and training “forcing” the police, National Guard, and Army into illegality and preventing the Army from professionalizing. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 135. Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 257-58. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 263. A. Javier Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 40, 44.

<sup>64</sup> CODEH, “Libertad para los 112 desaparecidos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 16, 1984.

<sup>65</sup> Ariel C. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 150.

especially Argentina. This parallels the pattern of outside influences on counterrevolutionary warfare (Chapter 2, “A ‘Black International’ ”) and the regional network of death squads oriented towards assassination and forcible disappearance. These anticommunist postulates and narratives provided a pan-American logistics<sup>66</sup> for ideological and epistemic attacks on the media, but they were not simply an outside import.

Honduras had previously had marked periods of political repression before Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez’s takeover—Tiburcio Carías and his expulsion of the Communist Party 1932 and 1944 massacre in San Pedro Sula, the 1954 banana strike, Gen. Oswaldo López Arellano’s 1963 coup and the 1965 execution of Lorenzo Zelaya and his small guerrilla group, and attacks against organized labor at Los Horcones 1975 and Las Isletas 1977. But Honduras also had one of the continent’s most intensive Agrarian Reforms 1972-78 under Gen. López Arellano and FF.AA. officers willing to sell arms to the Sandinistas.

Between 1979 and 1990, Honduras lacked the extensive guerrilla movements or civil wars even close to the scale of its three neighbors; it had a far weaker military apparatus that could be used for domestic purposes: only a small Army, FUSEP, and Ricardo Zúñiga Augustinus’s outmoded *Mano Blanca*, versus the profusion of National Guards, Treasury Police, Civil Defense Patrols, and paramilitaries in the rest of northern Central America. Jeffery M. Paige ties the anticommunist brutality of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua to the coffee-growing oligarchies who since the 19th century relied on dispossession of the *indio* classes to ensure landless labor for picking and processing the crop, leading to a Liberal ideology of export-funded Progress—potentially threatened by “backward” classes such as the *campesinato* or the Jesuits assumed to be agitating them. By contrast, Honduras’s export sector was never dominated by

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<sup>66</sup> Siba N. Grovogui and Lori Leonard, “Uncivil Society: Interrogations at the Margins of Neo-Gramscian Theory,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 173.

coffee, leaving it with a smaller military closer to that of Costa Rica before the 1948 abolition there.<sup>67</sup>

This chapter outlines Gen. Alvarez Martínez's adoption of the Chilean and Argentinean National Security Doctrine in his conventional war against Nicaragua and the disappearances by Battalion 3-16 and the Nicaraguan Contras under its command. Southern-Cone anticommunism had already reframed state abduction in order to blame its victims as perfidiously concealing themselves, exploiting their relatives and the international media to blame the armed forces. This chapter concentrates on state accusations of Soviet media control that were aimed at even the smallest of domestic news. Media anticommunism attacked the stories that resulted from the FF.AA. dismantling the Agrarian Reform or running drugs for the Medellín and Guadalajara Cartels.<sup>68</sup> The state faked Honduran guerrilla movements while the actual Cinchoneros and PRTC-H took Gen. Alvarez Martínez by surprise. Anticommunism allowed generals and colonels to blame social ills on a phantom left wing while keeping strict control over the events they cited as proof. But while the state was able to repeatedly underscore anticommunist narratives and conspiracy theories, it also drew contestation and ridicule, and revealed which topics were the most potentially stigmatizing and explosive.

The first explicit National Security Doctrine originated in 1950s Brazil, grounded in the premise that the Communist threat was *qualitatively* different—a political, social, and cultural threat in the remotest provincial town and poorest urban *barrio* rather than massed armies and navies, or even guerrillas *per se*. It was distinctively “South American,” geared toward domestic

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<sup>67</sup> Nor did Honduras see dispossession on the scale of El Salvador and Guatemala: its most “reactionary” landowning sector was the ranchers, and they were nowhere near as preponderant in the economy as coffee. (The Somoza's Nicaragua also had more diversification and smallholding than the northern two).

<sup>68</sup> Chapter 1, “5: Criminality and Extremism”; Chapter 8, “Marches for the Fatherland.”

repression rather than faraway superpower conflict: it was also oriented towards breaking any dependence on a Washington that might prove itself uncommitted to the “hemispheric” cause (Chapter 2). The Doctrine’s elaborated anticommunist premises marking “ideological borders” in Latin America had already been adopted by regimes such as Argentina’s Gen. Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-70)—but without the methodical murder of tens of thousands perpetrated under Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla the next decade.<sup>69</sup>

The Doctrine was first elaborated in the 1950s with a definition of *nation* which explicitly set aside elected government or the people.<sup>70</sup> It was combined with the French state’s counterrevolutionary experience in Vietnam and Algeria 1946-62: suspected “fellow travelers” and noncombatants were seized, interrogated to give names, and those were then seized and interrogated, until by blind luck the “terrorist” network was shredded. One important factor was that this practice explicitly erased the distinction between combatant and civilian: unionists, peasants, and students were redefined as “guerrilla infrastructure.” Musicians with working-class audiences, charity organizers, social-sciences professors, doctors, Sunday-school teachers all were murdered: lawyers and psychologists were especially targeted.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Nixon and Kissinger, with their state-centric Realism, were perceived as no more reliable than the soft humanitarian Carter; even Reagan sided with Britain against the self-appointed defenders of the hemisphere in 1982. Unlike even the most reactionary general of the 1940s-60s who deposed elected governments, banned political activity and invaded the universities, the new regimes of the 70s saw their mission as the remaking of society itself, to intimidate and immobilize it, and then remake it in their own image. Argentina’s junta planned to stay in power at least until 2000, and Gen. Pinochet expected that his 1988 plebiscite would let him rule until 1997 (and surprised when he lost). The only parallel regimes that could last that long were those of Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines (1965-86) and Gen. Suharto of Indonesia (1965/68-98).

<sup>70</sup> Adm. Massera asserted the military was born before Argentina in 1810—that, because of its central role in independence, actually *preceded* any of the republics of Spanish America. This attitude explained one of the Doctrine’s key elements, that the military transcended the state itself (let alone any civilian government or *pueblo*). Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 14, 159. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 77.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Aman, “Fighting for God: The Military and Religion in Chile,” *CrossCurrents* 36:4 (Winter 1986/7): 459-66. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 37. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 1. David Pion-Berlin, “Theories on Political Repression in Latin America: Conventional Wisdom and an Alternative,” *PS* 19:1 (Winter 1986): 51. Marco A. Ramos, “Psychiatry, Authoritarianism, and Revolution: The Politics of Mental Illness During Military Dictatorships in Argentina, 1966-1983,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87:2 (Summer 2013).



Argentinean officers built a messianic self-conception of anticommunism as saving the entire “West” and the Western Hemisphere, literally demonizing the opposition with explicitly-theological aspects of the Doctrine.<sup>72</sup> Gen. Ramón Camps had said that Communism “absolves, promotes, sustains, and exalts any incident which helps weaken western values.” The surest signs of subversion was drugs, promiscuity, street crime: anything dysfunctional or disruptive of good order was proof of this omnipresent yet undetectable but omnipresent assault on Western society.<sup>73</sup> The contraceptive Pill, rock and roll, sunglasses, youth disobedience were explicitly called part of the Soviet campaign, with the Brazilian and Argentinean regimes of the 1960s and 70s having police measure young women’s miniskirts and the length of young men’s hair.<sup>74</sup> Rather than indicating any failure of economy or government, any problems in Argentina only proved the all-encompassing, world-spanning Marxist-Leninist plot—a cunning new sort of warfare.

The Argentinean military took over President Isabel Perón’s Alianza Anticomunista Argentina with the 1976 coup: the previous anticommunist elements of the National Security Doctrine combined with a more hegemonic ideology: that the continued existence of society itself faced dissolution. Critics of social conditions thus had to be repressed with the maximum penal-

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<sup>72</sup> This was different from even the most radical French officer in the Organisation Armée Secrète. Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 13. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 213.

<sup>73</sup> J. Samuel Fitch, “Military Attitudes Toward Democracy in Latin America: How Do We Know if Anything Has Changed?” in Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 74-75. Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 91-95. David Pion-Berlin, *Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner, 1989): 401. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 54.

<sup>74</sup> Benjamin A. Cowan, *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016). Victoria Langland, “Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails: Reading Sex and Revolution in 1968 Brazil,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 308-49. Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s “Dirty War”* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997): 104-07.

ty.<sup>75</sup> “As many people as is necessary must die in Argentina to restore order,” Gen. Videla promised the directors of Operation Condor in 1975.<sup>76</sup> The Argentinean “Dirty War” of 1976-83 represented the apogee of the Latin American anticommunism that would be deployed under Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Regalado.

But as an ideology, the Doctrine had to explain the Dirty War’s *inability* to properly identify threats: the more non-guerrilla students, clergy, bankers, and military officers were abducted, the deeper the officers believed the “subversion” was. The Argentinean regime believed that anyone they murdered had to have been a subversive, not because of any action or characteristic they had but because the secret police had seized them. The more middle-class, professional, and even military victims the death squads seized, the wider the threat of subversion was perceived by the perpetrators—even archbishops and bankers could become classified as “subversive,” meaning the danger was believed to be greater and more insidious than ever. The Doctrine was a state conspiracy theory, a circular justification, where the Kremlin had infiltrated all levels of state, society, and culture, requiring total war, without quarter or concession.<sup>77</sup> Gen. Videla as-

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<sup>75</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) identifies extralegal measures as taken to spare the social body, regardless of mere law or justice. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 104-05. Günter Dux, “Toward a Sociology of Cognition,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 132. This all relies on a specific definition of “society”—Hobbes’s savior from war, Foucault’s biopolitical body, “good” citizens as a beleaguered family protected by their father-general—which identifies “society” as all that guarantees survival and turns dissidents into enemies of all humanity. But there is a danger of becoming too lost in the question of whether the ideology was 1. fervently believed, or 2. just a ruse or pretext for violence: this dissipates analysis of facts into guesswork about the private motives of presidents and generals.

<sup>76</sup> Sometimes quoted as “As many people as is necessary must die in Argentina to protect the hemisphere from the international communist conspiracy.” David Pion-Berlin, “Latin American National Security Doctrines: Hard- and Softline Themes,” *Armed Forces & Society* 15:3 (Spring 1989): 419.

<sup>77</sup> Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances* 2012: 134. Daniel Feierstein, “National Security Doctrine in Latin America: The Genocide Question,” in Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Lessie Jo Frazier, “Forging Democracy and Locality: Democratization, Mental Health, and Reparations in Chile,” in Rosario Montoya, Lessie Jo Frazier, and Jenise Hurtig, eds., *Gender’s Place: Feminist Anthropologies of Latin America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 94. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 52. Saul Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine: National Security and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988). López, “National Security Ideology as an Impetus to State Violence and Terror,” in Stohl and López, eds. *Government Violence and Repression* 1986.

serted that “A terrorist is not just someone with a gun or a bomb, but also someone who spreads ideas that are contrary to Western and Christian civilization”—belief, not action, was the definition of subversion.<sup>78</sup> The Air Force Academy made a “Tree of Subversion” with 47 branches—including progressive Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, alcoholism, prostitution, divorce, homosexuality, human rights, women’s rights, and pacifism—all rooted in Moscow.<sup>79</sup> The smallest deviance was perceived as a threat to the survival of society itself, which must be met with maximum repression. Identification of the state’s armed force with society itself was used to justify the most lurid state crimes against unarmed citizens (once the guerrilla challenge had been wiped out). Critics of social conditions were enemies of humanity for the reason that they threatened all that permitted humans’ existence—and thus even the law and the state could be abolished in self-defense of society.<sup>80</sup> Under the Doctrine, the counterrevolutionary state believed that unauthorized popular mobilization presented the same risk that a full guerrilla uprising did.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 1. David Pion-Berlin, “Theories on Political Repression in Latin America: Conventional Wisdom and an Alternative,” *PS* 19:1 (Winter 1986): 51.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 150.

<sup>80</sup> This in turn relies on a specific definition of “society”—Thomas Hobbes’s savior from “endemic warfare,” Foucault’s unified biopolitical “body politic,” Catholic Integralism or other notions of society as a “family.” Agamben’s state of exception is therefore Gramsci’s “unmasking,” the law’s enforcers using that force to depose the law itself alongside the members of the constitutional government: the executive branch is no longer *executing* laws, just *acting*. Note also that an ideology is not a cunning ruse or knowing pretext for force and violence: state actors can and do believe in the ideology, and their victims remain no less dead. Too much emphasis on the motive of generals and presidents simply opens the door too wide to hairsplitting and quibbling. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Günter Dux, “Toward a Sociology of Cognition,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 132. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 104-05.

<sup>81</sup> This attitude—that the populace was inert, capable of no self-generated action, unless agitated by an interloping demagogue like Gen. Juan Perón or outsiders such as the Communists and/or Jesuits—contributed to the 1932 *Matanza* in El Salvador or the Argentinean political genocide of 1976-83, to crush the *masas* and *montonés* back off the “stage of history.” It is also important to reiterate that the political and ethnic genocides of El Salvador and Guatemala were not aimed at those believed to be outside Marxist-Leninists stirring up a faceless *monton*, but local organizers, leaders, students, teachers, journalists, campesinos of all classes and incomes, and officers. It was to destroy the very idea that another Juan José Arévalo or Jacobo Arbenz could happen again: even Arturo Aruajo’s victory in El Salvador’s first honest election was enough of a challenge for the armed forces to drown it in blood. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 101. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 20. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 175, 233. López, “National Security

While these generals and Alvarez Martínez talked of defending “Christendom” in the Western hemisphere, the Argentinean strain of the Doctrine was based more on an idiosyncratic theology closer to conspiracy theories about “Judeo-Bolshevism” and the state as an organic unity integral in the natural order of things.<sup>82</sup> The *reaparecido* Jacobo Timerman recounted being told by his captors that “Argentina has three main enemies: Karl Marx, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of society; Sigmund Freud, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of the family; and Albert Einstein, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of time and space.” The threat was so insidious it could appear in physics and psychiatry as well as politics. *Porteño* psychologists and philosophers were forced to burn their books in their bathtubs in case of police raid.<sup>83</sup>

As an ideology the Doctrine had to obscure counterproductive outcomes to actions and to prevent self-examination about the causes of failure.<sup>84</sup> As an “episteme” it served to interpret facts, undermine witnesses, and redefine any unwelcome news as just another sign of how widespread Soviet disinformation had propagated.<sup>85</sup> Local struggles were caused by Soviet skullduggery or agitation by foreign-influenced clergy, not any local historical context. As an ideology, the Doctrine had to obscure the causes of social problems. Internal conditions were irrelevant in

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Ideology as an Impetus to State Violence and Terror,” in Stohl and López, eds. *Government Violence and Repression* 1986. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 74, 77-78.

<sup>82</sup> Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 144. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993). Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 55. Jeffrey L. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998): 68-76. Francisco Martorell, *Operación Cóndor, el vuelo de la muerte: La coordinación represiva en el Cono Sur* (Santiago: Lom Ediciones, 1999): 50.

<sup>83</sup> Diana Raznovich recalled how even her Jewish cookbooks had to be secretly destroyed: “Our pencils are broken, and we all have huge eraser encrusted in our brains.” Marco A. Ramos, “Psychiatry, Authoritarianism, and Revolution: The Politics of Mental Illness During Military Dictatorships in Argentina, 1966-1983,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87:2 (Summer 2013). Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 12. Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981): 130.

<sup>84</sup> Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 34.

<sup>85</sup> Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 109-10, 113.

the global fight. External, geographical frontiers were replaced with domestic and ideological ones, a world split into black and white. The war was in provincial Latin American towns, not at the Berlin Wall—in the hearts and minds of students, to in any physical location. Attacks on some of the poorest and most isolated peoples in the world was equated with a global battle for humanity’s soul against a superpower conspiring to subvert all that was good. But by requiring so many assertions of subversion—of a grand Soviet conspiracy to wage informational warfare, the Doctrine *failed* one of the crucial theoretical functions of hegemony: to avoid detail and explicitness in order to maintain flexibility in the face of contradictions. It showed where the terror state was potentially “brittle.”<sup>86</sup>

With the actual Montonero and Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo guerrillas annihilated even before the 1976 coup, and the issue of tens of thousands of forcible disappearances weighing heavily on Buenos Aires’s international reputation, the juntas turned instead to picking conventional fights with the eminently non-left-wing governments of Chile 1978 and Britain 1982, leading to the collapse of the Argentinean regime and an end to its role on the continent in 1983. Arguably, Argentina’s hardliners had failed in their attempts to shift the military’s 1955-76 role against Peronism into a new narrative where the state and armed forces were hunting down Soviet-inspired subversion aimed at destroying the Christian, family-based society of the Western Hemisphere. More significant for those resisting the new military regimes of Argentina or Honduras, the deployment of anticommunist rhetoric and explicit interference in the media process

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<sup>86</sup> See to the self-conception of U.S. planners of covert warfare as believing that North America was *threatened* by peasants in the mountains of Laos, Afghanistan, or El Salvador, Chomsky’s “pitiful, helpless giant” or Stan Persky’s “last domino” (Chapter 1, “1: Refusal of Neutrality”). Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 56, 67. Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 1988: 34. Robert Alan Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001): 26, 40. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 150. Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 108. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: xi.

revealed *where* the terror state was post potentially brittle—where its potential “lines of fracture” were.

The U.S. government had a key role in the evolution of Latin America’s National Security Doctrine before and after the 1976-83 Argentinean regime. Washington provided training and doctrine for police and conventional military operations and the infrastructure and ideology for political police and forcible disappearance and assassination. The School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone trained thousands of Latin American officers of all ranks to interpret signs such as “refusal of peasants to pay rents, taxes, or agricultural loans” or “children refusing to fraternize with members of the internal-security forces” as signals of an outside Communist force working on the populace. Nonviolent action, rural education, consciousness-raising in the slums were markers of dissidence and thus danger.<sup>87</sup> SOUTHCOM instructors taught that “there are no ‘battle lines’ where the economic infrastructures, social traditions, and political systems are eroded from within through external support from both military and paramilitary means.”<sup>88</sup> U.S. government contributions to the Latin American Doctrine in the 1960s were no cynical export, but can be theorized as a pan-American development, taking place in the “core” superpower no less than in “peripheral” Paraguay or Colombia.

Top U.S. officials such as Lyndon B. Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover firmly believed that every domestic cultural shift signaled Soviet victories in the secret war for culture and society, and ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation to launch COINTELPRO to hunt down any pos-

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<sup>87</sup> Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 85.

<sup>88</sup> Tom Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts: The New Battlefield in Central America* (Albuquerque: Resource Center, 1986): 3.

sible Russian tie to the anti-Vietnam-War and Civil-Rights Movements—and found none.<sup>89</sup> U.S. and British neoconservative writers ended up creating a cottage industry of identifying news stories that proved this global conspiracy. The sheer quantity of claims was itself used to give the impression of the subtlety and breadth of the Soviet assault. There were few fields of life, society, or science that were not alleged as avenues of Soviet influence.

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<sup>89</sup> World War II-style Soviet spy rings were gone from the United States by the 1950s. Subsequent KGB and GRU sources were simply paid in cash rather than any ideological motivation: Aldrich Ames (the only figure to plant disinformation into the heart of U.S. intelligence sourcing, which—despite being detected—was then covered up, continuing the “pipeline”), Christopher John Boyce, Robert Hanssen (himself put on the Active Measures Working Group), Harold James Nicholson (a head instructor at “the Farm” near Williamsburg, Va.), and Ronald Pelton (who exposed the adroit Operation Ivy Bells to plant a detachable wiretap on a Soviet underwater cable). Many on the New Right were motivated not by unmasking spies, but by the surge of drugs, riots, rebellions, and protests after 1965. The FBI and CIA sought to find Soviet influence in the Civil-Rights and antiwar movements: Lyndon B. Johnson had “no doubt” that the Reds were behind anti-Vietnam protests. Senators and CIA Station chiefs repeated rumors of training camps for African Americans in Ghana or Cuba. Tom Charles Huston—himself the author of a plan for mass arrest of U.S. dissidents—testified that COINTELPRO meant a “move from the kid with a bomb to the kid with a picket sign, and from the kid with the picket sign to the kid with the bumper sticker of the opposing candidate”—like the East German Stasi, completely unable to tell saboteurs from dissenters hoping to reform and renew their nation. But COINTELPRO found even *less* involvement by the Communist Party or the Soviet Embassy in mainstream or militant dissent than they ever expected. Instead J. Edgar Hoover’s secret policemen launched the bloodiest provocations—he “destroyed reputations, got teachers fired, broke up marriages,” falsely labeled victims as informers with the intent of getting them killed, fomented violence, and tried to drive Martin Luther King, Jr., to suicide (Hoover believed he was a Soviet plant on the scale of Patrice Lumumba and Fidel Castro). Hoover’s defenders said his critics were aiding the “Havana-Hanoi backed terrorists of the Weatherman Underground” and that it was “unrealistic” to limit FBI analysis to “legalistic proofs or definitely conclusive evidence.” (Chapter 1, “1: The Ignorant Armies,” n47.) Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018): 715-16. Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001): 118-19. Rodney P. Carlisle, ed., *Encyclopedia of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe Reference, 2005): 146-47. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 111, 132, 291, 305, 313, 341. Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider’s View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004): 228-30. Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 88-109. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 508-09. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 304, 370, 389, 575. Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, “Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference,” Institute for National Strategic Studies, Center for Strategic Research, National Defense University, Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C., *Strategic Perspectives* 11, 2012: 95. Michael Schudson, “The Multiple Political Roles of American Journalism,” in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Media Nation: The Political History of News in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017): 195-96. Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (New York: New Press, 2015): 1-2, 67-74, 104, 118-20, 124. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 43, 46, 51, 181, 230-36, 275-77, 285-86, 326, 360, 448-51, 465. Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012): 119-287, 349-66. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 448. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 58, 104-05.

The 1980s New Right and its self-styled experts in alien “cultural subversion” and “active measures”<sup>90</sup> compiled long lists of how the Soviet Union was supposed to be manipulating the West by planting stories and inciting culture wars<sup>91</sup>: “hard-left members of the House who are now acting as pro-Soviet agents of influence,”<sup>92</sup> the Sino-Soviet split,<sup>93</sup> Medicare expansion,<sup>94</sup> the assassination of John F. Kennedy, conspiracies about the assassination of John F. Kennedy,<sup>95</sup> questioning the Strategic Defense Initiative or the safety and boundless potential of nuclear power,<sup>96</sup> coverage of Agent Orange,<sup>97</sup> reports of U.S. involvement in the death of Patrice

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<sup>90</sup> The term initially referred in practice to “trust operations” to fake anti-Bolshevik resistance and lure Russian émigrés into the Soviet Union for execution 1921-26, general “false flags” (Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: Borders and Reporters,” n90), and foreign assassinations. The Active Measures Working Group had no working definition, counting covert Eastern-Bloc forgeries but also on overt Radio Moscow, published books, and even Mikhail Gorbachev’s practice of *glasnost*. Hugh W. Olds, USIA, Office of Research, “Soviet Disinformation: Methodology of Deception,” Feb. 20, 1987; box 43, folder M-2-20-87; entry P 64 (Research Memoranda, 1963-1999); Record Group 306 (U.S. Information Agency); U.S. National Archives at College Park, Md. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 281-82. Schoen and Lamb, “Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications” 2012: 17-18.

<sup>91</sup> Arnaud de Borchgrave, Richard Deacon (the pseudonym of the controversial journalist Donald McCormick), Marian Kirsch Leighton, Chapman Pincher, and defectors like Ladislav Bittman (Czechoslovakia, 1968) made a cottage industry out of delineating the features of the supposed or exaggerated campaign. Thomas C. Ellington, “Won’t Get Fooled Again: The Paranoid Style in the National Security State,” *Government and Opposition* 38:4 (Autumn 2003): 436-55.

<sup>92</sup> Marian Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda as a Foreign Policy Tool*, Focus on Issues 12 (New York: Freedom House, 1991): 134-35, 157.

<sup>93</sup> Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark* 2015: 131.

<sup>94</sup> Merlin Chowkwanyun, “How Red-Baiting in Medicine Did Lasting Harm to Americans’ Health Care,” *The Washington Post*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/06/12/how-red-baiting-medicine-did-lasting-harm-americans-health-care>. Reagan was one of the main players in the American Medical Association’s campaign, releasing *Ronald Reagan Speaks Out Against Socialized Medicine* on vinyl 1961.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Deacon, *The Truth Twisters* (London: Macdonald, 1987): 93-95. Robert Alan Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001): 110. Max Holland, “The Lie That Linked CIA to the Kennedy Assassination: The Power of Disinformation,” *Studies in Intelligence* 45:5 (Fall/Winter 2001). Tom O’Connor, “Did Russia Kill a U.S. President? New CIA Documents Reveal Spy’s Theory About JFK’s Death,” *Newsweek*, July 27, 2017, <https://www.newsweek.com/cia-releases-secret-interviews-russian-spy-imprisoned-jfk-assassination-642486>. Chapman Pincher, *The Secret Offensive: Active Measures: A Saga of Deception, Disinformation, Subversion, Terrorism, Sabotage and Assassination* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985): 243-4. Tim Weiner, “This is Where Oliver Stone Got His Loony JFK Conspiracies From,” *Rolling Stone*, Nov. 22, 2021, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/jfk-oliver-stone-conspiracy-theory-russian-disinformation-1260223>. It has returned with former CIA Director R. James Woolsey and Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Operation Dragon: Inside the Kremlin’s Secret War on America* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2021)—its cover promising to explain “how Russia stole America’s secrets, assassinated its president, and killed millions worldwide.”

<sup>96</sup> Deacon, *The Truth Twisters* 1987: 111-13, 120, 130-37. Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991: 96, 101. Pincher, *The Secret Offensive* 1985: 233.

<sup>97</sup> Ladislav Bittman, *The New Image-Makers: Soviet Propaganda & Disinformation Today* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1988): 28.



Lumumba or in the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan Civil Wars,<sup>98</sup> opposition to “any suggestion or evidence that there are vital links between genetics, intelligence and race,”<sup>99</sup> anti-war movements against U.S. efforts to “reassert her global predominance and overcome the ‘Vietnam syndrome,’” claims that World War III would leave medical doctors unable to cope with the damage, the concept of nuclear winter itself,<sup>100</sup> fear of radioactive fallout,<sup>101</sup> “permissive” parenting and teaching<sup>102</sup> that produces an “erosion of discipline in the school and home which is showing itself [...] as violent hooliganism and vandalism” that heartened the Kremlin,<sup>103</sup> claims of global warming or an ozone hole, “environmentalism ... abortion on demand, animal rights and other trendy issues,”<sup>104</sup> news stories deeming the government of “Pinochet as a monstrous violator of human rights,”<sup>105</sup> and Continental philosophy in general and the Frankfurt School in particular—seeds of critical theory that would sprout into identitarianism and “cultural Marxism” aimed at destroying the West decades after the fall of the Soviet Union itself.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1985): 92-93, 143. Deacon, *The Truth Twisters* 1987: 155.

<sup>99</sup> Deacon, *The Truth Twisters* 1987: 180.

<sup>100</sup> Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991:78, 90.

<sup>101</sup> Sen. Barry Goldwater had already called it “communist-induced hysteria.” John M. Murphy, “In Pursuit of Peace: John F. Kennedy, June 1963,” in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War: The Rhetoric of Hearts and Minds* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018): 380.

<sup>102</sup> Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991:146, 161.

<sup>103</sup> Pincher, *The Secret Offensive* 1985: 268.

<sup>104</sup> Mikael Karlsson, “Chemicals Denial—A Challenge to Science and Policy,” *Sustainability* 11:17, Sept. 2, 2019. Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991: 170. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, “Challenging Knowledge: How Climate Science Became a Victim of the Cold War,” in Robert Proctor and Londa L. Shiebinger, eds., *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008): 55-89.

Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010): 130-34. Sheldon Rampton and John C. Stauber, *Trust Us, We're Experts! How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles with Your Future* (New York: Jeremy T. Tarcher/Putnam: 2001). William K. Stevens, “3 Win Nobel Prize for Work on Threat to Ozone,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/12/us/3-win-nobel-prize-for-work-on-threat-to-ozone.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Pincher, *The Secret Offensive* 1985: 167.

<sup>106</sup> The self-proclaimed New Right experts listed several other surefire indicators of this global plot to deceive the citizens of the West and irreversibly remake its society in the Soviet image: historians excusing anti-colonial revolts, Liberation Theology, the British Catholic Church's call for a fast and day of prayer over Margaret Thatcher's cuts in public expenditure, “groups of doctors, scientists, religious figures and retired military officers” engaged in personal diplomacy in the Soviet Union, left- and right-wing media, the British Labour Party, and Reagan's own “softness” against Gorbachev. “Former Soviet Spy: We Created Liberation Theology,” Catholic News Agency, May 1, 2015, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/31919/former-soviet-spy-we-created-liberation-theology>. Deacon, *The*

With no actual evidence from behind the Iron Curtain (except the claims of defecting officials<sup>107</sup>) the standards of proof that “disinformation” dominated every corner of the press was quite low. If any news story reflected badly on the U.S. government or impugned intervention as imperialist, it counted as “active measures” by definition: the “proof” that Moscow was behind it was the existence of an unfavorable story to begin with. The Reagan Administration considered the media inherently hostile to foreign paramilitary action. The absence of any evidence of Soviet ties was in fact interpreted as evidence itself: Ladislav Bittman concludes by citing the *lack* of evidence of any Soviet fingerprints as proof only of their wily sophistication—if a story could not be proven to be a plant, that meant only there was no way to find proof.<sup>108</sup> Despite the constant assertion of dubious KGB operations, the narrative of foreign-planted stories sidesteps one of the dilemmas of Cohen-style denial of witnesses: having to engage with an opponent. Blaming the story on a more nebulous foe thousands of miles away allowed officials to try more peremptory dismissals<sup>109</sup>—in other words, to attack witnesses at second hand by attacking the reporting apparatus that brought a story to the public.

The more extremist proponents of the power of “disinformation” declared that the Kremlin held the reins in the West, from press to college to pulpit. This type of belief in an all-encompassing “Cartesian demon” controlling what the public sees is typically theorized as something far outside the U.S. political “mainstream”—an exception from extremists and cranks such as Sen. Joe McCarthy or the John Birch Society. But the strategists that came in with Reagan be-

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*Truth Twisters* 1987: 60-61, 74. Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991: 33, 44, 147. Pincher, *The Secret Offensive* 1985: 169.

<sup>107</sup> Another “cottage industry” was exiles telling eager U.S. patrons exactly what they wanted to hear: now thousands of miles from any verification or falsification: Yuri Bezmenov, Anatoly Golitsyn, Ion Mihai Pacepa, Jan Sejna.

<sup>108</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation* 1985: 218. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 147, 150.

<sup>109</sup> R.G.A. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Roy Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge* (Keele: University of Keele, 1979): 13. Treviño, ed., “Introduction,” *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 36.

lieved in news of the Contra War as a key domestic battlefield against global Communism.<sup>110</sup>

Actual disinformation by the Soviet Bloc appears to have been restricted to KGB-forged documents, not tailoring them into stories designed to take off.<sup>111</sup> The KGB was simply not planting dozens of stories able to infect and dominate Western discourse.<sup>112</sup>

In 1985 Reagan complained that his Central American policy lacked popular support mostly because “Communists are lobbying your Senators and Representatives. Together with the misguided sympathizers in this country, they’ve been running a sophisticated disinformation campaign of lies and distortion. ... Don’t let the Sandinista Communists and their sympathizers be the only voices heard.”<sup>113</sup> By 1986 Reagan claimed that it was hard not to equate opposition to his proposal with support for the Sandinistas. Lt. Col. North said that dissent on Nicaragua and

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<sup>110</sup> There might be some unintended amusement found in homemakers’ complaints about grade-school egg-hatching projects or the rich lode of material at the Reagan Library’s donated collections of “anti-Communist ephemera,” with pamphlets such as “The Betrayed: Our Men in Uniform Want to Win in Vietnam,” “McCarthy: The Truth, The Smear, and The Lesson,” “Sensitivity Training, The Plan to Brainwash America,” and “Communism, Hypnotism, and the Beatles.” A more complete set of right-wing extremist literature is found at Brown University’s Hall-Hoag Collection, <https://apps.library.brown.edu/hall-hoag>. But Reagan had spent his ideological career over the decades as a hardliner among conservatives. It is a clear parallel to the South American National Security Doctrine’s concept that social and cultural change were signs of Communist subversion. Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 1-2, 4, 7, 9-11. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, Politics and Society in Modern America 13 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008): 408-11.

<sup>111</sup> What would *not* be outré, for instance, would be the accusation that the Eastern Bloc secret-service agencies encouraged or planted stories accusing the U.S. government of creating HIV at Fort Detrick—but further research finds that this did not originate with the Stasi, Bulgarian State Police, or KGB. Erhard Geissler and Robert Hunt Sprinkle, “Disinformation Squared: Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick Myth a Stasi Success?” *Politics and the Life Sciences* 32:2 (Fall 2013): 2-99. Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020): 298-311. Douglas Selva and Christopher Nehring, “Operation ‘Denver’: KGB and Stasi Disinformation Regarding AIDS,” the Woodrow Wilson Center International Center for Scholars, July 22, 2019, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/operation-denver-kgb-and-stasi-disinformation-regarding-aids>.

<sup>112</sup> The most recent comprehensive work is Thomas Rid’s *Active Measures* (2020), but his selection of Soviet cases does not extend beyond the documents that the Active Measures Working Group already reported on (*i.e.*, the false manual calling for a “strategy of tension” in Italy, anti-neutron bomb protests, the 1982 Nuclear Freeze movement, the idea of nuclear winter, and HIV/AIDS. Peter Pomerantsev’s *This is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019) is simply unscholarly.

<sup>113</sup> Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on the Central American Peace Proposal,” Apr. 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/radio-address-nation-central-american-peace-proposal>.

El Salvador was pushed by “the most sophisticated disinformation and active-measures campaign that we have seen in this country since Adolf Hitler,” and Pat Buchanan that the Democrats would reveal whether they stand with Ortega or with their President: these Red-baiting insinuations were a factor in causing the February 1986 aid proposal to *fail*, until the Holy Week incursion (Chapter 5, “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”) (which Reagan blamed on the House voting against the aid).<sup>114</sup> As late as 1988 Reagan publicly announced the U.S. House of Representatives contained KGB assets<sup>115</sup> and personally called Human Rights Watch lawyer Reed Brody “one of dictator Ortega’s supporters, a sympathizer who has openly embraced Sandinismo.”<sup>116</sup>

One of the new Administration’s self-appointed tasks was to build techniques that would prevent media coverage from hindering the pursuit of any war, conventional or covert. A free press, carrying stories without prior state approval, was conceived by the New Right now in office as undermining free society’s ability to defend itself, its institutions threatened by “the very freedom they sustain.”<sup>117</sup> Ladislav Bittman wrote that America’s “aggressive press traditionally critical of the government provides an ideal environment for an outside party who wants to exploit that for its own benefit”<sup>118</sup> and that there were plenty of academics, journalists, scientists, and professionals already collaborating with the KGB, perhaps for decades, iterating its propa-

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<sup>114</sup> Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 133, 229-30. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 545. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene* 1996: 174-75.

<sup>115</sup> Neoconservatives did not stint in expressing their belief that the FSLN and FMLN was calling the tune in Congress with titles like Dennis L. Bark’s *The Red Orchestra* (1986), S. Steven Powell’s *Second Front: Advancing Latin American Revolution in Washington* (1986), James L. Tyson’s *Prophets or Useful Idiots? Church Organizations Attacking U.S. Central American Policy* (1986), or Curtin Winsor, Jr.’s *The Washington Battle for Central America: The Unmet Challenge of the “Red Chorus”* (1987). Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 184. Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 289.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Parry and Peter Kornbluh, “Iran-Contra’s Untold Story,” *Foreign Policy* 72 (Autumn 1988): 26.

<sup>117</sup> Of course media studies’ key criticism is of how the press serves antidemocratic purposes, but by *maintaining* secrecy rather than exposing the state defenders of freedom against foreign totalitarianism. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* 1989: 5, 162, 167. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 169-70.

<sup>118</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation* 1985: x. Bittman, *The New Image-Makers* 1988: 28.

ganda across all fields.<sup>119</sup> Free speech was a threat in and of itself: “Moscow doesn’t even need to recruit ... Rather, it exploits the skeptical attitude that many professional people in the West hold toward their governments,” Marian Kirsch Leighton wrote.<sup>120</sup>

This interpretation of the U.S. and international media required disciplining the press and Congress by covertly shoring up the plausibility of overt attacks that questioned their patriotism.<sup>121</sup> Reagan’s stalking-horse Accuracy in Media, which was regularly rolled out to accuse those reporting on foreign affairs or big business, announced that there were 10,000 Red professors controlling academia.<sup>122</sup> The FDN Directorate in Miami complained that FSLN and FMLN public diplomacy had made the guerrillas press sweethearts and controlled U.S. discourse, whereas the ever-victimized Contras and the White House could barely get a fair shake without some atrocity tale about the U.S.-funded forces popping up. Everyone from Madison Avenue to the Senate—campuses, churches, the op-ed pages—was dancing to the Sandinista tune while the Contras were silenced.<sup>123</sup> This line of Administration attack against the media would be particularly stressed in the 1984-86 campaign against Managua (Chapter 3): if it did not convince the public or “convert” Congress, it could still make doubt about Central America more plausible. The 1979-85 phase of activism had ended with Witness for Peace’s “discrediting” on the Río San Juan (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”).

U.S. and Latin American traditions of anticommunism, in particular their conceptions of how society and the media was being supposedly manipulated by the Soviets, converged in 1980s Honduras. They provided the ideology to motivate, defend, conceal, and deny fighting in

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<sup>119</sup> Bennett, *News*, 4th ed., 2001: 118-19. Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991: 130-31, 164. Pincher, *The Secret Offensive* 1985: 259.

<sup>120</sup> Kirsch Leighton, *Soviet Propaganda* 1991: 59-60.

<sup>121</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 211

<sup>122</sup> Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 229-30.

<sup>123</sup> Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 209-10. Walter C. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality: The Caribbean Basin, 1953-1992* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2001): 168.

its neighboring countries (Chapter 5), kidnapping and murdering civilians (Chapters 6 and 7), faking guerrilla movements, and trafficking arms and cocaine (Chapter 8, “A Right-Wing Student Riot”). Even after Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s deposal, officers and officials kept using his language of constant leftist peril, claims of conspiracies, and mass-produced and -distributed lists with photographs of “subversives” targeted for death. Honduras was governed by violence and conspiracy theories, and popular organization had to take back the terms of discourse—to delegitimize the state attacks on their own terms.

The clash between reality and rhetoric made the Honduran state dependent on maintaining epistemological authority: but this led state and Army to actual and rhetorical violence, even forced into obvious denial of events that delegitimized the regime on its own terms.<sup>124</sup> U.S., Argentinean, and Honduran state conspiracies and conspiracy theories were conducted in contexts that were not entirely of the states’ own choosing: political murder and campesino massacre provided high sources of potential stigma that the states had to deny overtly or head off passively. When the state made claims that were widely contested, such incidents can expose breakdowns of Gramsci-style consensus, where the authorities knew themselves most vulnerable to exposure of clandestine misdeeds hidden from the public sphere.

### Alvarez Martínez: Beyond Condor

The Argentinean and Chilean military regimes had a direct hand in training the Nicaraguan National Guard, then in reorganizing them as the Contras (Chapter 4) and as a multinational death squad for the hardline officers of the states in the Northern Triangle. The network perpe-

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<sup>124</sup> This is not in the broader sense of “symbolic violence” or marginalization, but explicit state calls for anonymous, vigilante action and promise of impunity. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” in Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005): 39. Daniel C. Hallin, “Field Theory, Differentiation Theory, and Comparative Media Research,” in *ibid.*: 230-33. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 52.

trated the notorious March 24, 1980, murder of San Salvador's Archbishop Óscar Romero at the altar—an atrocity that stood out even in the new *Matanza* of that year. The political murders under Gen. Alvarez Martínez were supervised by agents of the U.S. and Argentinean states. As early as June 1980 the Argentinean Embassy was teaching the FF.AA. about the more advanced tenets of “international subversion.” Professors in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula—especially Chilean and Argentinean exiles—began getting death threats.<sup>125</sup> In August 1980 25 FF.AA. officers were flown, without going through U.S. customs, to be trained for a 6-month interrogation course in facilities in Houston.<sup>126</sup> Even if most all of the Honduran, Argentinean, Chilean, U.S., Salvadoran, and Guatemalan officers and intelligence agents themselves kept the silence they sought to impose on the public, their survivors would dedicate their lives to fighting through layers of denial and starting processes of justice that would reach to the Hague. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez's predecessor as FUSEP head, Col. Amílcar Zelaya Rodríguez, created the “Group of Fourteen” in 1979 as Honduras's first death squad, with the Argentineans' assistance and fostered by those CIA officers who had most closely collaborated with the Argentineans, like Néstor Sánchez. The death squad's first recorded murder was in June 1980—Gerardo Salinas, an attorney defending political prisoners. Next was Juan Humberto Sánchez and his nine-year-old son, both handed over to the Contras to be murdered.<sup>127</sup>

Alvarez Martínez had trained at Argentina's Colegio Militar de la Nación 1958-62, was a personal friend of Gen. Rafael Videla, and had Gen. Pinochet's *Geopolitics* on his nightstand.

His mottos were “there are only two types of politicians—communists and others” and “every-

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<sup>125</sup> “Amenazas a catedráticos sudamericanos,” *Presencia Universitaria* 8:65 (June 1980). Víctor Meza, “Del terrorismo de estado al terrorismo de los estados,” *Presencia Universitaria* 8:65 (June 1980). “‘Escuadrón anticomunista’ amenaza a catedráticos y estudiantes de la ‘U,’ ” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 21, 1980.

<sup>126</sup> Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 97.

<sup>127</sup> The “fourteen” included the CIA-tied Alejandro Hernández Santos and U.S. graduate Capt. Billy Joya. However, Salinas and the Sánchezes do not appear in CONADEH, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos* 1994. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 94, 229 n93. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 208, 214-15, 222-23, 232-33 n115. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 15-16.

thing you do to destroy a Marxist regime is moral.”<sup>128</sup> Anything outside the narrow worldview he personally agreed with was a Red threat to the “incipient democracy” of Honduras and to the states of Central America.<sup>129</sup> His worldview would justify state violence against Catholic clergy, FF.AA. officers, and government officials<sup>130</sup>—and eventually lead to his own murder by the same death squad he created.

Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s October 2, 1982, speech was practically Argentine: “there is a plan of aggression against our country to destroy all the structures that are traditional and vital for the existence of a democratic and Christian republic.” The line between public and military was nonexistent: “the defense and security of Honduras, are not [the] exclusive responsibility of the Armed Forces, but that on the contrary, they are unavoidable duties of the people, government and army, because the fatherland is [the] common inheritance and solidaristic obligation of all Hondurans. We are in truth, the armed wing of the people”<sup>131</sup> He called the FF.AA. the Honduran nation as its armed aspect, its *brazo armado*—and as Commander-in-Chief he embodied the military and the nation, the sole protagonist in the country’s drama.<sup>132</sup> Any dissenters were outside the system—not true Hondurans.

Forced disappearance in 1980s Honduras was not all imported from techniques of repression developed in the Southern Cone. The Nicaraguan Guardsmen had organized, relocated to Honduras, started fighting the new Ejército Popular Sandinista, and visibly contemptuous of the

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<sup>128</sup> Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 80. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 42.

<sup>129</sup> Ramón Custodio López, “¿Quiénes son y que pretenden los subversivos en Honduras?” 2nd part, *CODEH* 5:35 (April 1987).

<sup>130</sup> Juan Ramón Martínez, “El significado de la detención del Padre Juan,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 29, 1985.

<sup>131</sup> “Militarismo en Honduras: El reinado de Gustavo Alvarez: 1982-1984,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 2 (August 1985).

<sup>132</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 157. Pinochet was particularly hit by opponents pointing out that he represented only an extreme faction within the Army, and not an embodiment of a united military, nor a solid society undermined by alien ideologies. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 223. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: 117.



Argentines' tactics as focusing too much on urban combat. After half a century of practice the Central American paramilitaries and death squads were certain they did not need a distant patron to crush guerrillas or civilians: the Central American states had their own traditions of repression, and preferred any counterrevolutionary patron to stay out of its way.<sup>133</sup>

Col. Ricardo Lau had been in the National Guard's *Servicio Anticomunista* and notorious for shooting teenage boys in the last days of the Nicaraguan Revolution if they had scuffed knees, sure signs they had been at the barricades. In Nicaragua as much as El Salvador it was "a crime to be young."<sup>134</sup> In July 1979 he formed the Frente Revolucionario Nicaragüense in Guatemala City, under the patronage of Mario Sandoval Alarcón—"godfather" of Central America's death squads, founder of the Mano Blanca and the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (self-described as "the party of organized violence"), ultimate commander of the Archbishop Romero assassination, and attending Reagan's 1981 Inaugural to represent the Guatemalan lobby at.<sup>135</sup> El Salvador's Maj. Roberto "Blowtorch Bob" D'Aubuisson designated Lau to manage Romero's March 1980 murder at the altar.<sup>136</sup> By the end of the year Argentina's Battalion 601 was organizing and training the dispersed and ill-equipped Guardsmen to kill Guatemalan peasants and dissidents.

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<sup>133</sup> See above, "Introduction," n22; and "Doctrines of National Security," n67.

<sup>134</sup> The Argentinean and Salvadoran paramilitaries made a similar slaughter of youth. "Ser joven en Honduras es un delito," *CODEH* 6:44 (April 1988). Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 83. Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 206-13, 251, 263.

<sup>135</sup> Typical Sandoval Alarcón quotes include "I am a fascist" and "If I have to get rid of half of Guatemala, so the other half can live in peace, I'll do it." Another invitee was Noriega's money launderer for Medellín and the Contras, Ramón Milián Rodríguez. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 93. Armony, "Transnationalizing the Dirty War," in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 145. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 72. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 20, 62-63, 70-71, 144. Victoria Sanford, "Learning to Kill by Proxy: Colombian Paramilitaries and the Legacy of Central American Death Squads, Contras, and Civil Patrols," *Social Justice* 30:3, "The Intersection of Ideologies of Violence" (2003): 71. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 87. Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* 1988: 77, 83-84.

<sup>136</sup> At this phase of the MLN-headed death-squad network favored the murders of famous figures, before it unleashed more widespread urban and rural massacre. Amb. Robert White in fact knew Maj. D'Aubuisson ordered the killing and the officer who pulled the trigger; Langley knew, but did not tell the House and Senate Intelligence Committees. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 87-89. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 48. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 110.

Col. José Osvaldo Riveiro was a cofounder of Operation Condor and Juan Martín Ciga Correa was one of Gen. Carlos Prats's 1974 assassins: the two Argentinean agents had procured funding, arms, and training for the Nicaraguan National Guard since 1979, first from Managua and, once they had relocated from Guatemala, Lepaterique in Francisco Morazán Department near Tegucigalpa starting in March 1981. In August the Contras proclaimed the Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense in Guatemala City and moved to Tegucigalpa.<sup>137</sup>

During 1981-82 the Argentinean advisors personally captured, interrogated, and executed Honduran labor, campesino, and student leaders, suspected FSLN sympathizers, and Salvadoran refugees. Late in 1981 it was the Argentineans who suggested that Contras under the command of Col. Lau be used to execute Battalion 3-16's clandestine prisoners. The Nicaraguans were responsible for the actual execution of most of the political killings of 1981-84.<sup>138</sup> This fact—while being entirely true—would be exploited by the FF.AA. after Gen. Alvarez Martínez's 1984 ouster, in order to disavow any Honduran involvement (Chapter 7, "López Reyes: Interregnum"). The first Salvadorans to be disappeared were murdered April 1981, including Archbishop Óscar Romero's secretary Nora Trinidad Gómez de Barrillas and her family, who had taken refuge in Honduras: they were thrown out of a death flight *en route* to Ilopango (see above, "The Argentine Method").<sup>139</sup>

Argentina does not just provide a convenient parallel: Gen. Alvarez Martínez grafted its practices and motives on top of the existing *Fuerzas Armadas*—closer to Gen. Pinochet sidestepping and threatening the usual chain of command in the Chilean military itself. Numerous

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<sup>137</sup> Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 45. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 114-18.

<sup>138</sup> Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 98, 102. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 304. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 216, 231.

<sup>139</sup> A full list is in CONADEH, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos* 1994: 145-202. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 227.

FF.AA. officers were involved in Battalion 3-16, but after his ouster none of them continued to envision their political murders as a mission for the state that was part of a war for American civilization itself. Like Alvarez Martínez's use of Nicaraguan Guardsmen and murderers from the Penitenciaría Central as deniable executioners, the Argentine Method served another role in Honduras after his ouster in 1984—Cohen's third-degree "implicatory" denial, that ultimately only one single member of the FF.AA. was responsible.

Battalion 3-16 drew on the more decentralized, paramilitary, plainclothes tradition offered by Honduras's neighbors than Buenos Aires. The Argentine political murders were brought to international and U.S. attention by the survivors and the juntas cut back on the abductions even before Gen. Videla stepped down in 1981. The Salvadoran forces acted even when the regime was "headless": ORDEN, the Unión de Guerreros Blancos, and the National Guard and Treasury Police operating independently against the efforts of the civilians and junior officers in the rapidly-undermined 1979-80 junta.<sup>140</sup> Nicaraguan's sole military force reconstituted itself entirely outside the boundaries of its country, outliving the leadership of Anastasio Somoza himself, killed with an RPG-7 at point-blank range in Asunción, Paraguay, September 1980.<sup>141</sup>

FUSEP already had the Group of Fourteen, but the Argentine Method (above) was introduced in full in Honduras at the start of 1981 under Capt. Alex Hernández's Special Investigations.<sup>142</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez opted for that style of forced disappearance after the March 27, 1981, hijacking of a jetliner by a new guerrilla group, the Cinchoneros,<sup>143</sup> who aimed to destabi-

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<sup>140</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996.

<sup>141</sup> Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 80. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 286.

<sup>142</sup> Dickey, *With the Contras*, 1985: 116.

<sup>143</sup> This was the Movimiento Popular de Liberación "Cinchonero," with the broadest rural and urban support among all Honduran guerrilla groups; Managua reacted with sharp alarm and opposition to the hijacking plans, even though designed to be bloodless (even their skyjacking victims remarked on their courtesy). The Cinchoneros were a "polit-

lize what was *de facto* a military state with a thin electoral veneer—and (successfully) obtain the release of members who had been secretly captured and detained alive.<sup>144</sup>

Over 1981-84, Battalion 3-16 abductions were marked by vehicles with tinted windows and no license plates, the men heavily armed with FF.AA. weapons. Squad members rebuffed the few FUSEP attempts to intervene by identifying themselves as G-2 military intelligence.<sup>145</sup> Guatemalan and Salvadoran paramilitaries also used plainclothes abductions for similar reasons as Honduras through the 1980s: to maintain not just plausible deniability for the FF.AA. but to back a narrative of “right-wing extremists” going behind the backs of the hapless official forces.

Another parallel with Argentina was state action aimed at providing the appearance of an all-pervasive leftist terrorist threat, giving reality to the generals’ narratives in the press. CO-FADEH noted that many of the disappearances were motivated by the military’s need to make Hondurans believe that the country and its armed forces were under direct threat from an armed “left wing.” It was a common tactic in Argentinean raids to use high levels of force to give the appearance of a serious threat to enforcement—in metaphorical terms, to create enough “smoke” that accusation of a “fire” was plausible. Leticia Salomón noted that, in order to divert attention

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ical-military” parallel to the non-guerrilla Unión Revolucionaria del Pueblo, whose leaders Tomás Nativí and Fidel Martínez were abducted by a Battalion 3-16 taskforce led by Capt. Alexander Hernández June 11, 1981. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 140-41, 199-200. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 230-31. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 10. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 200-09, 219-32.

<sup>144</sup> In Argentina after 1976 and El Salvador after 1980, even a hardline military isolated from any political base (*i.e.*, an “army-party” like Guatemala’s *Partido Institucional Democrático* and *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*, El Salvador’s *Partido de Conciliación Nacional*, or Brazil’s *Aliança Renovadora Nacional* (ARENA)) or coerced rural support (ORDEN or Guatemala’s Civil Defense Patrols) could still flatten an armed, trained, and motivated guerrilla force. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996. One argument is that the “export bourgeoisie” provided enough support to back the army over even the state (even if temporarily before they disputed over economic policy). Guillermo O’Donnell (*Bureaucratic Authoritarianism* 1988) argues that “bureaucratic authoritarianism” let the military build up a presence in the rest of the state and put state functions—from investment to interest rates to petroleum—in officers’ hands, creating a certain institutional base for itself—deliberately embarking on a “war of position,” in Gramscian terms. But this left the military regimes without middle-class support once the economic “miracle” they promised faltered (Brazil, Chile) or never “took off” (Argentina). Only the defeat by Britain could break the juntas’ image—and expose how weak the regime actually was without any civil-society arrangements to build up hegemony. Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies, Jr., eds., *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 60.

<sup>145</sup> “Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero,” *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31.

from their incapacity to confront common crime, FUSEP fabricated counterinsurgent operations. The militarized police conducted rescues of actual kidnap victims that “intentionally magnified the dimension of the violence.” This served the same narrative function as blaming phantom guerrillas for all crime or terrorism.<sup>146</sup> Whereas denial or assertion are simply rhetorical, the state altered the very actions it took—to use the act of witnessing an event to strengthen the atmosphere of fear—to draw their curtains and turn up their record players against their neighbors’ screams. Dividing *lo público* into neighborhoods, units, zones forced Argentineans to internalize the surveillance to survive, to monitor themselves.<sup>147</sup> The potential for disclosure still remained under the state’s grip over the public sphere. The state was not reiterating a narrative, but manipulating epistemology itself, the credibility of witnesses and their stories.

The Argentine Method had been developed to render the masses passive and atomized,<sup>148</sup> so the junta ended with few existing avenues of support—no independent press, a closed Congress, a divided Church<sup>149</sup>: as with most dictatorships, it had to seek other alternatives, but ended up with perhaps only soccer and saber-rattling.<sup>150</sup> Buenos Aires could offer little to the Honduran

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<sup>146</sup> Leticia Salomón, “Honduras: Violencia y descomposición social,” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 23-32.

<sup>147</sup> Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances* 2012: 90. Vincent Druliolle, “Remembering and its Places in Postdictatorship America,” in Francesca Lessa and Vincent Druliolle, eds., *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 20. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 28, 43. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: x, 94, 98, 102, 119, 122-23.

<sup>148</sup> Argentina had some characteristics distinguishing it from the rest of Latin America. Few elected leaders lasted long after the 1955 coup against Perón (1958-66 only), the military remaining firmly against civilian involvement in matters of state—no “army-party” or nationwide organization to garner lower-class and rural support. Its various factions blamed Peronism and the *descamisado* demonstrators backing him for everything between his 1943 election and his wife’s 1976 own ouster. Ironically “Peronism” had achieved a sort of hegemony, in that in his 18-year absence enough fantasies had accreted around his figure to span the entirety of politics, the Peronist Argentine Anti-communist Alliance targeting the Peronist Montoneros. The Peróns’ 1973-76 return was dominated by the AAA’s assassinations and disappearances of activists, conservatives, and rival far-right-wingers alike, and the subsequent junta reorganized and employed the death squad as cover for its own Dirty War. Deutsch and Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right* 1993. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016: 78-85. Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror* 1989.

<sup>149</sup> Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought* 2012: 186.

<sup>150</sup> Nico Stehr, “Knowledge Societies,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 307.

state other than variants on force.<sup>151</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez attempted to reframe the political violence he himself was perpetrating in order to replicate Gen. Pinochet's own construction of "memory as salvation," where the only threats remaining after 1973 was from the "left." But while some Chileans could be convinced,<sup>152</sup> the Argentine Method relied on large numbers of civilians continuing to play their roles in public—and the *Madres* in their white shawls, fleeing perpetrators, or rival officers arranging for leaks of clandestine cemeteries were able to reveal state operations by breaking the usual processes maintaining Goffman's "backstage."

Gen. Alvarez Martínez began expanding beyond the Argentine Method with another hijacking of a passenger flight April 29, 1982, Congress passing a new terror law after a series of power-plant bombings blamed on the Cinchoneros.<sup>153</sup> The San Pedro Sula Chamber of Commerce and Industry was seized by the guerrillas September 17, 1982, and the general especially feared a repeat of Edén Pastora's 1978 seizure of the Nicaraguan National Palace. While he was certain that Honduran guerrillas were backed by the Sandinistas and exile Montoneros in Nicaragua, now they were *imitating* them against Honduras's small military and a civil government with few historical or popular roots.

Battalion 3-16 did not succeed in dismantling the Cinchoneros, who departed on their own terms, and was equally taken by surprise with the incursion of the Partido Revolucionario de

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<sup>151</sup> Siba N. Grovogui and Lori Leonard, "Uncivil Society: Interrogations at the Margins of Neo-Gramscian Theory," in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 173. Hyug Baeg Im, "Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci," *Asian Perspective* 15:1 (Spring-Summer 1991): 138.

<sup>152</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* 2004: 32, 105-8.

<sup>153</sup> The Anti-Terror Law was used exclusively against hundreds of campesinos for "invaded" land that they had been given a claim to by the Instituto Nacional Agrario, on the grounds they were "armed"—with their machetes. "Demands Presented by the Honduran Leftists to the Honduran Government," *Honduras Update* 1:2 (October 1982). "Campesinos subversivos," CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 13-16. "Testimony of Torture: Margarita Murillo," *Honduras Update* 6:2-3 (November-December 1987). Tony Equale, "Fighting Subversion—Honduran Style," box 22; collection DG 174 (Central American Historical Institute Records, 1980-1993); Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Penn. Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power* 1988: 9. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 33-34. Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 58, 163. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 208-09. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 43-44.

los Trabajadores Centroamericanos–Honduras column (Chapter 7, “Real Guerrillas”): this replicated the death squad’s *lack* of success in intercepting the few Nicaraguan arms headed for the FMLN, its ostensible task. Besides working-class organizers and political dissidents, many Salvadorans and Hondurans were forcibly disappeared in the hunt for the FMLN arms network in Honduras—which turned out quite sparse.<sup>154</sup> In fact, as Sgt. Florencio Caballero testified, none of the Battalion’s victims were perceived as having been threats to the state: anything that serious would have been exhaustively investigated. In French/Algerian style, it was not victims’ actual connections or ideas that were targeted by the death squad, but loose patterns of behavior. It was enough to have three single men living in one house, or people meeting at night: they would then be listed, spied on, and tailed as though they were already confirmed conspirators or arms smugglers.<sup>155</sup>

As in Argentina, the “covert” disappearances were often fact highly public—well-known, immediately-recognizable acts by obvious plainclothesmen. Even the details of illegal detention and covert torture, murder, and burial were “open secrets” by 1984—known by everyone but not safe to discuss, briefly reported by the subdued press, if at all. The Centro de Documentación de Honduras (CEDOH) describes the authorities’ motive for constant first-degree, literal denial of any aspect of the disappearance as forcing every Honduran to become compliant and complicit, compromising their own moral integrity to remain silent out of fear.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> See Chapter 4, “Conventional Military Deception: El Salvador,” n37.

<sup>155</sup> Arquímedes Antonio Cañada, the Salvadoran Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo’s “Comandante Montenegro,” was captured in August 1982 but released after the capture of San Pedro Sula’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry and turned anti-guerrilla. “Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero,” *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. See also Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances* 2012: 27, 30.

<sup>156</sup> “Derechos humanos: Un juicio histórico,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 88 (August 1988). McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 246.

Diana Taylor coined the term “percepticide”—forced disappearances do not just eliminate the victims’ point of view as witnesses to the atrocities against them, but were conducted overtly and known publicly in order to force the press to be visibly silent about crimes that were terrorizing the public. The public was not just atomized, but forced to refuse to bear witness, to turn away, to make sure that the death squads *saw* them not-looking, forced to not turn their heads while passing.

Forced disappearance had two functions, to attack supposed state enemies and to atomize society: witnessing was perverted to force all of society to keep the state’s secrets for it, to let the state into their head. Breaking this process was part of the *Madres’* mission, in Argentina and then Honduras. Disappearance served to supply deniability to the state, to give it impunity from the sort of sanctions Gen. Pinochet’s crimes had drawn down on Chile. Mothers and wives could force the state to accumulate stigma by telling their stories and defending their perspective, reversing the process that the hardliners had tried to impose on public communication of knowledge.

### The United States and Battalion 3-16

Argentina’s defeat in the British Falklands and Gen. Ariel Sharon’s recall to Israel left the U.S. government as the only third country involved in the death squad in 1982, as well as responsible for funding and arming the Contras in general. This came at the same time that Congress passed the first Boland Amendment and William Casey began seeking outside funding to disentangle the Reagan Administration from the Contras—leading directly to the structures whose revelation sparked half of “Iran-Contra” (Chapter 2). The 1986-88 public scandal generally focused on the funding mechanism and Reagan’s personal decisions, not on U.S. involvement



in disappearance, torture, and murder: that would only reach the U.S. press with *The Baltimore Sun*'s 1995 investigative journalism on Amb. John Negroponte's role in Battalion 3-16. However, increasing covert involvement in the death squad also increased the amount of potentially-salient knowledge originating in Honduras. The measures taken by the Reagan Administration against this potential new source of unfavorable and stigmatizing news reveal the ways in which secrecy was not a given for state action, nor the veil or curtain of metaphor, but a secret-keeping process—that required active maintenance.

Plainclothes political violence had allowed for a fusion of operations between the Contra and Honduran death squads and their sponsors—whether Argentinean or CIA. In 1980 Buenos Aires's connections to the FF.AA's G-2 and the ex-Guardsmen was hidden by the FF.AA from Amb. Jack R. Binns and even the CIA. By 1981 the CIA Station at the U.S. Embassy was concealing the proliferating Contra aid network from Binns, acting secretly behind the back of its own nominal supervisor.<sup>157</sup> Col. Alvarez Martínez told Binns February 6, 1981 that he favored the “Argentine method” and other approaches that were “extralegal,” as Alvarez Martínez termed it. The Ambassador reported to the U.S. State Department that “they have begun to resort to extralegal tactics—disappearances and, apparently, physical eliminations—to control a perceived subversive threat.”<sup>158</sup> Binns upbraided himself in his autobiography for allowing himself to be silenced on disappearances, but he had decided on a course of denial against the Río Sumpul massacre in May 1980. He refused to test the refugees' accounts or to see for himself, instead insisting that U.S. Congresspersons were dupes of the Salvadoran guerrillas (Chapter 3), effectively certifying his own replacement.

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<sup>157</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 13, 164, 216.

<sup>158</sup> “Un engaño cuidadosamente creado,” *Desaparecidos*, special 15 (February 1996): 32-38. Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 93, 104, 226.

On June 17, 1981, Binns cabled Foggy Bottom that “I am profoundly worried by the growing evidence of assassinations of political individuals officially approved, which clearly shows that the repression of the government of Honduras has increased.” He was immediately phoned by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders: all human-rights reports were now to be sent by the encrypted “backchannel,” with restricted circulation within the Department. Any evidence of murders would show that the FF.AA. was violating the Foreign Aid Act and thus could not be given U.S. government money.<sup>159</sup> Goffman notes that dissent is one of the major elements kept “backstage,” but the new Administration was cutting off opportunities to express it (such as the Carter-era Department’s “dissent channel”<sup>160</sup>) and removing anyone who might prove too vocal—a move of force in the absence of hegemony within the Administration. The New Right had the disadvantage of winning a Gramscian “war of maneuver,” seizing all the institutions of the Executive Branch, but not public approval or institutional support for even the very public positions it had campaigned on in 1980. The neoconservatives remained a small camarilla.<sup>161</sup> Regardless of any supposed Cold-War consensus, the new Administration’s foreign policy did not more pragmatic Secretary George Shultz formed a rival to Casey’s favored CIA Department of Operations, seeking to contain the 1981 appointees still seeking regime change.

Amb. Binns’s reprimand was to keep knowledge of Battalion 3-16 from the State Department in general. The new Administration’s Secretary of State Gen. Al Haig (ret.) was also undertaking a “purge” of the Department: the hardline foreign-policy appointees saw Foggy Bottom as full of long-term civil servants who had lost the Cold War in the 1970s—as prone to leak-

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<sup>159</sup> “CODEH acusa a USIS de manipular informes sobre derechos humanos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 23, 1987. “Honduras: Posturas políticas ante las maniobras militares,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987). Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 200. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 10.

<sup>160</sup> The dissent channel was opened in 1971 and highly constricted under Reagan; its overall effect seems to have been to punish or defuse internal dissent rather than reevaluate policy or allow publicity for criminal behavior. Hannah Gurman, “The Other Plumbers Unit: The Dissent Channel of the U.S. State Department,” *Diplomatic History* 35:2 (April 2011): 321-49. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 1.

<sup>161</sup> Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 1. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 23-24.

ing to the press and resistant to the bold new plan to take the fight to the Reds around the world. While “the State Department” can be described as deeply involved in covert support of Battalion 3-16, and its restriction of knowledge analyzed in terms a single institution, the silencing of the state’s own Ambassador reveals a potential line of fracture in the secrecy that working with the death squad depended on.<sup>162</sup> “The state” was not internally transparent to knowledge: its action required disrupting its usual channels of communication: as with Raymond Bonner the White House successfully prevented a potential news story, but at the risk of not only breaching the story anyway, but making it far more salient by potentially being caught taking exceptional effort to cover it up.

Binns was swiftly replaced in November 1981 by John Negroponete, who had been stationed at Saigon throughout the Vietnam War, a fervent Cold Warrior, and partisan of Argentina within the State Department. He openly admired the Argentine junta’s measures and agreed with Gen. Alvarez Martínez that Western democracies were too soft to resist communism.<sup>163</sup> One Honduran joke—or observation—was that the country’s authorities were Negroponete, Alvarez Martínez, and Suazo Córdova—in that order. Under this ambassador the Embassy was made into the third-largest in Latin America (after Mexico and Brazil), with 150 staffers and dozens of agents at its CIA “Station,” the largest in the continent.<sup>164</sup> The Embassy sent glowing human-rights reports to the U.S. Congress every year during his 1981-85 term: the reports had been

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<sup>162</sup> William P. Alston, “Belief-Forming Practices and the Social,” in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 29. Christian List, “Group Knowledge and Group Rationality: A Judgment Aggregation Perspective,” in Goldman and Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology* 2011: 223. McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*, 2011: 4. Miriam Solomon, “A More Social Epistemology,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 219.

<sup>163</sup> “Cómo silenciaron a un periodista,” *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 30-31.

<sup>164</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 114. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 133. Allan Naim, “The United States Militarizes Honduras,” in Nancy Peckenham and Annie Street, eds., *Trouble in Our Backyard: Central America and the United States in the Eighties*, (New York: Praeger, 1985): 293. Clara Nieto, *Masters of War: Latin America and United States Aggression from the Cuban Revolution Through the Clinton Years*, trans. Chris Brandt (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003): 320. Persky, *America, the Last Domino* 1984: 231. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 514. Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994): 247.

mandated by law in order to certify that a country receiving aid would not turn it against its own people.<sup>165</sup> CIA Inspector-General Frederick P. Hitz's 1997 report noted that the Embassy's analysts "took great care in drafting congressional responses as they did not want to take any action that could negatively affect covert action funding," even suppressing 1983's draft intelligence report because it included "murders, executions and corruption"—which the Embassy itself was routinely informed of.<sup>166</sup> The maintenance of secrecy required deceit within the state—to other non-public institutions—as well as deceit of the press.

Under Amb. Negroponte, the Embassy and its CIA Station was directly involved in disappearances and always well-informed on the FF.AA.'s kidnapping and murdering of civilians: Battalion 3-16 was part of the same process as supporting the Contra War. During and after Argentina's formal involvement, the CIA had provided funding, management assistance, and interrogation training to Battalion 3-16, in full awareness of its role in the wave of atrocities.<sup>167</sup> The Pentagon also provided logistical and intelligence support to the death squad along with the other Honduras-based Contras.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> "Honduras: Posturas políticas ante las maniobras militares," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987). "CODEH acusa a USIS de manipular informes sobre derechos humanos," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 23, 1987.

<sup>166</sup> Frederick P. Hitz and A.R. Cinquegrana, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report of Investigation: Selected Issues Relating to CIA Activities in Honduras in the 1980s (96-0125-IG)*, Aug. 27, 1997: 117, available at [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000283031.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000283031.pdf).

<sup>167</sup> Col. Riveiro remained at the Hotel Maya for years after the regime that sent him collapsed, though unable to supply any cash or logistics whatsoever. They trained and advised Contras until their return to Argentina 1987. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade* 1997: 132. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation*, Institute for Media Analysis Monograph Series 2 (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 5-6. Dickey, *With the Contras*, 1985: 136, 153, 156, 195. Martorell, *Operación Cóndor* 1999: 206-07, 212. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 217.

<sup>168</sup> Gary Cohn and Ginger Thompson, "Unearthed: Fatal Secrets," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 11, 1995, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bal-honduras1-story.html>, and "A Carefully Crafted Deception," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 18, 1995, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/bal-negroponte4-story.html>. "Una sobreviviente cuenta su historia," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 24-29. "Un engaño cuidadosamente creado," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 32-38. "Causas," *Desaparecidos* 6:35 (January 1998): 6-9. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras* 1982: 15-17. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 208. George Shultz cable to the U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, Mar. [9?] 1988; CO065, box 85; WHORM Subject File; Ronald Reagan Library. Manuel Torres Calderón, *Honduras, la transición inconclusa hacia una democracia, 1981-2009*, Observaciones y Advertencias (Tegucigalpa: Pastoral Social Cáritas de Honduras/Ediciones Subirana, 2011): 14.

Battalion 3-16's liaison with the CIA was Indochina veteran "Colonel Raymond"<sup>169</sup>: every Monday Raymond got a report from Col. Lau of all the operations carried out by FDN intelligence—its investigations and interrogations, all its death sentences of fellow Contras, Nicaraguan civilians, as well as those it had forcibly disappeared. Raymond supervised Col. Lau's investigations and interrogations and all the death sentences, but also told Col. Lau to stop *reporting* on those the FDN had captured and killed, to keep from documenting any potential primary-source knowledge. His hesitancy had limits: Raymond told a subordinate that a prisoner he thought was innocent nevertheless had to be eliminated because he might reveal sensitive information about the death squad.<sup>170</sup>

Gen. López Reyes publicly admitted that the CIA had chosen many of the victims of 1981-84.<sup>171</sup> CIA agents were sent by the Station at the Embassy to visit Battalion 3-16's clandestine cells, which not even FUSEP policemen were allowed to enter. Before her 1983 abduction and reappearance, Inés Murillo (see also Chapter 7, "State Un-Disappearance") had been visited by a "Mr. Mike" from the Embassy; the torture was stopped and she was allowed to clean herself up. Mike had come often to inspect the secret detention center at Industrias Militares in Las Tapias, west of Tegucigalpa, where not even Honduran police, unauthorized FF.AA. offic-

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<sup>169</sup> Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan's Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 227. This contact was Lt. Col. Ray Doty—El Aguacate's first "base chief," a Laos veteran like most of the CIA Contra leadership, but not Spanish-speaking. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 514, 520. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 230-31.

<sup>170</sup> The 1983 draft intelligence report was suppressed by the Embassy: it would've documented the PRTC-H executions and other "murders, executions and corruption" that the Embassy was routinely informed of. Hitz and Cinquegrana, *Report of Investigation* 1997: 117-18. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 218, 221.

<sup>171</sup> "Honduras and Contras," *This Week: Central America and Panama* 10:18 (May 11, 1987). "Honduras: Posturas políticas ante las maniobras militares," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987). "El papel de los Estados Unidos," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 75 (July 1987). "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. "Derechos humanos," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 91 (November 1988). "Confesiones de los torturadores," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 16-22. Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power* 1988: 17-18. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras*, Tegucigalpa (1988): 13.

ers, or court officials were allowed entry.<sup>172</sup> COFADEH tentatively identifies “Mike” as CIA agent Michael Dubbs or “Bill Johnson,”<sup>173</sup> and that he was in the room with Gen. Alvarez Martínez when he decided that Rev. Carney had to be executed rather than publicized after his capture.<sup>174</sup> He was the Tegucigalpa CIA Station chief until 1982, then transferred to Beirut and killed in the massive April 18, 1983, Embassy bombing that wiped out the entire CIA Station there.<sup>175</sup>

In and of themselves, the forcible disappearances perpetrated by Battalion 3-16 presented far less of a potential news story than El Salvador’s massacres on the streets and annihilations of entire villages. The secrecy around forcible disappearances was part of an everyday *modus operandi* that the new Administration imposed on the Embassy in Tegucigalpa, even if against its own Ambassador. But even confirmation of the death squads’ existence in the “fledgling democracy”—let alone the CIA working hand in glove with them—would be “explosive” news, a tremendous source of potential stigma on the domestic and international stage.<sup>176</sup> It would not be through any U.S. or Honduran state institution that the disappearances threatened to come into U.S. public discourse.

## Conclusion

Despite being a potentially larger and more salient story than arms-for-hostages or violating the Boland Amendment, U.S. government involvement in forced disappearance by the Hon-

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<sup>172</sup> Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 40, 48. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 228.

<sup>173</sup> César Augusto Murillo Selva, “A un año del desaparecimiento de mi hija,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 30, 1984. “Una sobreviviente cuenta su historia,” *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 24-29. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 219.

<sup>174</sup> Valladares Lanza and Peacock, *In Search of Hidden Truths* 1998: 33.

<sup>175</sup> Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 126, 294. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 219.

<sup>176</sup> In other words it would have been as blindsiding to the White House as the arms-for-hostages deals with Iran were in 1986, regardless of any prior Cold-War “consensus” or the saliency of Central America as a topic in the press and Senate.

duran state was never part of the 1986-88 scandal which stayed relatively confined to the President himself (Introduction, “Iran-Contra Literature Review”). The Administration was never forced to address mass disappearance in Central America, Battalion 3-16 only reaching the U.S. press in 1995 with *The Baltimore Sun*’s investigation. The death squad and its hand-in-glove relationship to the U.S. Embassy and CIA Station posed enough of a threat to get an Ambassador fired for quoting Gen. Alvarez Martínez in a report to State Department headquarters: the new Administration knew it faced direct exposure. As with the massacres at the Río Sumpul or El Mozote (Chapters 3 and 4), no amount of U.S. Presidential charisma or Cold-War consensus would have been able to publicly justify the practice of abducting and murdering civilians in secret: as with the El Mozote cover-up, a scandal would have exposed that the Senate money to “professionalize” the Salvadoran and Honduran militaries was only serving to fuel atrocities.

Any state (no matter how “rogue”) must still maintain some domestic consent and save some “face” in international relations: the Argentinean junta developed the practices of disappearance and denial to continue an image of normality and avoid the open state violence that had drawn sanctions down on Chile 1973. Without any consensus for the purge, the junta opted to murder dissenters and disarticulate society, to shred the very practice of trust and solidarity between individuals. Political repression puts particular stresses on the perpetrator state’s ideological mechanisms—which it needs to domestically justify its actions, handle unexpected incidents, and otherwise preemptively handle damaging news. The Argentinean and Chilean militaries relied on heavy use of force (even if hidden) rather than convincing any element of the public. Andreas Glaeser notes that secret police and militarized regimes can quickly fail to understand the lack of private *support* behind public mass rallies and media domination. Against Foucault, Glaeser finds that power and knowledge are *not* self-reinforcing: the all-pervading network of

informants of the Stasi made it the organization in East Germany *least* able to understand social changes.<sup>177</sup> The relationship between power and knowledge, between ignorance and true information, cannot be taken for granted: political repression and secret police have to be understood in the context of a broader field of efforts to discredit opponents (without the ultimate measure of abducting and murdering them).

Latin America's regimes did not fall simply due to some civilian crisis of confidence: only resounding military defeat ended Argentina's juntas, which had planned to perpetuate themselves in direct rule to at least 2000, and the civil government faced repeated uprisings from the hardline "*carapintadas*" 1987-90 demanding restrictions on any further accountability.<sup>178</sup> Chile's Pinochet likewise planned to reign for life—until the 1988 referendum to renew his Presidency to 1996 revealed the weakness of even coerced support.<sup>179</sup> Honduras's Battalion 3-16 endured past the fall of all military regimes on the continent: the influence of the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan death squads seems more lasting than that of the Argentinean military regime (though Hon-

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<sup>177</sup> Typically Kafkaesque scenes include Ralph W. McGehee's "snake pit" of six-foot file cabinets filling with useless information at the pre-Langley CIA headquarters, records on a "Dwight (last name unknown)" running into the thousands, half-mile long corridors packed with rumor and news clippings. Even the infamous Securitate's procedures—where typists were "not given the name of the person about whom the report was written; she typed blank lines, onto which the officer would later fill in the [true] names by hand," files that were never opened, and databases divided between officers by which letter the target's surname started with. Andreas Glaeser, "Power/Knowledge Failure: Epistemic Practices and Ideologies of the Secret Police in Former East Germany," *Social Analysis* 47:1 (Spring 2003): 10-26. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits* 1983: 37-38. Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* 2013: 294. Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truth: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police* (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2014): 44, 132-35, 138-41.

<sup>178</sup> The Argentinean military had been used only for domestic warfare, while reaching 12% of the annual budget; its only engagement since the conquest of Patagonia 1885 had ended in discredit to the military's entire project itself. J. Samuel Fitch, "Military Attitudes Toward Democracy in Latin America: How Do We Know if Anything Has Changed?" in David Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 65-66. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 201-02, 210-11. Juan E. Méndez, *Truth and Partial Justice in Argentina* (New York: Americas Watch, 1987): 68-69, 76. Deborah L. Norden, "The Organizational Dynamics of Militaries and Military Movements: Paths to Power in Venezuela," in Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America* 2001: 120. Harold A. Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela," in *ibid.*: 178-81.

<sup>179</sup> Reagan made no move to intercede with Thatcher as Buenos Aires may have hoped, Cold-War transatlanticism winning out over Cold-War pan-Americanism. (See Chapter 4, "The Triangle of Iron," n8.) "Discovered Documents Reveal Argentine Dictatorship's Inner-Workings," Deutsche Welle, June 11, 2013, <https://www.dw.com/en/discovered-documents-reveal-argentine-dictatorships-inner-workings/a-17210024>. "Last Argentine Military Junta Had Plans to Remain in Power Until 2000," MercoPress, Nov. 7, 2013, <https://en.mercoPress.com/2013/11/07/last-argentine-military-junta-had-plans-to-remain-in-power-until-2000>.



duras and Argentina followed similar paths to democratization after 1982/84, while Guatemala and El Salvador had more minimal civilian control).

Exponents of the Doctrine—Gens. Videla and Alvarez Martínez—attacked the *Madres* as Russian dupes in order to control the spread and interpretation of news: but again engaging with the relatives of those they had murdered forced the generals out of the realm of abstraction and rhetoric, down into specificity and reality. State murders were reappropriated by the murderers themselves to blame the dead, their survivors, and the press and human-rights as all one Soviet conspiracy. Gen. Pinochet's new regime concocted and publicized a supposed "Plan Z," where elected President Salvador Allende was "proven" to have been planning a coup of his own where he would slaughter people according to death lists and villainously blame the Army for the Socialist Party's purge of its own allies. This was not just setting up a narrative to justify the eradication of all of Chile's democratic traditions, but to set up a narrative that would convert any reports of forced disappearance into further proof of an internal purge that was blaming the hapless Pinochet junta.<sup>180</sup> The claims of Plan Z were intended to destabilize the ways in which citizens could perceive reality, to undermine their belief that they could read the world around them. Erving Goffman points out that a frame-up uses the same methods as the usual frames that provide events with the meaning that makes them understandable, that regulate interaction and prevent falsehood; it exploits the same means of transmission and mechanisms of validation as a true story. In other words, a frame-up cannot initially be distinguished by any characteristic, only

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<sup>180</sup> Jorge Montealegre and Lena Taub Robles, "Internal Enemies: Facets and Representations Under State Terrorism," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 13:1 (Spring 2013): 189-208. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006:42-46.

whether it eventually turns out to be true or not. If they could not *convince*, then the goal of the new regime was to subdue the public, to delay international response.<sup>181</sup>

However, even the slightest comment on the disappeared forced Gens. Pinochet and Videla into engagement with their surviving mothers and wives: *Madres* and human-rights organizations forced the state to accumulate stigma and discredit—domestically, and then at an international level. Disappearance required a narrative, even if it was unconvincing and exposed a lack of hegemony—and the regimes were unable to discredit the survivors as witnesses. Forcible disappearance brought international investigation and generated new organizations, which distributed true stories and provided warrant for them, which the state was not able to undercut. Survivors and international attention were still enough to push Gen. Alvarez Martínez's 1984 downfall (even if he and the death squad were able to evade justice).

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<sup>181</sup> Ramón Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman: The Structure of His Sociological Theory Revisited* (London: Routledge, 2016): 180, 190.

## Chapter 7

### Not Even Bones Left Behind: The Survivors of Disappearance

#### Introduction

The practice of *desaparición* was designed by the 1976-83 Argentinean junta to lower the need for denial or fabrication altogether: however, the survivors of the state's crimes forced the generals to engage with them—exposing that disappearance and denial showed not state mastery over the civilian public, but its vulnerability to exposure, its need to avoid detail and explicitness. The military could certainly physically threaten human-rights groups or the international press, but every accusation and assassination, every insistence on *unimportance* further highlighted the contradictions of a regime unable to admit to the indefensible. Military perpetrators were faced with contradictory needs: 1. to prevent independent and international warranting of testimony, but also 2. to avoid explicit engagement with witnesses and survivors—which proved impossible. The issue of forced disappearance particularly shows that secrecy was not a given for state action, but a *process* that requires active maintenance.

Gen. Alvarez Martínez's efforts to eliminate activists, opponents, and members of supposed support networks for Honduran and Salvadoran guerrillas immediately led to the creation of the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras (*Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras*, CODEH) in 1981 and the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (*Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos en Honduras*, COFADEH) the next year. These organizations quickly engaged with the international audience offered by the press and by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The disappearances and the attention they drew down on Honduras were significant in the generals' decision to oust the Commander-in-Chief at gunpoint. The Honduran state was successfully sued by CODEH in the Organization of American States's Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) over

Alvarez Martínez's disappearances, and eventually the perpetrators themselves had to come to the organizations for protection and to warrant one another's stories.

The stories of forcible disappearance in 1980s Honduras had a similar profile to the atrocities publicized by Witness for Peace (Chapter 3, "Debunked by Being Right"): these organizations aimed their stories at a U.S. audience, while the stories all originated in Central America—where their warranting and validation could be attacked. The human-rights organizations, directly contributed to the democratization of Honduras through the decade, especially the *Madres'* regular, visible public presence, wearing their shawls at national anniversaries and other military parades. Gen. Alvarez Martínez's Argentinean partners had been unseated by military defeat in 1982, ending the regime the next year. The U.S.-based organizations ended up subjected to discredit campaigns from the White House, but the Honduran organizations followed the more persistent example of Argentina's Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo, generating enough visible publicity over the forced disappearances to impel Gen. Alvarez Martínez's ouster at gunpoint by Gen. Walter López Reyes, and successfully suing the Honduran state itself at the IACHR.

Despite the efforts of Honduran human-rights groups and international solidarity networks, the forcible disappearances generated no controversies on the scale that El Salvador did in 1980-81: the U.S. Senate's collective concern with Central America focused more on the Contras' military aspect (Chapters 2 and 3). Intimate U.S. involvement in the abduction and murder of civilians could not be publicly defended by President Reagan in any Cold-War context, like the mobilization against the journalists and Embassy staffers approaching the El Mozote massacre—to the extent where the cover-up became risky as well. While CIA, Embassy, and Guardsman perpetrators kept their silence, enough Honduran members of Battalion 3-16 became witnesses to let the disappearances become an international story and IACHR court case.

Abduction and murder were reappropriated by the perpetrator state itself: the dead were accused of going underground for terrorist training, and exploiting their own relatives and human-rights organizations to falsely cast the blame on the helpless military. So state terrorism required making 1. a positive assertion that 2a. inverted act and actor and 2b. was designed to preempt the description of reality by the victims' survivors. The deaths were acknowledged by the state after Gen. Alvarez Martínez's forcible removal—but reframed to deny state responsibility. The “implicatory” degree of denial allowed the murders to be isolated in time as something that had happened before 1985, to isolate the FF.AA. from its former leader. Now the FF.AA. “discovered” that the disappearances had been committed by squads of right-wing extremists outside of government control. Or, sometimes, they *were* admitted, but as Alvarez Martínez's personal “excesses.” Death-squad activity did diminish through 1985, but Gen. López Reyes's abrupt replacement in January 1986 began a new era for the reorganized Battalion: it was not dependent on Argentines or on its founder (Chapter 7, “The Perpetrator-Victims”).

Scholars of human rights in Latin America have analyzed the actions of disappearance, denial, and resistance *during* atrocities; but in the end they emphasize the search for accountability and justice, the processes of “truth and reconciliation” that come *after* the change of state, after the “managed transition” to democracy—to the extent of the outright creation of new principles of justice such as *lèse-humanité* or “universal jurisdiction.” Social epistemology holds that organizations and institutions, including states and militaries, can themselves be analyzed as having belief or knowledge, as a collectivity rather than being nothing more than the sum of its components.<sup>1</sup> This line of thought better highlights the ways in which compartmentalization of

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<sup>1</sup> William P. Alston, “Belief-Forming Practices and the Social,” in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 29. Christian List, “Group Knowledge and Group Rationality: A Judgment Aggregation Perspective,” in Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 223. Benjamin

knowledge by the perpetrators of forced disappearance was aimed not only against the Honduran press and the U.S. Senate, but against Langley and Tegucigalpa—*within* the perpetrating institutions. The practice of disappearance already begins with the interdiction of normal police arrest, writs of *habeas corpus* going unanswered. Ambassador John Negroponte’s CIA staffers ordered Battalion 3-16 to *stop* informing them who they had killed every week. To prevent ultimate accountability for the murder program, the CIA headquarters at Langley was not fully informed outside Director William Casey himself. In 1997 Inspector-General Hitz was himself stonewalled, and in turn even the Honduran state has not been given the full declassified report—and therefore was not aware of which of its own former or current generals were named!

Some select studies of *desaparición* and *memoria* provide a more “close in” perspective that moves beyond analyzing only victim narratives or perpetrator motives: the ways that survivors built up legitimacy, organized themselves, and brought their stories to national and international attention has been studied in depth.<sup>2</sup> Infiltration and red-baiting were commonly used by the Southern-Cone military states to undermine survivors and human-rights groups—but were not enough to prevent Honduran generals from seeking the protection of the selfsame organizations they had tried to persecute and debunk, instead supplying them with top-flight “warrant.”

Analyses of Pinochet’s regime have especially provided in-depth interpretations of the use of *memoria* in Chile—how it became the main way to fight dictatorship and its attempts to

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McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 4. Miriam Solomon, “A More Social Epistemology,” in Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology* 1994: 219.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on disappearances also has few works using Cohen’s wide spectrum of denial of incidents, restriction of stories, attempts to influence their public interpretation and political consequences, or state efforts to build up the false consensus justifying force. Human-rights advocates from Colombia to the Congo have long been routinely targeted as enemies of the state, guerrilla proxies, “humanitarian terrorists,” threats to society, agents of foreign powers, and so forth. J. Samuel Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Daniel H. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2012). Kenneth Roth, “The Abusers’ Reaction: Intensifying Attacks on Human Rights Defenders, Organizations, and Institutions,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 16:2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 18.

justify its crimes even after 1990, as a symbol with its own power that influenced politics.<sup>3</sup> Steve J. Stern's study of murder, denial, and remembrance in Chile complicates any simple alignment between perpetrator and *olvido*, survivor and *memoria*. *Olvido* is not simply "forgetting" or "misremembering" in the sense of individual memory: Stern warns against assuming that there is any natural habit of denial or consensual "culture of forgetting": *el olvido* is a deliberate, enforced act—much like "secrecy."<sup>4</sup>

Noisily instating on an event's unimportance only "flags" which topic is the most sensitive: Stern recalled how one Chilean colonel repeatedly and for half an hour, that nobody cared about disappearance.<sup>5</sup> If a state uses force against its own subjects, Gramscian analysis considers that as an indicator that the state has failed at accomplishing hegemony, that it has failed to secure a justification for the force that it could air in public (regardless of whether the civilians accepted it or not).<sup>6</sup>

Stanley Cohen and Stern interpret *memoria* as something contentious and competitive, rather passive and dependent on secondhand verification.<sup>7</sup> To analysts of forcible disappearance, "remembering" is a processes by which particular versions of events are promoted, reformulated, or their salience reduced until they were no longer in the newspapers. *Memoria* is not the simple concealment of truths until they are uncovered and overthrow state-imposed lies. The state had to

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<sup>3</sup> Sergio Grez Toso, "Historiografía y memoria en Chile: Algunas consideraciones a partir del manifiesto de historiadores," in Bruno Groppo and Patricia Flier, eds., *La imposibilidad del olvido: Recorridos por la memoria en Argentina, Chile y Uruguay* (La Plata, Argentina: Al Margen, 2001): 209-28. Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006): iii, xix-xxii, 137.

<sup>4</sup> Shoshana Felman, "The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*," in Felman and Dori Laub, eds., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (London: Routledge, 1991): 229. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London, 1998* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 111. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: xxvii, xxix, 281-82.

<sup>5</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* 2004: 93.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Joseph, "On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations: A Scientific Realist Account of Hegemony," in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 78.

<sup>7</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* 2004: xxvii, 127.

expend its resources (whether theorized as Bourdieuan “social capital” or as Foucauldian power<sup>8</sup>) to fight to control the news and its interpretation, against the survivors and human-rights groups engaged in the same fight. Secrecy and denial were the best that the state could hope for: denial did not show state mastery over the public sphere, but instead a rearguard action to cover deeds that were indefensible if admitted.<sup>9</sup> Eventually the persecutors had nowhere else to turn, sergeants and generals dodging their companions from the death squad itself.

Leigh Binford says that removing “the fabrications, half-truths, elisions, and outright lies perpetuated by the military, the national media” is important because it restores survivors’ humanity, their ability to remember and to be remembered<sup>10</sup>—and because it does allow the truth to propagate, despite all state and social obstacles. Epistemologists argue that testimony is not about “remembering” or about having others acknowledge and affirm the accuracy of one’s sensation and recall. It is about bringing others to confirm, to follow up, to get proof in the courts and legislatures<sup>11</sup>—because otherwise Cohen’s “implicatory denial” remains in force, and accountability remains deferred and responsibility diffused. The ability for survivors to have a nationwide audience for state crimes is crucial to the actual democratization of society in the nomi-

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<sup>8</sup> They argue that memories are not “propelled” by their inherent verity, siding with Michel Foucault over Bruno Latour that even true stories can be slowed and their impact reduced by political power. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, “Introduction: Contested Pasts,” in Hodgkin and Radstone, eds., *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003): 5. Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 279, 285.

<sup>9</sup> But *all* covert warfare since the overt and conventional Korean War has been unplanned in advance, never going the way that the proponents expected and requiring them to find justifications for continued involvement—not “abandoning” local forces and ally states, trying out new techniques in hopes of (if not a “breakthrough”) at least a standstill. What this dissertation analyses is the fractures that this “rearguard” activity reveals, the “near misses” of stigmatizing events such as massacres or trading arms for hostages. If the media or Senate *had* kept pressing, if certain covert officials *did* overcome their uncertainties and their socialization, then the scandals would have “broken” before Hasenfus’s shootdown.

<sup>10</sup> Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 250.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Moran, “Getting Told and Being Believed,” in Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Epistemology of Testimony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 274-75, 280.



nal electoral states left by the “managed transitions,” supervised by departing military regimes seeking to avoid any accountability.

### The Second Disappearance: Denial

In Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, or Honduras, the term *desaparición* does not simply mean the action of state abduction and murder. Survivors realized there were others in the same predicament and organized to demand the whereabouts and status of their loved ones. This forced perpetrators to engage with the survivors, to move from secret action to verbal denial—Cohen’s classification of literal denial of the event and its witnesses, interpretive denial reframing and re-categorizing an admitted event or muddying the state perpetrator, implicatory denial diffusing state responsibility.<sup>12</sup> Going beyond Cohen’s interpretation, “denial” in turn is not simple negation, but requires that the generals advance false explanations of their own.

Argentina’s explicitly-antidemocratic military state had to make a claim to speak for its subjects’ values and the common good—force always in the name of some grander narrative that could paper over any contradictions, at least for a while. The juntas’ pronouncements repeated a language of Christian morality and civic order.<sup>13</sup> Goffman says that reputation and “credibility” are really impression management, about not disrupting interstate relations. Stigma could threaten the most powerful figures—to reframe them from *generals* to *dictators*, to *murderers*, *cradle-robbers*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 7-8, 106-07, 110-11.

<sup>13</sup> Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 47. James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 154-56.

<sup>14</sup> Fernando Broncano, “Trusting Others: The Epistemological Authority of Testimony,” *Theoria* 23:1 (61) (January 2008): 11-22. Mike Hepworth, “Deviance and Control in Everyday Life: The Contribution of Erving Goffman,” in

Even a police state needs a positive project, above factions and above classes, to secure hegemony—but Gramscians also note that “hegemony” is defined as the consensus that is the *hardest* for police states to achieve.<sup>15</sup> Gens. Pinochet, Videla, and Alvarez Martínez all made accusations and speculations when confronted by the wives and mothers of those they had abducted, extending from the location of the absent men and women to a grand Moscow-directed conspiracy against all the states and societies of the Americas. The Argentine Method sought to lower the need for denial or fabrication altogether: that would force generals to engage with citizens and stake out claims. The state would have to bring up the topic again to dismiss it, to acknowledge that it was a salient issue that the state felt important enough to attack, failing to keep it off newspaper headlines.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike the self-nominating Argentinean juntas, Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s adaptation of the National Security Doctrine took place in a *de jure* democracy, with elections held to ensure that the U.S. Senate would continue funding the bulwark of Central American counterrevolution. But against the Commander-in-Chief’s most obstinate rhetoric, CODEH, COFADEH, the Comité Hondureño de Mujeres por la Paz “Visitación Padilla,” and Catholic and Protestant clergy all noted that Honduras’s *democracia de fachada* was a meaningless narrative if civilians were dragged off the street and murdered, the judiciary either helpless or complicit.<sup>17</sup> Violence was

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Jason Ditton, ed., *The View from Goffman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980): 83. Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992): 34. A. Javier Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 36. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 85-86.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Bocoock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 28. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 154-56.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996): 170-71.

<sup>17</sup> Miguel A. Pavón, “¿Y los 105 desaparecidos?” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 13, 1984.

proof that the FF.AA. was not defending democracy against terrorism and dictatorship.<sup>18</sup> Diana Taylor interpreted the 1976 Argentinean coup as aiming to usurp every public space—even theaters and horse races—replacing the public sphere with the junta’s own spectacle. Her analysis of the goal of disappearance was to militarize society and reduce citizens to spectators rather than participants, legitimating rather than choosing the government.<sup>19</sup> These police states expended their effort to enforce rhetorical narratives of democracy, peace, or order, but also to disarticulate and isolate any potential challenges to narratives unbacked by hegemony.

The most typical official speculation was that the disappeared had staged everything—they had deceived their loved ones, fled abroad to further organize and train for terrorist action, and manipulated the blame for their own villainy onto the military. Gen. Videla often used this narrative, but more typically said that the disappeared had died in combat or internal purges among Montoneros—or perhaps the “young women who leave the country are prostituting themselves in Mexico and your sons must have gone with some girl.”<sup>20</sup> The Chilean regime likewise blamed its death squads’ killings on a campaign by the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria to damage Gen. Pinochet’s image: there the narrative was that the left was cannibalistic and hated the human-rights defenders that gave it cover, villains so cruel that they would deceive their own relatives into thinking they had been kidnapped. After all, the dead had been found with “traitors to the MIR” written on their bodies<sup>21</sup>—a literal false flag.

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<sup>18</sup> “COFADEH: Hay que desenmascarar a Gustavo Alvarez M.,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 6, 1984.

<sup>19</sup> Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s “Dirty War”* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997): 60, 62, 137.

<sup>20</sup> Emilio Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances: The Political History of *Nunca más**, trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Routledge, 2012): 19, 33-34, 70, 84, 135. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 70.

<sup>21</sup> Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: 108-09, 153.

The first mass graves were uncovered in February 1982—three near Tegucigalpa. This “exposure” was in fact allegedly arranged by Col. Leonidas Torres Arias, a former close crony of Alvarez Martínez and a known drug trafficker, who feared that the Army—that is, himself—was about to be purged.<sup>22</sup> The bodies had been bound hand and foot, tortured, and repeatedly shot in the head at close range.<sup>23</sup> PINU Congressman Antonio Julín Méndez publicly damned state terrorism,<sup>24</sup> forcing FUSEP chief Col. Daniel Balí Castillo to deny the existence of any political prisoners, concluding that there was no documentation of any activities of that sort.<sup>25</sup>

Echoing Gen. Pinochet, Alvarez Martínez was clear in his speeches that Honduras’s human-rights groups were enemies of the state, their claims nothing but carefully-calibrated lies to give cover to left-wing political murder and random acts of terrorism. “Disgracefully, in Honduras [there] currently exist groups of persons who hoist the flag of ‘human rights.’ ” “Human rights” was a phrase which “in no way is created to protect terrorists, to safeguard those who promote public disorder, to keep in liberty those who receive training for sabotage and guerrilla [warfare] [...] the sowers of disorder and of collective assassination.” “Those who allege that here there are violations against human rights are Communists.”<sup>26</sup> Echoing Gen. Videla’s derisive motto *los argentinos somos derechos—y humanos*, Alvarez Martínez said that whatever “human rights” was, however it was defined, it rightfully belonged to the military, by virtue of

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<sup>22</sup> Those murdered and unburied were apparently “street” criminals: none of corpses of those listed as disappeared were identified postmortem. The colonel’s staged revelations—embarrassing the FF.AA. on the international stage—appear to have derailed Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s plans for direct attack on the EPS. Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power: Human Rights Violations in the 1980s* (London: Amnesty International, 1988): 8. Juan E. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras: Signs of the “Argentine Method”* (New York: Americas Watch, 1982): 16. James A. Morris, “Government and Politics,” in James D. Rudolph, ed., with Kenneth Nolde and Mark Rosenberg, *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984): 202. Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994): 75. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 41.

<sup>23</sup> Leticia Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1992): 62-63.

<sup>24</sup> “Antonio Julín Méndez: Caso de desaparecidos también es terrorismo,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 1, 1982.

<sup>25</sup> “Alvarez especula,” *Patria* 5:213 (July 4, 1981). “Balí Castillo: En Honduras no hay presos políticos,” *La Prensa*, Sept. 20, 1982. “Reitera jefe de la FUSEP: ‘No hay presos políticos,’ ” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 20, 1982.

<sup>26</sup> “Militarismo en Honduras: El reinado de Gustavo Alvarez: 1982-1984,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 2 (August 1985).

the Armed Forces' unity with the Honduran people and their democratic government: the FF.AA. could only be their *brazo armado*.<sup>27</sup> If anything contradicted what an officer declared, it was not just a lie by leftist supporters of terrorism, but a logical contradiction.<sup>28</sup>

Officials repeatedly called human-rights workers traitors and suggested that their citizenship be revoked. They were terrorist fronts who mocked the term by their very use of it.<sup>29</sup> Maj. Juan Blas Salazar, chief of FUSEP's Dirección Nacional de Investigaciones (DNI), accused CODEH of "discrediting the government, violating human rights, and working to destabilize the government" by saying that there were disappearances. The group "was anti-patriotic and should be condemned by honest citizens"—concluding, ominously, that "the police do not have to guarantee rights to those who attack the country." Like the terrorists, they had put themselves outside of society, outside of human or divine law by defending "terrorists," including all the disappeared. Even Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams was privately concerned in 1982 that this last phrasing, equating CODEH with guerrillas, was "an open invitation for any 'patriotic' Honduran citizen to attack the Commission."<sup>30</sup> Even one of the more hardline figures in Central America policy was disturbed by the rhetoric—which threatened the narrative of freedom and democracy facing down Nicaragua's militaristic dictatorship.

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<sup>27</sup> Brian Loveman, " 'Protected Democracies' and Military Guardianship: Political Transitions in Latin America, 1978-1993," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 36:2 (Summer 1994): 132.

<sup>28</sup> Patricia Funes, "Nunca más: Memorias de las dictaduras en América Latina," in Groppo and Flier, eds., *La imposibilidad del olvido* 2001: 45. Gen. Pinochet took the opposite approach, insisting that calm and normalcy were a lie and that the country was secretly at war, exhibiting murdered captives as "proof" the guerrillas were still active. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: 77.

<sup>29</sup> Leticia Salomón, "La Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en Honduras: Análisis de la caída del General Gustavo Álvarez Martínez," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 11 (May 1984). Oscar Aníbal Puerto, "La presencia de los desaparecidos," *CODEH* 6:45 (May-June 1988). " 'It is a Triumph for the Honduran People': Zenaída Velásquez on OAS Human Rights Court's Verdict on 1981 'Disappearance,' " *Washington Report on the Hemisphere* 8:18 (June 8, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> "La amenaza permanente del terror," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Oct. 13, 1982. Elliott Abrams to John D. Negroponte, "Honduran Human Rights Situation," July 1983, box 2; Honduras Human Rights Collection; the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

UNAH Rector Oswaldo Ramos Soto said that his university's disappeared dean of medicine Raúl Felipe Cálix had been kidnapped by leftists in August 1983 "to use him as a martyr."<sup>31</sup> In September 1983 Supreme Court President Manuel Arita Palomo said there were no disappeared and no political prisoners in the power of FUSEP, concluding they had all self-exiled. As proof he cited that 90-95 percent of *habeas corpus* writs in the country had been resolved: any cases that had not been resolved were because the guerrillas had taken assumed names. "We are trying to preserve the nation against terrorist invasion and subversion that threatens our state," the justice had insisted the year before.<sup>32</sup>

To defend and reclaim the memory of the disappeared, to vouch for their own standing as witnesses, and to deny the legitimacy of the state's florid narratives and efforts to discredit them, relatives and human-rights activists were forced to mobilize beyond the political parties, religious, campesino, women's, or student organizations that had existed before Battalion 3-16 began. Activists created CODEH in 1981 and COFADEH 1982, and within two years had impelled the overthrow of Gen. Alvarez Martínez by making themselves witnesses and public demonstrators no amount of state denunciation could unwarrant.

### Mothers Versus the *Pater Patriae*

The Committee of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (*Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos en Honduras*, COFADEH) was created by Bertha Oliva with the June 11, 1981, nighttime abduction of her husband, professor and Unión Revolucionaria del Pueblo organizer Tomás Nativí. She witnessed Nativí and Fidel Martínez be dragged away by

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<sup>31</sup> Cálix was released, not murdered. "Ramos Soto se refiere a secuestro de Cálix: La izquierda busca un mártir para desestabilizar Honduras," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 10, 1983.

<sup>32</sup> "Presidente de la Corte Suprema: No existen presos políticos ni desaparecidos," *La Prensa*, Oct. 25, 1982. "Presidente de la Corte Suprema: ¡No hay desaparecidos!" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 2, 1983.

plainclothesmen and thrown in a truck: Oliva was probably spared because she was visibly pregnant<sup>33</sup>—though women and girls were hardly safe from the forces of Cols. Ricardo Lau and Alvarez Martínez. The women resisted attacks on their testimony, contested the generals on their own turf—turning their narratives of Catholic piety and law and order against them—and, unlike the unrepentant perpetrators of the Southern Cone, even ended up with generals and death-squad members themselves admitting that all their testimony was accurate and seeking the protection of their organizations. Cohen’s analysis emphasizes discredit—that the dictators could not withstand any challenge, that they lacked flexibility in the face of surprise or civic hegemony even if they could forcibly impose their discourse.<sup>34</sup> But that meant Gens. Pinochet, Videla, and Alvarez Martínez instead had an urgent need for anything that could supply such legitimacy—a *mission* for the military, Catholic ethics, “true” human rights, the state as family, “self-defense” of the hemisphere against subversive ideas—ideologies that supply a state with credibility but which a purely-Hobbesian state, such as a military regime, lacked.<sup>35</sup> While the *Madres* were seeking epistemic justification to warrant and help the spread of their testimony, the perpetrators were forced to seek a moral stance by engaging with the survivors, ones which were discreditable—a father of the nation, a Catholic defender of law and order.

It was as pious mothers that COFADEH publicly embarrassed Tegucigalpa and Washington for the press’s cameras with their monthly protests, wearing white shawls like those of Argentina’s *Madres*, an emblem of piety and femininity.<sup>36</sup> Argentina’s *Madres* had already gone

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<sup>33</sup> J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 230. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 231-33.

<sup>34</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 111, 176, 180-81. Nico Stehr, “Knowledge Societies,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 307.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen Gill, “Epistemology, Ontology, and the ‘Italian School,’” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, 1993: 39.

<sup>36</sup> COFADEH, “Carta abierta al Premio Nobel de la Paz 1982,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 13, 1984. Bertha Oliva, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, August 2012.

through the same fight of explicitly having to use motherhood to defend the concept of “disappearance” against military attacks on the concept, to undermine the Madres’ narratives and undo their international warrant. The iconic *pañuelo* allows for *madres* of any country to be instantly recognized: by 1978 they already were international symbols of the Argentinean women’s victories, however slow and painful.<sup>37</sup>

Rocio Táborá writes that Honduran women’s political practice in the context of violence, including COFADEH and “Visitación Padilla” of the 1980s, was based on their private role—wives, mothers, companions, sisters. They mobilized their piety against the state’s claims that their loved ones were epigones of an atheist terrorist menace to all good citizens. However, she interprets COFADEH as exercising motherhood on behalf of *everyone* in Honduras—a motherhood that was explicitly “political” as well as legitimated by religious or social roles. Latin America’s militaries ended up trapping themselves in a patriarchal discourse that worshipped a cliché of ideal motherhood: now *actual* mothers were there, defending the body politic from the state’s power. COFADEH specifically distanced themselves from the stereotypical role of *dolorosas*—passive, reactive mourners of events they had no control over, which had taken away their menfolk and left them to clean up afterwards. They set up an entirely new popular movement based on being female survivors at a time when the party, campesino, union, and Church organizations from the 1960s and 70s were being more successfully targeted by Gen. Álvarez Martínez’s novel use of state force.<sup>38</sup> They would defeat generals—sometimes by getting them

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<sup>37</sup> Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 1, 35, 43, 54, 56, 74, 81, 154. Martha I. Rosenberg, “Lo que las madres saben,” *Debate Feminista* 6 (September 1992): 69.

<sup>38</sup> It was a new concept of politics, separate from male victim-heroes as protagonists and women relegated to comforting or widowed wives. Contentious politics would strike Táborá herself, her brother Germán Rivas murdered in 2003 after exposing cyanide pollution and smuggling. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 15, 182, 220. Adrienne Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008): 60. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 83. Rocío Táborá, *Masculinidad y violencia en la cultura política hondureña* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1995): 121.



ousted, like Gen. Alvarez Martínez in 1984—but when the officers or their families had to turn to COFADEH once they themselves became subject to the violence they had unleashed.

During the depths of Gen. Alvarez Martínez's reign, COFADEH publicly described its task as building networks of solidarity, with the goal of breaking the unprecedented fear he had imposed on Honduras—to reverse the process where state terror had broken all solidarity and family bonds.<sup>39</sup> As in Argentina, Battalion 3-16 targeted not just political dissent but the social fabric itself.<sup>40</sup> Epistemic injustice isolates, breaks trust, prevents corroboration of events and cuts up potential knowledge communities. Seeing one another regularly at the police stations and walking through the plazas, the *Madres* of Argentina found new ways to warrant and distribute knowledge, which Gramscians conclude produces new potentials for political action and social organization.<sup>41</sup>

Lynn Stephen says that witnessing is an act aimed at putting wrongs into the public and historical record, to transform lived personal history into something actionable under the law.<sup>42</sup> It insists on the reality of the witnesses' experience over the rhetoric of generals' speeches and the narratives they back—but which are vulnerable because they lack mass backing or popular conviction.<sup>43</sup> Theorists of *testimonio* conclude that the process is not about “being believed” about some relatively-neutral proposition, nor about defending one's own individual standpoint in gen-

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<sup>39</sup> COFADEH, “Carta abierta al Premio Nobel de la Paz 1982,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 13, 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 85, 107.

<sup>41</sup> John Beverley, “‘Through All Things Modern’: Second Thoughts on *Testimonio*,” *boundary 2* 18:2 (Summer 1991): 1-21. Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 106. Kimberly Nance, “Disarming Testimony: Speakers' Resistance to Readers' Defenses in Latin American ‘*Testimonio*,’” *Biography* 24:3 (Summer 2001): 570-88. Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., “Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 18.

<sup>42</sup> Lynn Stephen, “Testimony in Truth Commissions and Social Movements in Latin America,” in Louise Detwiler and Janis Breckenridge, eds., *Pushing the Boundaries of Latin American Testimony: Meta-morphoses and Migrations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 109.

<sup>43</sup> Abraham Acosta, *Thresholds of Illiteracy: Theory, Latin America, and the Crisis of Resistance*, Just Ideas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014): 155-7. Gustavo V. García, *La literatura testimonial latinoamericana: (Re)presentación y (auto)construcción del sujeto subalterno* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 2003): 44.

eral, but about ways of warranting their reputation and the reliability of their story, in order to ultimately provide convincing and testable reasons to pursue further investigation.<sup>44</sup>

In both the Southern Cone and Honduras the tactic of covert disappearance—not obviously attributable to the police even if perpetrated in public—still forced its perpetrators to engage with the immediate survivors. If the networks of mothers, wives, and children could not be dismantled, discredited, or themselves disappeared, then they have to be undermined as witnesses. Ignoring the wives and mothers had even given them the initiative without being opposed and undermined from within.<sup>45</sup> Cohen’s denial applies directly to specific incidents, whereas discrediting the entire opposition requires an attack on the survivors’ epistemology.

The Argentinean military launched a careful press campaign against the mothers of those it had “disappeared” 1976-83—that they were tricked by their sons and husbands, that they were mothers of terrorist bombers, that they were “public women” (*i.e.*, prostitutes), psychiatrists even diagnosing them as *locas*.<sup>46</sup> If they could be reframed as unable to even see straight (like the campesino witnesses of the Sumpul Massacre), then they were irrational and marginal and could be dismissed from discussion among reasonable citizens, and any alleged evidence they brought

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<sup>44</sup> Moran, “Getting Told and Being Believed,” in Lackey and Sosa, eds., *The Epistemology of Testimony* 2006: 274-75, 280.

<sup>45</sup> Azucena Villaflor, the Madres’ first informal “leader,” was particularly maternal towards the blond young Gustavo Niño: the Madres would always surround him in a circle of Mothers when the police charged, and always warned, “Son, don’t come. They’ll kidnap you like they kidnapped your brother.” But “Niño” was Cmdr. Astiz, who in 1977 seized Villaflor, a dozen other Argentinean Madres, and two French nuns. The junta believed that this move would “decapitate” and terrorize the movement: instead, it erupted, generating constant international controversy and left the Madres more uncowed than ever. This contrasts to Honduras’s human-rights and survivors’ organizations: rather than infiltrators, CODEH was joined by the perpetrators Sgts. Florencio Caballero and José Isaías Vilorio. Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 69. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 83-84. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 187.

<sup>46</sup> Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994 and Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997 particularly focus on gender roles in the Dirty War. The attacks against the Honduran *Madres* are described in Liduvina Hernández, ed. Oscar Aníbal Puerto, *Mujeres contra la muerte* (Tegucigalpa: Guaymuras, 1993).

forward was just “looped” as a further sign of their pathology.<sup>47</sup> But in this case the act of marginalizing these women went against the state’s need to have the issue ignored and silenced: attacks on their reputability and the journalists and activists who were warranting their stories was still a form of engagement, still drew attention to the issue rather than drove it out of the headlines.

The junta was forced to admit the disappearances in 1978, damning them as “terrorists, delinquents, or killed during armed conflicts”—an admission that started the process of recuperation. Videla shifted from first- to second-degree denial, to more diffuse and abstracted negation. But as Cohen’s model also allows, the initial admission let the *Madres* fight the military’s version of reality, to challenge it on the junta’s own ground. The mothers now told him to his face that he did not even have the courage to sign death warrants for those he had killed.<sup>48</sup>

In Argentina and Honduras, military commanders, state spokesmen, and the editorial pages insisted that the disappearances were only further proof of a grand Kremlin-directed conspiracy (Chapter 3). In this narrative, the *Madres* and other human-rights activists had been tricked by their leftist extremist husbands and sons, who had absconded for training and taken advantage of their relatives’ naïveté to discredit the regime, to prepare the ground for the terrorism the men would return to sow all while the military was unfairly blamed. The goal was to undermine and destabilize its most vocal and visible opponents’ ability to perceive and describe the reality of their own families, to undermine each witness and the warrant their organization received from institutions such as the Catholic Church, world press, and international human-rights

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<sup>47</sup> Norbert Elias, “Knowledge and Power: An Interview by Peter Ludes,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 203. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 82.

<sup>48</sup> Even the restored democratic President Raúl Alfonsín had little scruple about calling the *Madres*’ leaders Moscow-paid liars. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 70, 82, 156.

organizations.<sup>49</sup> However, this added more falsifiable assertions to the denial, bearing potential discredit for the state.

Against Cohen's emphasis on denial, the Argentinean and Honduran militaries had to confront a growing number of women—which meant engaging them: there was no chance that the disappearances could be maintained as a nonissue. Each disappearance still left behind too much specificity and detail, and the mothers were able to counter the military ideology, used to justify the violence without *admitting* the violence.<sup>50</sup> The *Madres* placed their own lived memories and the materiality of the victims' bodies—living or dead—against the abstractions of the regime, against its claims to being the “body politic.”

Cohen emphasizes how witnesses are *denied*, while Goffman focuses on marginalization: opponents can be *ignored* by states with enough force or hegemony. If opponents are framed as repeating lies planted by a dictatorship or as downright absurd, there is no need to examine their “evidence” and they have no place in discourse<sup>51</sup>—a step beyond marginalization. Where debate is refused reveals what is being concealed from dispute, what might not survive examination.<sup>52</sup> Like the lengthy and deep attack on those who witnessed and warranted the stories of the Sumpul Massacre, the military's battles against the *Madres* were a distinct example of Bourdieu's “symbolic violence”—an exclusion, a silencing through narrative and discredit. But like priests or doctors, *Madres* could not convincingly be called Communists, not Othered: they had enough

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<sup>49</sup> Human rights in the Southern Cone of South America or the Northern Triangle of Central America relied on two pillars (in large part because they were all that survived of the old civil society): 1. the protection of the Catholic Church and other mainline religious institutions, and 2. international press attention, local and international human rights organizations, and pressure from Washington and the Western European governments.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph, “On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 78. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 28, 30. Charles W. Mills, “Ideology,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 104.

<sup>51</sup> Robert K. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 36

<sup>52</sup> Michael Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Allen and Unwin, (1979) 1992): 84, 91-92.

urban, middle-class members to avoid the epistemic marginalization imposed on the rural campesinos.<sup>53</sup>

The wives, mothers, and sisters of the disappeared had not been targeted for obliteration<sup>54</sup>—not deemed troublemakers on their own account by the Contra-FF.AA. death squad. Even activist women fell well outside the armies' traditional image of a political threat.<sup>55</sup> In more tactical terms, Gen. Alvarez Martínez could not even consider that Bertha Oliva, Gilda Rivera, or Gladys Lanza could become crucial threat to his regime's legitimacy<sup>56</sup>—and that the widespread attention they brought to those he had disappeared would play a factor in his 1984 downfall *and* his widow coming to them in 1989 after his murder by his own assassins.<sup>57</sup>

Emilio Crenzel analyzes disappearance as enforcing Steve J. Stern's *olvido*, as working to erase the memory of its actual victims and replace it with only state narratives of remembrance, to deny public space for commemoration to the survivors<sup>58</sup>—a vision that, with only force and no hegemony, is as brittle as it is final. The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo undercut the state's otherwise-unchallenged rituals of patriotism and commemoration by silently demonstrating that the military “guardians” of society were instead its greatest threat. COFADEH's women formed an inevitable silent, shawled presence behind the marching soldiers and florid speeches of holidays

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<sup>53</sup> Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 52. Pohlhaus, “Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 13.

<sup>54</sup> 17 of those disappeared under Gen. Alvarez Martínez were female, 78 male: 18% were female, 12 points lower than Argentina's 30%. A full list is in Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos: Informe preliminar sobre los desaparecidos en Honduras 1980-1993* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1994): 145-202. Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances* 2012: 81. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 77.

<sup>55</sup> See in particular Tábora, *Masculinidad y violencia* 1995.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 191.

<sup>57</sup> Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 181, 187. Andrea Malin, “Mother Who Won't Disappear,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 16:1 (February 1994): 209. Tábora, *Masculinidad y violencia* 1995: 121.

<sup>58</sup> Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances* 2012: 17-18.

such as the September 15 Independence Day.<sup>59</sup> The Argentinean regime summarily arrested any groups of more than three: simply congregating broke the “frame” of state spectacle, indicating that there were state activities the state could not acknowledge.<sup>60</sup>

Women were ultimately faulted for political and social violence, their mis-parenting blamed for creating guerrillas.<sup>61</sup> In Argentina female survivors were called unwomen, mentally-ill, the weak point of the body politic. Gen. Alvarez Martínez tacitly deployed this frame to discredit them as the mothers of terrorists, hijackers, bank robbers, and subversives of society.<sup>62</sup> Disappearance meant to negate the women’s motherhood itself, denying the birth of the victim, un-mothering them. If there were no “disappeared,” then they never *had* children, never *were* parents, and they had put themselves outside the national family by daring to become trouble-makers. However, the state’s attack on biology let the mothers insist in turn that the disappeared were still “alive”<sup>63</sup>—if they indeed lived, then produce them! Wives, mothers, grandmothers, and daughters of the disappeared reaffirmed their motherhood against generals’ attempts to define the national “family,” to define who was and was not a “true Honduran.”

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<sup>59</sup> “Andonie Fernández caloriza manifestación de COFADEH,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 4, 1983. “El COFADEH en su primer año de lucha,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 30, 1983. “Denuncia COFADEH: En las cárceles clandestinas se tortura a nuestros parientes,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 5, 1983. “Hoy: COFADEH realizará marcha de protesta,” *El Tiempo*, Aug. 5, 1983. “Más personas marchan esta vez con COFADEH,” *El Tiempo*, May 7, 1983.

<sup>60</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 207. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 254. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 186, 188. Treviño, “Introduction,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 36. Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* 1992: 43.

<sup>61</sup> The intensification of *mara* violence in the late 1990s and early 2000s would also be blamed on the mothers, as raising a generation of vipers, re-mapping the older guerrilla slander. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 176, 252. Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard* 2008: 35, 59-60. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 79-80, 88.

<sup>62</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 72, 83, 88-89, 184-85.

<sup>63</sup> Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 254. Alfredo Martin, *Les Mères «folles» de la Place de Mai: Maternité, contre-institution, et raison d’état* (Paris: Renaudot, 1989): 95-97. Cecilia Sosa, “Queering Acts of Mourning in the Aftermath of Argentina’s Dictatorship: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and *Los rubios*,” in Francesca Lessa and Vincent Druliolle, eds., *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 71. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 195.

*Desaparición* is the practice of the state denying the deaths it caused, while using those deaths to intimidate everyone else, to secretly abduct a living body rather than leave a murdered corpse in public to be seen. It meant that death was robbed of even the spectacle of violence: abductees were murdered in clandestine prisons, officers' *haciendas*, remote hillsides, and roadside clandestine cemeteries. But such crypts, designed to evade public bloodshed, still accumulated subversive potential, undoing the regime's claims of "law and order" and "an Oasis of Peace": it rested atop a sepulcher.<sup>64</sup>

The rhetoric of discrediting witnesses and survivors comes secondary to the actual actions of abduction, murder, and concealment of the body. Survivors emphasized the missing body, whether alive or dead, as a contrast to the mere words of officers and officials—wind over a grave. COFADEH President Liduvina Hernández said that the worst aspect of disappearance was the *lack* of a corpse: "I could have picked him up, had a wake, buried him, cried and suffered." They wanted nothing more in their lives than to hold the bones of their sons and husbands one last time, no matter how unrecognizable. But even that was denied them by state terrorism: at least with the regular sort of death squad a corpse was left behind, Hernández concludes.<sup>65</sup> COFADEH's motto was that "your children began to live through you the day they were kidnapped. Now they go everywhere through you"—that they were now with the survivors forever.<sup>66</sup> Through others, the body still able to speak and testify what had been done to it. Oliva noted

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<sup>64</sup> "Allan McDonald" (Norman Allan Saucedo) and COFADEH, *Memoria de fin de siglo: cinco gobiernos condenados al olvido, sin el perdón de nadie* (Tegucigalpa: Ediciones Guardabarranco, 1999).

<sup>65</sup> "Honduras: A Democracy in Demise," *Update Latin America*, special, February 1984. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 37. Hernández, ed. Puerto, *Mujeres contra la muerte* 1993: 69, 71, 73.

<sup>66</sup> "COFADEH's Liduvina Hernández," *Honduras Update* 7:2-3 (November-December 1988), from *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 21, 1988.

that “the victims survived their clandestine burial.”<sup>67</sup> COFADEH’s Elvia Cristina Zelaya, whose son was taken 1988, affirmed “I know that he is alive, I know that they have him [for] me.”<sup>68</sup>

In Argentina, relatives of the victims of disappearance would not even know for years whether the disappeared were dead—a fact that the military used to its advantage, since their survivors feared provoking the state into executing the disappeared.<sup>69</sup> There is little sign that the state’s campaign to call the *Madres* totalitarian terrorists had much traction—but the survivors could not risk the lives of their loved ones if they indeed still lived.<sup>70</sup>

This was a conventional category of secrecy, designed to give the state the upper hand over its victims during an internationalized scandal. The nature of disappearance, and the reports of months of torture in state captivity, made it downright irresponsible for relatives to simply assume that all the disappeared had been murdered. In other words, survivors’ responses were forced into syllogisms more complicated than “are they alive?” or “where are the bodies hidden?” “¿Dónde están las vidas?”—“Where are the living?”<sup>71</sup> The hope being expressed was that of justice against the perpetrators, not for any *reparación*.<sup>72</sup> “Alive they took them, alive we

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<sup>67</sup> “McDonald” (Sauceda) and COFADEH, *Memoria de fin de siglo* 1999.

<sup>68</sup> “Callejas también es responsable de las desapariciones: COFADEH,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 2, 1988.

<sup>69</sup> Many captives remained alive for the 1978 World Cup, and the 1979 IACHR visit sparked a wave of prison massacres and “disposal” of the corpses in ovens or over the ocean (see Chapter 6, “The Argentine Method,” n52). Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* 1989: 73, 83-84. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 42.

<sup>70</sup> Even the most authoritarian junta needs a constituency (at least until international controversies, economic decline, and/or military defeats began to accumulate). Even the Communist Party of Argentina called Videla a “patriotic general” and warned that worse hardliners would take over if the general was replaced! It seems morbid, even libelous, to describe scenes such as 1. the soon-to-be-murdered *desaparecidos* playing cards with their guards or united in elation at the 1978 World Cup, or 2. the *Madres* splitting over the war with Britain led by their own worst persecutor Cmdr. Astiz. But the way that “hegemony” operates provides more explanation: they all remained actors in their society and their country, not rigid icons of Justice or Motherhood. A related example was Brazil’s political prisoners recalling how guards not only wore their hair long to infiltrate the youth movements, but even asked their victims for advice with women. Crelinsten, “In Their Own Words,” in Crelinsten and Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain* 1995: 55. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* 1989: 72-73, 82, 99, 115-16. Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 82-83. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* 1994: 33, 81, 117. Martin, *Les Mères «folles» de la Place de Mai* 1989: 78. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 60, 77-78, 114-16. Treviño, “Introduction,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 36. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 285-87.

<sup>71</sup> Jorge Debravo, “Se preguntado por tu nombre, Pedro,” *Soberanía* 1 (September 1988).

<sup>72</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 189, 199.



want them” was not denial of death to spare the psyche, but a slogan underscoring the public hypocrisy that the state was trying to force public consent to.

The U.S. and Honduran states mounted exceptional responses to reports of massacre, to the point of risking further exposure that would discredit the government itself (Chapter 3). These reactions consequences revealed where the militarized state was most vulnerable, what testimony could draw down the most stigma and discredit onto the men who had seized the maximum of state power, regardless of whether they had built up any social consensus. The *Madres* had not established a new suite of hegemonic ideas, but instead threw the new state’s whole attempt to build hegemony into doubt.<sup>73</sup> The roles of CODEH and COFADEH in 1980s Honduras went much further than seeking international attention and reclaiming the memories of over 200 dead, or even the unique accomplishment of death-squad members turning to them for aid once threatened by their compatriots (below, “The Perpetrator-Victims”).

Foucault emphasizes the concept of deviance—how it provides public evidence that a ruling ideology is incomplete and inadequate, unable to handle exceptions<sup>74</sup>: deviance threatens not consent, but the central authority’s ability to have its subordinates act on commands.<sup>75</sup> The Honduran Armed Forces under Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Regalado had to fight stories of disappearance because it discredited the military in the international press and because the topic could threaten its continued funding; by 1986 even the FF.AA.’s existence was being questioned over the disappearances. Forced disappearance expressed the state’s raw unchallengeable power, but

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<sup>73</sup> John Schwarzmantel, “Introduction: Gramsci in His Time and in Ours,” in Mark McNally and John Schwarzmantel, eds., *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2009): 9. Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 31. Henrik Lundberg, “Between Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim’s Quest for a Political Synthesis,” in David Kettler and Volker Meja, eds., *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* (London: Anthem Press, 2017): 14.

<sup>74</sup> Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 35.

<sup>75</sup> Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

repression also signaled that the state lacked hegemony, that its talk of breakdown in order or subversion of society were due to itself and not any totalitarian terrorist menace to innocent civilians.<sup>76</sup>

Angela Elena Fillingim has found that the *Madres* of 1970s Argentina had more success than the relatives of those murdered by the Salvadoran state: the Argentine Method was more identifiably perpetrated by the state, whereas the perpetrators in El Salvador could make a false claim of independent paramilitaries and successfully defuse the salience of news from El Salvador in the U.S. media after the 1982 election in the “fledgling democracy.”<sup>77</sup> COFADEH and CODEH would win justice only in the next decade—the state acknowledging lists of the dead,<sup>78</sup> civil trials of officers outside of the separate military *fuero*,<sup>79</sup> and exhumations of El Aguacate’s mass graves of Hondurans and Contras in the 1990s.<sup>80</sup> Any implication that the disappeared were hiding abroad was an obvious lie.

### State Un-Disappearance: *Reparación*

*Desaparición* was coined as a transitive verb in response to a “hermeneutical” epistemic injustice: an experience was obscured from social understanding by the lack of a name for it, rather than actively denied.<sup>81</sup> The FF.AA. insisted that the disappeared were still living, either having faked their own abduction, or that they were leftists purged by their comrades. The Honduran military of 1981-89 was not unique in making these counterclaims: South American juntas had a

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<sup>76</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 52.

<sup>77</sup> Angela Elena Fillingim, *Tortured Logics: Crafting the U.S. Response to Human Rights Violations During the Argentinian Dirty War and the Salvadoran Civil War*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> CONADEH, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos* 1994.

<sup>79</sup> Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 70. Salomón, *Honduras: Cultura política y democracia* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH and Programa de Dinamarca Pro-Derechos Humanos para Centroamérica, 1998): 17-18. Torres Calderón, *Honduras, la transición inconclusa hacia una democracia* 2011: 34.

<sup>80</sup> “Mass Graves and Torture Chambers Found at Contra Base,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 33:2 (September-October 1999): 1, 43, from *Weekly News Update on the Americas*.

<sup>81</sup> Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale,” *Frontiers* 33:1 (2012) 26-29.

decade of experience working to undermine the concept of disappearance itself. Controlled “reappearances,” releases of those the state had kidnapped but not yet murdered, directly aimed to undermine every specific case of disappearance by debunking the general concept itself. This practice was not too distant from the FF.AA. staging false guerrilla movements (Chapter 8, “False Guerrillas”), but specifically aimed at the *concept* of disappearance—to deprive survivors of the term they had coined to account for what had been done to them. At the same time, each reappearance only proved that the disappeared *were* being held unacknowledged by the military, and the individuals posed a threat to the FF.AA. with their specificity and downright unpredictability—a televised presentation could easily go awry.

Brazil and Chile’s regimes were the first to use the press to plant elaborate false guerrilla plots, and the first to complain internationally that the human-rights movement (perhaps serving Soviet ends) unfairly criticized only their state “excesses” while the guerrillas were able to manipulate or instigate the human-rights groups and media. The Brazilians were also the first to use “reappearances,” where ex-guerrillas made televised confessions and urged their comrades to lay down arms.<sup>82</sup> By contrast, Gen. Pinochet’s regime used reappearance to deny “the disappeared” as a category itself, to undermine the hundreds of witnesses at once, to damage their class of testimony even before it reached the public sphere. Reappearance in Honduras was also compelled by the need to manufacture the appearance of a guerrilla threat, forcing false confessions.

President Reagan, Director Casey, and Secretary of State Haig were completely certain that the Salvadoran guerrillas were Cuban-led in the field: Dewey Clarridge recounted, “My plan was simple. 1. Take the war to Nicaragua. 2. Start killing Cubans.”<sup>83</sup> However, zero Cubans

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<sup>82</sup> Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: 123, 125.

<sup>83</sup> John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 509.

would be captured or killed in El Salvador or Honduras, and only slightly fewer arms detected. However, the usual motives for reappearance were more complex: it was an effort to reframe the concept of “disappearance” itself, much like police who plant a “drop” gun to turn their victim into a would-be perpetrator.<sup>84</sup> Even if every example is later exposed as having been secretly staged, shifting the public towards accepting (or just tacitly acceding to) a narrative still serves a hegemonic purpose: “everyone knows” that “criminals are armed threats” or “guerrillas purge their own ranks.”

But by March 1981 Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders was complaining that the State Department had been “burned” twice already by the White House rushing them into presentations on Nicaragua’s threat to Central America, which had turned out to have been completely unverified and publicly picked apart. Even *The Wall Street Journal* critiqued the February 1981 White Paper that FMLN arms were on their way from across the Soviet Bloc.<sup>85</sup> Enders knew that the Administration’s reputation on this issue was on shaky ground, and the White House shifted from building public support to downplaying the issue—while still funding the counterrevolution.

On March 12, 1982, The White House again tried to make real its claims of extensive Nicaraguan involvement in El Salvador by presenting the captured Orlando José Tardencillas, the “smoking Sandinista” with surefire “irrefutable” evidence of Managua’s export of revolution. He promptly told the press conference that he had never seen one Nicaraguan or Cuban in El Salvador. Tardencillas said he had been “obviously presented for the purpose of propaganda”<sup>86</sup> and that “An official of the U.S. Embassy told me that they needed to demonstrate the presence

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<sup>84</sup> See Chapter 4, “Conventional Military Deception: El Salvador.” Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 107.

<sup>85</sup> See Chapter 4, “Conventional Military Deception: El Salvador,” n37.

<sup>86</sup> Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 131. Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan’s Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 168-69.

of Cubans in El Salvador,” and so Salvadoran forces had tortured him into confessing that he was trained by Cuba and Ethiopia. He was promptly released to Nicaragua after the capture had been trumpeted across the headlines the week before: the piecemeal retractions went to the back pages.<sup>87</sup>

Captives of the FF.AA./Battalion 3-16 were released into exile, sent to rigged trials, or coerced into declaring that they were communist terrorists, to the enthusiastic and repeat coverage of the pro-military *El Heraldo* and *La Prensa*. Gen. Alvarez Martínez and FUSEP’s Col. Daniel Balí Castillo insisted that all disappearances were spurious: they were either guerrillas, or the people that CODEH listed had never been captured in the first place.<sup>88</sup> The Commanders-in-Chief of Honduras would use “reappearances” until 1989, but again risked contradicting their narrative and reinforcing the human rights organizations by making the issue salient again. Reappearance posed a two-horned dilemma for U.S. and Latin American regimes: 1. a constant need for evidence of 1a. the falsity of “disappearance” as a concept and 1b. the imminent reality of the guerrilla threat, and 2. an equally-constant failure almost every time the maneuver was actually used.

Professor Efraín Duarte Salgado was disappeared May 1, 1983; on May 3, Maj. Juan Blas Salazar claimed that the heavily-armed kidnapers had to have been subversives and that Duarte Salgado had become victim to internal conflicts among nameless far-left groups. By implication, all disappearances were blamed on militants fleeing abroad or ruthlessly executing potential de-

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<sup>87</sup> Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 103. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 112-13, 383. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 645.

<sup>88</sup> “Reitera jefe de la FUSEP: ‘No hay presos políticos,’ ” *El Tiempo*, Sept. 20, 1982. Leticia Salomón, “La Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en Honduras: Análisis de la caída del General Gustavo Alvarez Martínez,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 11 (May 1984). Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 68-69.

serters.<sup>89</sup> *El Tiempo*'s Jesuit columnist José María Tojeira said this incident was instead a clear sign that these were state-sanctioned paramilitaries, more dangerous and lawless than any supposed FMLN sympathizer.<sup>90</sup> Duarte Salgado was forced into exile in Guatemala by heavily-armed plainclothesmen at the end of the month, where he read a confession to being the founder of the Fuerzas Populares Revolucionarias "Lorenzo Zelaya."<sup>91</sup> He *was* a leader of FPR Lorenzo Zelaya,<sup>92</sup> but he had been drugged and constantly beaten by the Guatemalan forces, to induce psychological dissociation and make him pliable for the press conference showcased by Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt.<sup>93</sup>

Inés Murillo was kidnapped by paramilitaries March 13, 1983, and the DNI denied detaining her—and then she was "reappeared" by the DNI itself. She was publicly presented with other prisoners on April 5 as "proof" that Honduran FPR Lorenzo Zelaya and Salvadoran FMLN guerrillas were responsible for the violence in Honduras—disappearances, bombings, bank robberies, FUSEP weapons going missing. Murillo was told by the Embassy's "Mr. Mike" (Chapter 6, "The United States and Battalion 3-16") that she would shortly be returned to her family—provided that she publicly admitted she had been a member of communist groups that were

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<sup>89</sup> "Juan Blas Salázar: Desaparecidos podrían deberse a conflictos entre izquierdistas," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 3, 1983.

<sup>90</sup> José María Tojeira, "De nuevo al tema de los desaparecidos," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 4, 1983.

<sup>91</sup> *The White House Digest*, July 13, 1983, in U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, "The Central American Outreach Effort: Facts Not Widely Known," available at <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86M00886R001200340020-3.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Not necessarily untrue—in the 1990s Duarte Salgado still said that his group had attacked U.S. soldiers in 1981. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 254, 257.

<sup>93</sup> Gen. Ríos Montt's regime was weathering controversy at the time after executing six supposed subversives (four of them actually of Protestant confession) March 4, 1983, days before Pope John Paul II's visit and drawing his personal condemnation: the executions were considered a personal insult by the fundamentalist "reformer" after the pontiff personally requested the president to commute the secret court's sentence. "Carta de un torturado," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 80 (December 1987). United Press International, "Fuente del Vaticano: 'Ejecuciones son un insulto al Pontífice,'" *El Tiempo*, Mar. 4, 1983. Daniel Drosdoff, ["Pope John Paul II Rebuked Guatemala's Rulers and Rebels"], United Press International, Mar. 7, 1983. Stephen Kinzer, "5 Guatemalans Die by a Firing Squad," *The New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1983. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 2010: 131. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 228.

working to topple the government; but always the torture would resume. The courts and President Suazo Córdova were still operating on the usual mechanisms of denial, and continued to tell her father, former officer César Murillo she was in a guerrilla “people’s prison” or to seek her in Cuba or Nicaragua. She was released to a tribunal May 31, 1983, on charges of being an FPR Lorenzo Zelaya guerrilla, as “confirmed” by Duarte Salgado.<sup>94</sup> Murillo’s case caused international controversy, and she was released after having been threatened not to say anything about her abuses. Maj. Salazar, who had denied Murillo’s disappearance altogether, subsequently justified it as “necessary to preserve our democratic system.”<sup>95</sup> COFADEH noted that her reappearance was not proof that the concept of “disappearance” was a fraud and that the disappeared were all guerrillas.<sup>96</sup>

“Reappearances” were continued under Gen. Humberto Regalado. Ezra Honán Roiz, the 18-year-old nephew of exiled Communist Party leader Rigoberto Padilla Rush, was arrested in 1987 at Toncontín Airport upon returning from Moscow: his parents had fled there for their lives seven years prior. He was detained incognito and then released, in order to use him as elaborate proof that Tomás Nativí (disappeared 1981, below, “Mothers Versus the Pater Patriae”) and unionist Rolando Vindel González (disappeared 1984, “López Reyes: Interregnum”) were in the

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<sup>94</sup> The military presented crude drawings of police stations and “subversive” poems as evidence that she had presented, and she was sentenced to two years in prison. César Augusto Murillo Selva, “A un año del desaparecimiento de mi hija,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 30, 1984. “Una sobreviviente cuenta su historia,” *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 24-29. This is close to the situation of dissident journalist Oscar Reyes and his wife Gloria (Gary Cohn and Ginger Thompson, “How a Journalist was Silenced,” *The Baltimore Sun*, June 15, 1995).

<sup>95</sup> Washington Office on Latin America, “Honduras: A Democracy in Demise,” *Update Latin America*, special, February 1984.

<sup>96</sup> “Por guerrillero hondureño del ‘Lorenzo Zelaya’: Denunciado sórdido plan sandinista para generar violencia en Honduras,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, May 30, 1983.

Soviet Union.<sup>97</sup> The FF.AA. continued issuing false lists of the allegedly disappeared who had turned up alive—but none of the people the state named had ever been on CODEH or COFADEH’s lists.<sup>98</sup> Nor had any of the two dozen actual PRTC-H guerrillas that the military released alive in August 1983 (below, “Real Guerrillas”) been listed as disappeared.<sup>99</sup>

Gen. Luis Alonso Discua Elvir was the Battalion 3-16 commander for 1984 and made Commander-in-Chief 1990-95. In 1992 he tried to discredit CODEH by citing kidnapper Orlando Ordóñez Betancourt’s claim that he was a Cinchonero—and that Ramón Custodio was their secret commander. The operation backfired badly after Ordóñez drew a gun on the government officials who had arranged to meet with him and demanded ransom and a flight to Mexico City; worse, he had previously been jailed for raping a child and then paid by the Honduran state to emigrate to Costa Rica.<sup>100</sup>

Sharon Sullivan insists that knowledge and ignorance produce one another, rather than being competing opposites<sup>101</sup>: this insight helps conceptualize why reappearance in the service of denying disappearance was risky for the state—it was too factual, allowed for too much detail to emerge. Like massacres or shootdowns, stories of forced disappearance, torture, and murder moved too quickly to contain, once relatives, journalists, and human-rights activists managed to push the stories past a certain point.<sup>102</sup> Once first-degree denial of the disappearance itself was no longer sustainable to the state, the abductions had to be diffused. The perpetrators could not

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<sup>97</sup> “Ezra Honan Roiz: ‘No vi a los que se dan por “desaparecidos” ...’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 20, 1987. Aníbal Delgado Fiallos, “Los desaparecidos volaron a Moscú,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 28, 1987. Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power* 1988: 44.

<sup>98</sup> “Lista de ‘desaparecidos’ vivos del Gobierno no es la misma de Custodio,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 15, 1988.

<sup>99</sup> COFADEH, “Manifiesto público: Los desaparecidos siguen en Honduras,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 5, 1983.

<sup>100</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 308-09.

<sup>101</sup> José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 294.

<sup>102</sup> Fillingim, *Tortured Logics* 2015: 59-76. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 210, 222-23, 234, 255. Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.



avoid investigation by claiming the disappearances were done by extremists of the far right or left, that the Sumpul Massacre was perhaps military maneuvers that had simply been misunderstood by campesinos, that witnesses were coached.

### Real Guerrillas

According to its own ex-members, Battalion 3-16's abductions and murders were never targeted against guerrillas or smugglers: like the former Nicaraguan National Guardsmen who made up most of the active membership, its experience was directed at civilians. The FF.AA. was blindsided by the appearance of an actual armed guerilla column crossing the frontier it was supposedly monitoring by land and air for any infiltrator (Chapter 4, "Conventional Military Deception"). The Jesuit "Padre Guadalupe" James Carney had been exiled in 1979 by the *junta* (Chapter 9, "Paz García: Persecution"), but returned in summer 1983 as the chaplain of approximately ninety fighters in the Gramsci-inspired rebel group Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos–Honduras (PRTC-H). The guerrilla column evidently built little campesino support—and, like the Cinchoneros, was vocally opposed by Managua<sup>103</sup>: they were captured by the special-forces 1st Battalion garrisoned near Juticalpa, Olancho. 150 U.S. troops, mostly Army Rangers, also parachuted into Olancho Department between August 5 and 16, 1983, in what the Pentagon called a joint "simulated counterinsurgency" exercise with the FF.AA. Honduras's 5th Battalion was flown in on U.S. helicopters on September 9 to fight the retreating column on the Río Wasprasní.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 174-77.

<sup>104</sup> Olancho was simply chosen by Reyes Mata because it had thick jungle and bordered Nicaragua: the left wing lacked any social base or organization that could support them: Yoro Department had more activism. George Black and Anne Nelson, "The U.S. in Honduras: Mysterious Death of Fr. Carney," *The Nation*, Aug. 4-11, 1984: 82-84. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 175. Valladares Lanza and Peacock, *In Search of Hidden Truths* 1998: 37.

It might be expected that Gen. Alvarez Martínez needed an actual guerrilla menace to help justify his policies of domestic repression, unacknowledged disappearance, and involvement in El Salvador and Nicaragua's wars. But the actual incursion and the massacre of the captives was covered up: in large part this was because the guerrillas' chaplain Father Carney was a Catholic priest and former U.S. citizen, facts which threatened to renew the international press attention to Honduras at a time when the White House had shifted the rhetoric on Central America. Twenty-three of the captured guerrillas were publicly released as "low-level and ideologically uncommitted," but the remaining seventy were deemed "beyond rehabilitation." Gen. Alvarez Martínez decided that enough prisoners had been taken and ordered the remainder executed: according to reports, they were murdered on the Río Patuca by special-forces officers, away from their enlisted men: corpses started washing ashore along the Río Patuca.<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, those PRTC-H guerrillas not marked for death—that is, not judged as committed ideologues—were cited as proof of the dire guerrilla threat that Honduras faced, and several of them were released.<sup>106</sup> Three of these survivors—later shot "trying to escape" after their relatives found their prison-visitation rights suddenly canceled—gave an interview for reporters and television at Nueva Palestina that U.S. advisers going by the pseudonyms of "Wes Blank" and "Mark Kelvi" had personally overseen the torture and interrogation of captives at El Aguacate airbase, Olancho, the FF.AA. and U.S. hub for Contra logistics—including Father Carney.<sup>107</sup> The situation threatened to "make headlines" again.

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<sup>105</sup> Other reports/rumors were that some were thrown from helicopters. Hitz and Cinquegrana, *Report of Investigation* 1997: 47-49, 60-61, 68, 77-78, 80, 83, 129, 196. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 229.

<sup>106</sup> Colin Danby, "Big Pine II: U.S. Military Buildup in Honduras," *Honduras Update* 2:1 (October 1983). Hitz and Cinquegrana, *Report of Investigation* 1997: 47, 80.

<sup>107</sup> One of the deserters said Lt. "Blank" and Maj. "Kelvi" were present at Carney's interrogation, and that a U.S. military attaché personally interrogated the other guerrillas. Black and Nelson, "The U.S. in Honduras," *The Nation*, Aug. 4-11, 1984: 82-84. Martin Francis, "The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization," *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985. David L. Hobbs, U.S. Department of State Citizens Emergency Center, letter to Virginia Smith, Jan. 9, 1984; CO065, box 85;

CIA Inspector-General Frederick P. Hitz found that the U.S. Embassy had weeded out the well-confirmed reports of the murder of the PRTC-H from its 1983 intelligence report, to keep the potentially-explosive Carney issue from coming up again and to maintain Honduras's illusory human-rights record. Staffers and CIA agents were "actively discouraged" from following up any such stories that threatened to expand in the press.<sup>108</sup> *The Baltimore Sun's* 1995 investigation found that the CIA directly participated in interrogations and tortures—but Amb. Negroponte and the Station in the Embassy had blocked even Langley from understanding the scope of Agency involvement in the Carney affair.<sup>109</sup> Hitz admitted that, given the stonewalling, he could not rule out whether CIA agents were present during Father Carney's torture since all the agents and officers investigated stonewalled him, disclaiming any knowledge or that Father Carney had come through El Aguacate. The Tegucigalpa Station Chief for 1982-84, Donald H. Winters, denied to Hitz that the FF.AA. killed or tortured prisoners—and even denied that anyone had stonewalled the Inspector-General!<sup>110</sup>

Despite the FF.AA.'s physical control over eastern Olancho, *El Tiempo's* Manuel Gamero managed to interview workers near El Aguacate, who had recognized one of the captives as José María Reyes Mata. The newspaper was able to report that the PRTC-H's leader had been taken alive, rather than killed in a firefight as Gen. Alvarez Martínez announced.<sup>111</sup> As at the Río

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WHORM Subject File; Ronald Reagan Library. Hitz and Cinquegrana, *Report of Investigation* 1997: 36, 48, 53, 73, 80. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 229-30. Donna Whitson Brett and Edward Tracy Brett, *Murdered in Central America: The Stories of Eleven U.S. Missionaries* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988): 17-68.

<sup>108</sup> Note also that Carney's disappearance occurred in 1983, during the controversy that led to the supposedly -final second Boland Amendment. "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. Hitz and Cinquegrana, *Report of Investigation* 1997: 2, 39-40, 50, 82, 105, 111, 117-20, 124, 126, 166, 200, 203.

<sup>109</sup> Ginger Thompson and Gary Cohn, "Torturers' Confessions," *Baltimore Sun*, June 13, 1995, and "A Survivor Tells Her Story," June 15, 1996.

<sup>110</sup> Tim Golden, "Honduran Army's Abuses Were Known to C.I.A.," *The New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1998.

<sup>111</sup> Black and Nelson, "The U.S. in Honduras," *The Nation*, Aug. 4-11, 1984: 82-84.

Sumpul three years earlier, the media warranting and distributing the testimony of local witnesses threatened the FF.AA.'s power of control over coverage of its actions.

The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency had actually assessed at the time that Gen. Alvarez Martínez would have wanted Reyes Mata and Father Carney alive for propaganda purposes, but he had actually personally ordered the guerrilla leader shot. Instead of brandishing their first real “guerrilla priest,” the FF.AA. denied the disappearance as long as it could. As with the Cinchoneros’ 1981-82 attacks, Gen. Alvarez Martínez—and his machinery of denial and discredit—seems to have been caught by surprise, and would rather avoid too much *detail* rather than brandish evidence for his hardline view.

The PRTC-H incursion in fact was seen as a minor nuisance by the FF.AA., “not of crucial interest or viewed seriously.” The guerrilla column had not been strong enough or reached far enough to serve the narrative of a constant existential threat from the Nicaraguan border. The invasion had been dismantled too easily—faster than the generals could have even hoped—and the High Command judged the Honduran insurgents headquartered in Nicaragua as no real threat.<sup>112</sup> *Actual* rebels meant the arrival of journalists and relatives from the United States, and required actions to conceal the deed within the CIA hierarchy itself—and more cover-ups meant more potential risk.<sup>113</sup> In the absence of a hegemony that would allow the state to withstand the

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<sup>112</sup> Honduran Army sources noted that Gen. Alvarez Martínez offered a week of leave to those who brought in Father Carney alive, especially with the Catholic Church’s pressure on Carney and its disputes with the general. As for Reyes Mata, even as a prisoner Alvarez Martínez remained intimidated by the guerrilla—as commander of the 4th Infantry at San Pedro Sula he’d had him thrown off a cliff, which he survived, vowing vengeance. Hitz and Cinquegrana, *Report of Investigation* 1997: 46, 81, 89-90, 109, 112-14, 120-21.

<sup>113</sup> Carney’s case was pursued by his U.S. family and not the Honduran Catholic Church—in sharp contrast to the 1979 excommunication of Gen. Paz García’s junta merely for exiling him. Martin Francis, “The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization,” *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985. David L. Hobbs, U.S. Department of State Citizens Emergency Center, letter to Virginia Smith, Jan. 9, 1984; CO065, box 85; WHORM Subject File; Ronald Reagan Library. Brett and Brett, *Murdered in Central America* 1988: 17-68.

failure of these cover-ups,<sup>114</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez used the ultimate state power, extralegal murder.<sup>115</sup> Forging false guerrilla movements were preferable for the counterrevolutionary states purposes of justifying repression (Chapter 8, “False Guerrillas”).

### López Reyes: Interregnum

In summer 1983 Battalion 3-16’s tactics expanded from abductions and disappearances to daylight murders, especially of labor leaders and political activists.<sup>116</sup> On March 18, 1984, electricity workers’ union chief Rolando Vindel González and former lottery official Gustavo Adolfo Morales Funes were abducted in broad daylight, precipitating Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s removal by Air Force Gen. Walter López Reyes at gunpoint on the night of March 31. State force is often concealed by being restricted to the marginalized and deviant (according to Foucault’s conception) or to symbolic violence (Bourdieu) but now state officials—and eventually officers and Alvarez Martínez himself—were being murdered. Disappearance was a direct factor in his removal, though the preponderance of officers were more concerned by the prospect of future trials of officers, as in post-junta Argentina.<sup>117</sup> The new Commander-in-Chief understood that the continental situation had changed: Contra bombings launched from Honduras were causing scandal in the U.S. Senate, and defeat by Britain had removed the Argentinean junta, Honduras’s other counterrevolutionary patron.<sup>118</sup>

Honduras had been among the earliest states to make the formal transition to democracy, before El Salvador’s 1982 “demonstration election” or Gen. Ríos Montt’s removal in Guatemala

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<sup>114</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 51.

<sup>115</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>116</sup> WOLA, “Honduras: A Democracy in Demise,” *Update Latin America*, special, February 1984.

<sup>117</sup> “Análisis: La caída del general,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 36 (April 1984).

<sup>118</sup> The fall of the Argentinean junta started a change in the whole course of the continent’s military regimes: by 1985 all of them except Chile and Paraguay had been handed off *de jure* to elected civil states—though without the trials of top generals that Alfonsín oversaw.

which allowed elections in 1985. But a lawless state, street murders, and a Commander-in-Chief Constitutionally above the President in the chain of command made analysts dub Honduras a *democracia de fachada*, an electoral façade set up strictly to serve the White House’s need for Senate funding.<sup>119</sup> Gramscian analysts have noted that weak states—rather than strong ones— increase the chance of military interventionism: the armed forces, not civil institutions, ensure its functioning and continuity<sup>120</sup> and the civil institutions never had the chance to take over the apparatus.<sup>121</sup>

Gen. Alvarez Martínez had been hated by the *coronelidad* for his ideological extremism, his collusion with the Salvadoran military, his illegal promotion from colonel, for purging officers open to economic reform, for attempting to centralize the military by neutralizing the Superior Council of the FF.AA.—a parliament of colonels and generals established 1975—and for his dangerous messianic self-conception as savior of the whole subcontinent by means of war with Nicaragua.<sup>122</sup> The 1984 *coup de garnison* dismantled Battalion 3-16’s formal institutions and

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<sup>119</sup> Like the annual “certification” process where the State Department had to report that a government was making human-rights progress before it could receive U.S. aid. Mirna Flores, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, July 2012. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 112.

<sup>120</sup> This contrasts to more “Liberal” views of the state—often defined as promoting or opposing “the market,” or at least the mercantile and professional classes. See the 1972 coup against Ramón Ernesto Cruz Uclés (1971-72): civil-rights groups, unions, and the Church offered Gen. López Arellano support for his overthrow. Likewise Gen. López Reyes was called upon by the Church and the spectrum of political parties to prevent Suazo Córdova from succeeding himself as President 1985 by calling a new constituent assembly in stead of the scheduled election. A mediating role for the state’s enforcers, over and above the press or freely-elected politicians, goes against Habermas’s more Anglocentric history of the relations between politics and the state. Leyda Barbieri, *Honduran Elections and Democracy, Withered by Washington: A Report on Past and Present Elections in Honduras, and an Evaluation of the Last Five Years of Constitutional Rule* (Washington: Washington Office on Latin America, 1986): 20-25, 34. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 113-15. Donald E. Schulz, *How Honduras Escaped Revolutionary Violence* (Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992): 9. Max Velásquez Díaz, *El golpe de estado de 1972: Antecedentes y consecuencias*, CEDOH, *Boletín Especial* 80 (1998).

<sup>121</sup> Otto Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratisation: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 227

<sup>122</sup> Víctor Meza, *Honduras: La evolución de la crisis*, Colección Realidad Nacional 5 (Tegucigalpa, Editorial Universitaria, 1982): 37. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 62.

removed state sanction, cutting the disappearance rate—temporarily—throughout 1985, and Amb. Negroponete was replaced by John Ferch in May 1985.<sup>123</sup>

Now the FF.AA. could admit to the death squads, but put them safely in the past and deny all connection to the state, a basic implicatory denial that simply isolated the murders in time and authority, reframing them as “excesses.” Relatives of those taken by the plainclothesmen were still told by uniformed officers that the disappeared had all gone underground, or were training for terrorism in Managua, Havana, or Moscow.<sup>124</sup> Gen. López Reyes himself said in June 1984 that, following Marxist practice, the disappeared had “kidnapped themselves and logically cast the blame on the armies of Latin America.”<sup>125</sup>

Once the deaths were actually acknowledged, the state tried to muddy who the perpetrators were. The FF.AA. released a “final report” in December 1984: it was a masterpiece of hedging. Since the disappeared were not in any prisons, the report could only hypothesize that some “could have been the victims of a vendetta carried out by non-Honduran irregular armed leftist and rightist groups, who in the past have operated clandestinely in the national territory,” the same frame used for El Salvador’s mass deaths.<sup>126</sup> These supposed renegades would never be

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<sup>123</sup> Custodio remained skeptical, however, and the bombings, “rogue” disappearances, and “unattributed” murders resumed under Gen. Regalado. CONADEH, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos* 1994: 145-202.

<sup>124</sup> Ybendrán Mass, “Mi Honduras,” *Patria* 5:214 (July 11, 1981). “En Tegucigalpa: Nueva manifestación realizan familiares de desaparecidos,” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 9, 1983. “Ridícula declaración oficial, según la esposa de T. Nativí,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 20, 1987. “Según vocero de las FF.AA.: Presumimos que Vindel y Tomás Nativí están en la Unión Soviética,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 20, 1987. Napoleón Ham, “‘Muerto’ ...” *La Tribuna*, Aug. 21, 1987. Leticia Salomón, *Honduras: Cultura política y democracia* 1998: 14-15.

<sup>125</sup> Danilo Antúñez, “Sostiene el general Walter López: ¡FF.AA. no tienen desaparecidos!” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 9, 1984.

<sup>126</sup> This was the theory of a civilian government and populace caught “between two fires”—1. reactionary militaries and rogue paramilitaries, provoked by 2. leftist guerrillas who were no less ruthless and lacking in popular support; two symmetrical extremists equally mirroring one another. It was employed in Argentina (Raúl Alfonsín), Guatemala (Jorge Castañeda Gutman, David Stoll), and here in Honduras. Of course the narrative is at odds with the fact that 96-91% of deaths in Chile, Guatemala, and El Salvador being caused by state forces, and only the remnant by any guerrillas. David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012): 101, 263. Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutioniz-*

investigated by police or courts—despite the FF.AA. condemning them as the country’s supposed highest danger.<sup>127</sup>

The FF.AA. report grudgingly admitted the disappearances, but immediately blamed the Contras for most all of them.<sup>128</sup> In and of itself, this statement was not untrue: Battalion 3-16 was full of former Guardsmen—but they relied on CIA intelligence and especially FF.AA. protection to torture and murder Honduran critics even after 1985.<sup>129</sup> They had always been under Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s direct orders and with the tightest supervision of the CIA. But pointing the finger at the Contras, Alvarez Martínez, or even the CIA would still allow for the U.S. Senate to keep approving millions of dollars for the FF.AA.: Battalion 3-16 was supposedly gone along with its founder. Mayors’ testimonies about death squads and clandestine prisons in their small towns was excluded from the report entirely.<sup>130</sup> If the FF.AA. could not convince press and public, it could sufficiently hide its institutional guilt to keep its shifting explanations at a sufficient

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*ing Motherhood* 1994: 132-33. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 59. Stephen G. Rabe, “Human Rights, Latin America, and the Cold War,” review of *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006* by Steve J. Stern, and *Latin America’s Cold War* by Hal Brands, *Diplomatic History* 36:1 (January 2012): 234-35. Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012): 274.

<sup>127</sup> “Es algo que existe, dice jefe de la DNI: ‘Purgas’ entre extremistas,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 25, 1982. “En informe oficial al respecto ... : Es imposible indentificar a culpables de las desapariciones afirman FF.AA.,” *El Tiempo*, Dec. 31, 1984. “Informa la Comisión Especial de las FFAA: Grupos extremistas extranjeros habrían victimado desaparecidos,” *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 31, 1984. COFADEH, “A las Fuerzas Armadas: A la opinión pública,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 3, 1985. Steve Lewontin, “Human Rights: Round Two,” *Honduras Update* 3:5 (February 1985). Robin Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006): 98.

<sup>128</sup> “Canciller no descarta que ‘contras’ hayan participado en desapariciones,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 18, 1985. “Contras participaron en Honduras en secuestros y asesinatos informa también el *Washington Post*,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 21, 1985. “El papel de los ‘contras’ en las noticias sobre desaparecidos,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 21, 1985. COFADEH, “Presidente Roberto Suazo Córdova: General Walter López Reyes,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 29, 1985. Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Bordering on War,” press release, Apr. 1, 1986. “CODEH revela nombres de políticos y dirigentes amenazados de muerte,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 2, 1986.

<sup>129</sup> “Los tres objetivos del comunismo en Honduras,” from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 19, 1986, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 64 (August 1986). Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power* 1988: 19, 21.

<sup>130</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 116.



level of plausibility—manipulating what was kept unsaid in order to frame what was openly said.<sup>131</sup>

Lt. Col. Angel Ricardo Luque Portillo had actually produced a comprehensive investigation of those being held by the FF.AA.: instead his supervisors recommended moving the prisoners away from CODEH and COFADEH's inquiries. Lt. Col. Luque Portillo was quite clear that they were not being held legally and urged Gen. López Reyes to keep this quiet. These victims of Battalion 3-16 were murdered in 1985 to ensure that human-rights organizations had nobody to find.<sup>132</sup>

Now that the earlier murders were admitted, Tegucigalpa and the U.S. State Department studiously denied that there were any disappearances in 1985.<sup>133</sup> CODEH recorded that state or parastate murder began to resume that year, even more openly than under the Argentine Method proper. Commander-in-Chief Gen. López Reyes had threatened some reform of the military and had held up the Contras' funding and supply after officially revealing their presence in Honduras, but found himself humiliated and fired January 1986 by the incoming President José Azcona because he had threatened Reagan's project. Peter Fourie and Melissa Meyer note that genuine democratization can *discourage* criticism of the state: it would be *unfair* to the fledgling democracy, treating it like a police state. The state's denial became more sophisticated, more diffuse in society.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Robert Ackermann, review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller, *Erkenntnis* 33:1 (July 1990): 134.

<sup>132</sup> This parallels the prison massacres in Argentina 1979 after an IACHR delegation was announced, to make sure there were no prisoners or bodies that could not be denied (see Chapter 6, "The Argentine Method," n52; and above, "Mothers Versus the Pater Patriae," n69). McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 224.

<sup>133</sup> "Según informe del Departamento de Estado de USA: No hubo desaparecidos en 1985," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 21, 1986. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994.

<sup>134</sup> Marcia McLean, "A Democratic Disdain for Life," *Honduras Update* 6:5 (February 1988). Peter Fourie and Melissa Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism: South Africa's Failure to Respond*, 2010: 200.

Once the FF.AA. had officially declared that political murder was firmly in the past and the fault of one now-exiled general, it could reframe any further attempts at seeking out state responsibility as badgering. Political murders after 1985 were blamed on extremists, presumably left-wing, as usual. Azcona and Gens. Walter López Reyes and Humberto Regalado periodically insisted that the disappearances were over for good—in 1985, 1986, 1988, and 1989. While crime and state violence did noticeably fall in 1985, they surged together starting in 1986.<sup>135</sup> Battalion 3-16 did not cease its activity in the second half of the decade—even gunning down Gen. Alvarez Martínez himself in the street in broad daylight 1989—but their members began divulging details about their own state crimes.

#### Regalado: The Human-Rights Death Squads

Gen. Walter López Reyes had been the one who personally ousted Gen. Alvarez Martínez at gunpoint 1984, and a year later prevented Roberto Suazo Córdova (whom he had told “the plane is still waiting” during the coup) from succeeding himself as President, allowing the Liberal technocrat José Azcona to win. The new President then promptly humiliated and replaced the Commander-in-Chief within days. His replacement was Gen. Humberto Regalado, more repressive and more dedicated to keeping the war against Nicaragua going, keeping the Contras in Honduras. Gen. Regalado was not as zealous as the founder of Battalion 3-16, but still was an ideological reactionary who reconstituted the death squad<sup>136</sup>—and, like Gen. Alvarez Martínez, would become a victim to it. Half of those who were disappeared in the 1980s were

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<sup>135</sup> This matches the pattern since 1985 of admitting the Contras, followed by a cycle of covering up their continued support from the state, then having to admit their presence once again. “Derechos humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 63 (July 1986).

<sup>136</sup> Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 108. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, “The 316th MI Battalion,” Jan. 6, 1995, available at [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000283030.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000283030.pdf).

kidnapped and murdered *after* the 1984 ouster of Alvarez Martínez, most all under Regalado.

The new Commander-in-Chief restored the internal protection for Battalion 3-16 within the military that López Reyes had suspended.<sup>137</sup>

The death squads perpetrated a sharp upsurge of political murders and violence in 1986-87, accompanied by the rise in general violence. As the defeated Contras sold off their arms, intentional homicides surpassed accidental deaths in 1987.<sup>138</sup> The death squads were not “out of control” during this period: Gen. Regalado personally commanded them through the newly-organized *Proyectos Militares Técnicos* (PROMITEC), a media-oriented psychological-warfare and propaganda unit that aimed to professionalize the secret police.<sup>139</sup> But despite having supplied the 1986-90 denial and protection necessary for its revival, the death squad eventually targeted the general himself in 1993, whereupon he appealed to the human-rights organizations which he had damned. The FF.AA.’s own physical attacks on critics were exploited to “prove” that a strong hand—and generous budget—was needed to protect a fragile society from the polit-

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<sup>137</sup> Many FF.AA. officers were not hardliners, but could be pressured by Battalion 3-16’s violence. In practice, the ideologies of a military’s top officers are often mixed, ambiguous, or secondary, with the “true believers” influential but sparse. CONADEH, *Los hechos hablan por sí mismos* 1994: 145-202. Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 93-94. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 24, 30. Kenneth P. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues: Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000): 227. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 37. Alfred C. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>138</sup> Under the 2009-22 *narco*-regime San Pedro Sula remained the “murder capital of the world” for years. “1987 in Review,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1989* (Somerville, Mass.: Honduras Information Center, 1990): 8. David Bacon, “If San Pedro Sula is Murder Capital of the World, Who Made it That Way?” *The American Prospect*, June 13, 2019, <https://prospect.org/economy/san-pedro-sula-murder-capital-world-made-way>.

<sup>139</sup> Gen. Regalado signed off on even the TV spots from the newly-technologized, reinvented death squad; Gen. Alvarez Martínez likewise had focused on modernizing the FF.AA. and its secret police, rather than relying on luck and campesino gumption as with the 1969 war: this aspect of his professionalization campaign had nothing to do with any Argentinean model. “‘Guerra de carteles’ contra el CODEH y su presidente,” *CODEH* 6:46 (July 1988). “FF.AA. y sus amenazas,” *Antorcha* 4:22 (May 1989): 1. “Disappeared on and off the Agenda,” *Central America Report* 20:32 (Aug. 27, 1993).

ical violence. The supposed “Alianza de Acción Anticomunista” death squad was used by Gen. Regalado to justify overt domestic military action.<sup>140</sup>

Rocío Táborá has concluded that Honduran violence institutionalized itself, making its practice the norm of collective existence, of thought and feeling, fear and threat in everyday life.<sup>141</sup> Adrienne Pine adds the observation that “street violence” can serve the same social function as explicit state threats, leaving a public conditioned to fear and passivity—*tractable* to the state: nobody knew where the next violence could come from and everyone had better stay in line.<sup>142</sup> Leticia Salomón has noted that while state security was used in Argentina or Honduras to justify violations of individual and public security, state security was never actually threatened. She describes how the National Security Doctrine even increased the common crime that plagues Honduras to today, by abandoning the notion of citizen *safety* in exchange for a “*security*” understood in military and counterinsurgent terms. It contented itself instead with conflating critics and common criminals with subversives, one tentacle more of a unified yet conveniently nebulous foe (Chapter 3).<sup>143</sup>

Violence could have short-term pragmatic goals, or the de-democratization of state and society, as seen in the Southern-Cone military regimes of the 1970s and 80s. Street violence was exploited to defend Army and FUSEP budgets and militarization of the police, and secret state violence used to justify state repression. Gramscian analysis notes consent and coercion are not opposites—street crime is met with dispossession and police violence.<sup>144</sup> The state’s own covert

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<sup>140</sup> Ann Branaman, “Interaction and Hierarchy in Everyday Life: Goffman and Beyond,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 111-12.

<sup>141</sup> Táborá, *Masculinidad y violencia* 1995:3, 122.

<sup>142</sup> The state, the cartels, and landowners accustomed to violence have also fed into one another in a similar way in Bolivia, Colombia, and Mexico since the 1970s. Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard* 2008: 29-30. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 65, 122-24, 156.

<sup>143</sup> “Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero,” *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras*, 1994: 16, 61, 72.

<sup>144</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 51.

attacks on dissidents were used to blame the victims and justify further repression because the authorship of the bombings and shootings was kept deniable, blaming any violence on left-wing subversion. Diana Taylor concludes that Argentinean repression had an intentional, functional aspect: in the face of arbitrary terror, the populace will mute itself and not resist the state. The target therefore is not the victims—which the state knew were innocent—but to frighten the whole public sphere into making itself “disappear”: only the military could gather in the streets and plazas.<sup>145</sup> Violence and the official rhetoric on violence was intended to *subdue* rather than *convince* public opinion<sup>146</sup>—but that meant exerting force at the cost of hegemony.

Commentators asked that since turning the streets into an armed camp did not prevent the crime wave, then what good was letting the FF.AA. prey on civilians using government revenue? The political power, numbers and armaments, funding, and even existence of the FF.AA. were seriously being questioned beginning in 1986. It was embarrassed by reports of officers running guns for the FMLN and trafficking drugs, and by its open inability to do anything about either the Contras or the EPS’s regular cross-border raids against them.<sup>147</sup> Battalion 3-16’s bombings and assassinations made FUSEP seem unable to handle the “guerrillas” or “street criminals” that official pronouncements blamed for the bombings. This self-induced situation sharpened the military’s need to legitimate itself, but was unable to build up hegemony, and thus unable to escape its reliance on simple assertion and denial.

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<sup>145</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997: 130-31.

<sup>146</sup> This observation is key to the work of Dana Frank, Leticia Salomón, and Diana Taylor.

<sup>147</sup> José Luis Vega Carballo, “Partidos, desarrollo político y conflicto social en Honduras y Costa Rica: Un análisis comparativo,” *Polémica* 1, 2nd epoch (January-April 1987): 43-59. “No hubo enfrentamiento del ejército con guerrilleros salvadoreños: Mintieron Fuerzas Armadas para ocultar muerte de 3 campesinos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 9, 1988. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 143-44. Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras*, 1994: 70.

Death lists with names, addresses, and pictures of academics, journalists, religious, politicians, and union and human-rights figures began to be circulated in 1986—exemplary media for everyone but the death squads producing them: it was state incitement, publicized by posters and newspaper advertisements. Journalists and CODEH were bombed in 1986-88, without any subsequent investigation.<sup>148</sup> Graffiti, posters, and machine-gun bullets were turned against the houses, workplaces, and offices of human-rights and union leaders.<sup>149</sup> During the April 1988 riots after kingpin Ramón Matta Ballesteros's unconstitutional extradition (Chapter 8, "A Right-Wing Student Riot"), simulated violence by the state against itself was deployed against even (empty) military offices, bombs somehow planted under tight curfews and Army patrols and using C4, an explosive exclusively used by the Army, in order to blame the left for AAA's wave of terror.<sup>150</sup> The Commander-in-Chief insisted that anyone saying that the military was protecting or directing AAA had to themselves be a Communist.<sup>151</sup> Drs. Ramón Custodio and Almendáres Bonilla countered there was no conceivable way that the U.S. military and intelligence, the Contra forces, and the FF.AA. combined were unable to detect the rogue rightists operating freely under their noses.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> "El terrorismo amenaza al gremio periodístico," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 5, 1986. "Movimiento popular organizado," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 64 (August 1986). "Represión sin fundamentos: FF.AA. atacan al CODEH," *CODEH* 4:27 (August 1986). COHA, "Republic for Rent," press release, Sept. 26, 1986. "Comandos de la muerte amenazan a personalidades honorables," *CODEH* 4:28 (September 1986). "Porque defienden la patria y soberanía: Comandos de muerte amenazan a personalidades honorables," *CODEH* 28:4 (September 1986). "Hondurans Seek Removal of Contras from Their Country," Central American Health Initiative, *Update* 5:44 (Dec. 12, 1986).

<sup>149</sup> "Así se fabrica el terrorismo y la subversión," *CODEH* 6:44 (April 1988). "Nuevo atentado terrorista contra el CODEH y su presidente," *CODEH* 6:44 (April 1988). "Vinculan a policía con paramilitares que amenazan a dirigentes populares," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 27, 1988. "Tras asesinato de Alvarez: Varios hombres públicos son amenazados a muerte," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 27, 1989.

<sup>150</sup> "Esa acusación es irresponsable: CODEH," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 22, 1988. "Medio estalla un artefacto explosivo cerca de oficina de voceros de FF.AA.," *El Tiempo*, July 22, 1988.

<sup>151</sup> "Regalado: Absurdos acusan de criminales a las FF.AA.," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 26, 1988.

<sup>152</sup> "Respuestas a los amenazados a muerte por la Triple A," *CODEH* 49 (January-February 1989).

Gen. Regalado not only denied the existence of the death squads, but asserted that all the assassinations were diabolical false-flag machinations by guerrillas—or even the human-rights groups themselves. This required an active attack on CODEH that aimed at the social credit and epistemic warrants it had built up since 1981. In April 1986 CODEH had filed a motion at the OAS’s Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica, over Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s disappearances: this became one of the Court’s largest investigative cases to date, a threat of exposure large enough to get the death squad to murder its own founder. The state entered a process of repeated self-contradiction similar to its cyclical insistence the Contras had departed, partly due to an ideological inability to recognize its failing course of action, and partly due to the lack of any ideological alternative capable of building consensus.

The U.S. State Department had praised CODEH in its 1984 and 1985 human-rights reports as a sterling example of Honduras’s freedom of expression and participation.<sup>153</sup> In the 1986 report it now labeled CODEH as a “leftist antidemocratic organization” and accused it of “willful exaggerations or mistaken interpretations.”<sup>154</sup> The Embassy steered visitors and journalists away from Ramón Custodio 1987-88 by warning them that he was “one of the most dangerous leftists in Honduras,” “the most radical of the Honduran Communists,” and “damaging the situation of human rights.”<sup>155</sup> The 1987 human-rights report declared that “most Hondurans consider it to be partisan organization. CODEH is publicly identified with the support and defense of leftist or radical causes” and that Custodio was “widely criticized in Honduras as an unreliable source of

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<sup>153</sup> “State’s 1988 *Country Report*, With Notes,” *Honduras Update* 7:7-9 (April-June 1989).

<sup>154</sup> “El papel de los Estados Unidos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 75 (July 1987).

<sup>155</sup> Ramón Custodio López, “Editorial: La alianza del odio,” *CODEH* 5:33 (February 1987). Marcia McLean, “Military Aid to Honduran Police,” *Honduras Update* 6:2-3 (November-December 1987). Oscar Aníbal Puerto, “Desesperación diplomático o tragedia planificada,” *CODEH* 6:43 (February-March 1988). “‘Guerra de carteles’ contra el CODEH y su presidente,” *CODEH* 6:46 (July 1988). “Beyond the Trial: Zenaida Velásquez,” *Honduras Update* 6:11-12 (August-September 1988). Ramón Custodio López, “Editorial: Guerreros del odio y la mentira,” *CODEH* 6:48 (November-December 1988). “¿Lealtad, honor y sacrificio?” *CODEH* 6:48 (November-December 1988).

information because of his association with the far left.” This was described as being common knowledge, a unanimous and uncomplicated opinion. Secretary George Schultz was also happy to certify the report’s announcement that there had been no serious human-rights violations in 1987—no torture, illegal detention, or assassination.<sup>156</sup> But these attacks on one of Honduras’s main warrantors of testimony were and aimed entirely at Capitol Hill: the Honduran state was already facing extensive litigation at the IACHR and the International Court of Justice at the Hague thanks to CODEH.

On January 14, 1988, CODEH regional head Miguel A. Pavón—already a fixture on the death lists and now scheduled to testify at the IACHR—was driving with schoolteacher Moisés Landaverde when the two were gunned down by men in ski masks, their documents stolen.<sup>157</sup> Pavón had lived long enough to write down the license plate number of the motorcycle trailing them, but the paper was missing when the briefcase was released by the police.<sup>158</sup> The government’s culpable negligence toward the double murder—not even opening a police investigation—left Western Europe’s governments to proclaim themselves “stupefied” when the government decided instead to attack CODEH.<sup>159</sup> The assassination was in fact a sign of the state’s desperation over the IACHR trial—a strength of force that covered up weakness of evidence. The state had been taken to court for its 1981-84 murders, which could only be concealed with further murders.

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<sup>156</sup> “ ‘American Trainers Have Instructed Our Torturers’: Ramón Custodio on the State of Human Rights in Honduras,” *Washington Report on the Hemisphere* 8:11 (Mar. 2, 1988). “Custodio on Meeting at State,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

<sup>157</sup> “FFAA sostienen que hace un año desapareció el 3-16,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 4, 1988.

<sup>158</sup> Marcia McLean, “A Democratic Disdain for Life,” *Honduras Update* 6:5 (February 1988).

<sup>159</sup> “Editorial: Una seria advertencia al Gobierno de Honduras,” from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 6, 1988, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 82 (February 1988). “Derechos humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 91 (November 1988).



Chancellor Carlos López Contreras and Procurator-General Rubén Darío Zepeda ominously “predicted” that Custodio was next at the hands of this supposed leftist wave.<sup>160</sup> Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) expressed concern over Custodio’s personal safety: *izquierdista* was a dangerous word to use, but Amb. Everett Briggs simply reiterated to him that Custodio was an “old-fashioned, hard-line communist with terrorist proclivities” who “cared nothing about human rights.”<sup>161</sup> FF.AA. spokesman Col. Manuel Enrique Suárez Benavides said that “the Honduran people do not give any importance to the accusations of human rights violations,” which were all part of a left-wing conspiracy against democracy.<sup>162</sup>

In February 1988 Custodio went to the UN Commission on Human Rights to condemn the murders of IACHR witnesses Pavón and Sgt. José Isaías Vilorio, and for the 263 extrajudicial executions (separate from disappearances and political murders) that CODEH had tabulated for 1987 alone.<sup>163</sup> Chancellor Carlos López Contreras went before the UNCHR in March and insisted that these solid, internationally-backed proofs of state violations were all imagined: there were no death squads, no secret government prisons, no undocumented “disappeared.” The Chancellor concluded that all the recent crimes that had drawn world outrage had in fact been masterminded by the very same human-rights fraudster who had blamed them on the FF.AA. on a global stage.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> “Era miembro del 3-16 y testigo ante la CIDH: Vilorio fue asesinado,” *CODEH* 6:42 (January 1988).

<sup>161</sup> Amb. Briggs also knowingly covered up FF.AA. torture. “ ‘American Trainers Have Instructed Our Torturers’: Ramón Custodio on the State of Human Rights in Honduras,” *Washington Report on the Hemisphere* 8:11 (Mar. 2, 1988). “Custodio on Meeting at State,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 246, 255.

<sup>162</sup> “Human Rights: A Question of Importance,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 7, 1988.

<sup>163</sup> EFE, “Custodio, en sede de la ONU: 263 ejecuciones extrajudiciales hubo en Honduras durante 1987,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 24, 1988.

<sup>164</sup> “Editorial: Una ofensa para Honduras la ‘defensa’ del canciller,” *CODEH* 6:43 (February-March 1988), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 15, 1988.

López Contreras directly accused Custodio of the murders of Pavón, Landaverde, and Sgt. Vilorio. The state had already murdering the witnesses against it, and was now shifting the blame to the surviving critics.<sup>165</sup> López Contreras said the threats and attacks on CODEH's head were from his fellow leftists, trying to create martyrs: Custodio "makes temer[ari]ous accusations, which he later retracts after damaging the moral solvency of the government and the armed forces." The AAA itself ran newspaper ads concurring that CODEH was creating martyrs to win the IACHR case, accusing Custodio of running a death squad of his own and having had a hit taken out on Pavón over jealousy.<sup>166</sup>

A parallel *CODEH–Auténtico* under former CODEH regional leader FUSEP and ex-Sgt. Héctor Orlando Vásquez was even created and recognized by the state at the end of 1988. This "CODEH-A" ran interference, declared the Army the real defender of human rights, and "confirm" that Custodio had led the Cinchoneros and ordered all three witnesses murdered, as repeated by Gen. Regalado. Vásquez claimed Custodio repeatedly threatened to murder him and sought a protection order, though this was denied by the courts for lack of any evidence.<sup>167</sup> In July 1988 the IACHR found the Honduran state guilty, putting the lie to the claim that human-rights advocates were perpetrating crimes and sowing falsehoods in Moscow's service.<sup>168</sup> Gen. Regalado had opted for repression over Gen. López Reyes's (relative) reform

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<sup>165</sup> "Por el Canciller: Custodio vinculado a muertes de Landaverde, Vilorio y Pavón," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 3, 1988. "Diputado Landaverde: Canciller hizo ridículo al acusar a R. Custodio," *La Tribuna*, Mar. 5, 1988. "Reitera canciller: Custodio sí está vinculado a secuestros y atentados," *La Prensa*, Mar. 17, 1988. "Letter of María Elena E. de Custodio," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

<sup>166</sup> Marcia McLean, "A Democratic Disdain for Life," *Honduras Update* 6:5 (February 1988). "Official Lines on Human Rights," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). Honduran Embassy to the United States, "Honduran Government Self-Portrait," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). "'Triple A' niega amenazas a muerte," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 28, 1989.

<sup>167</sup> "Case Orlando Vásquez: Sin mérito declara juzgado acusación contra Custodio," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 6, 1989. "Para teparle el ojo al macho: Ex-director de PROMITEC procesa a directivo del CODEH," *CODEH* 51 (April 1989). CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1988*: 14.

<sup>168</sup> "Custodio on Meeting at State," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). "Official Lines on Human Rights," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

In order to discredit his own victims and the concept of *desaparición* itself, Gen. Alvarez Martínez had claimed that the “disappeared” had only absconded themselves and left their relatives to unfairly blame the military. Gen. Regalado’s approach was more assertive: human-rights groups were not just “useful idiots” providing terrorists with cover, but *were* the death squads themselves, perpetrating internal purges under guise of the AAA and staging the attacks on their headquarters during the April 1988 curfew. If few Hondurans could be convinced that CODEH was committing false-flag attacks and then calling them false-flag attacks by the state, at least the FF.AA. had established a narrative that was printed alongside any accurate reporting of state murders.

In March 1988 Gen. Regalado announced that the FF.AA. had “uncovered” a plot by well-known human-rights figures, priests, journalists, and professors to assassinate government and military figures, kidnap the rich, and spark conflagration in city and countryside.<sup>169</sup> Anonymous television spots, apparently paid by PROMITEC, claimed that Custodio and Almendáres were Communist agitators attacking democracy.<sup>170</sup> The reactions in *El Tiempo* and *El Heraldo* were disgust and mockery: columnists noted that the state conspiracy theory had coincided with the revelation that officers were smuggling cocaine and marijuana (itself called a campaign to discredit the military<sup>171</sup>) and calls to reduce the military’s budget.<sup>172</sup> Ominously, the threat was not delivered by anonymous and deniable death lists, but by the most powerful man in the coun-

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<sup>169</sup> “Insiste López Contreras en acusar a Custodio de actos criminales,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1988. “¿Un plan terrorista en Honduras?” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 82 (February 1988). “Azcona: A mitad de su mandato (Hacia un balance general),” *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 4-11. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1989* (1990): 9.

<sup>170</sup> “‘Guerra de carteles’ contra el CODEH y su presidente,” *CODEH* 6:46 (July 1988).

<sup>171</sup> “Coronel Martínez Ávila: Orquestan campaña para desacreditar FF.AA.,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 2, 1988.

<sup>172</sup> “General Regalado Hernández: Reducción del presupuesto militar debilitará sistema democrático,” *Proyecciones Militares* 9:81 (September-October 1988): 5.

try, Regalado publicly listing names of people as the enemies of all Hondurans and threatening the post-1984 democratization.<sup>173</sup>

*El Herald*’s own far-right columnist Moisés de Jesús Ulloa Duarte had made a comprehensive denunciation of human-rights groups in March 1987. Foreign agents, “hidden behind apparently healthy and well-intentioned purposes, such as the defense of human rights [...] have accomplished nothing other than backing the communist regime of Nicaragua and attempting a similar system in Honduras.” Resurrecting Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s claims, he concluded that young disappeared persons had been lured “behind the Iron, Bamboo and Banana Curtains to receive Marxist indoctrination, techniques of terrorism and subversion” to become Honduran “Maurice Bishops.”<sup>174</sup> Government front groups insinuated that Custodio was perhaps Salvadoran<sup>175</sup> and he was arrested as early as 1982 for having a son studying in the Soviet Union—an arrangement that was entirely legal.<sup>176</sup>

Anonymous death lists and bombings persisted through 1989, and officers preemptively blamed leftist “plans” for any conceivable hitch in that year’s elections.<sup>177</sup> Gen. Regalado paid for more PROMITEC spots for the election, juxtaposing scenes of violence and armed insurrection with human-rights, peace, and union activists on TV.<sup>178</sup> The “discovery” of another plot was repeated in November 1989, Gen. Regalado now adding that Custodio was an agent of Panama’s

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<sup>173</sup> “Asegura Regalado Hernández: Existe plan terrorista para desestabilizar el gobierno,” *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 6, 1988. “Letter of María Elena E. de Custodio,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). Movimiento Popular Hondureño, “Defamatory Charges Against Honorable Hondurans by the Chief of the Armed Forces,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

<sup>174</sup> Bishop had led the revolutionary government of Grenada 1979-83. Moisés de Jesús Ulloa Duarte, “Aparecen los desaparecidos,” *El Herald*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 6, 1987.

<sup>175</sup> Oscar Anibal Puerto, “Desesperación diplomático o tragedia planificada,” *CODEH* 6:43 (February-March 1988). “‘Guerra de carteles’ contra el CODEH y su presidente,” *CODEH* 6:46 (July 1988). “Beyond the Trial: Zenaida Velásquez,” *Honduras Update* 6:11-12 (August-September 1988).

<sup>176</sup> “Demands Presented by the Honduran Leftists to the Honduran Government,” *Honduras Update* 1:2 (October? 1982).

<sup>177</sup> CODEH, “¿Conspiración y plan subversivo de las Fuerzas Armadas?” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 21, 1989.

<sup>178</sup> “Derechos humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 63 (July 1986). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 124. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1989*: 9, 13.

Manuel Noriega as well as Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega.<sup>179</sup> Presumably the top commanders of AAA were aware that nobody would be *convinced* that CODEH had planted bombs against its own building. But the state actions and claims functioned to delay reaction, constrain political action and social interaction, and ensure that repression continued. While the press explicitly pointed to the bombings as perpetrated by the death squads, the state continued to blame a phantom revival of the 1981-82 Cinchoneros.

Azcona and Gen. Regalado repeatedly humiliated themselves, constantly claiming and then retracting Contra successes, or denouncing violent conspiracies by respected clergy and human-rights activists. While officialdom may have been trapped by its own rhetoric, the Honduran people were no less trapped by the logic of the violence that the state was still able to wield. The assertions, retractions, and public reactions took place in a situation marked by increasing democratization—the ability to outright mock the Commander-in-Chief—a regime of force that murdered as many as Gen. Alvarez Martínez and had terminated the 1984-86 changes within the state itself, and an actual surge in common crime.

### The Perpetrator-Victims: The Death Squad Versus its Creators

The “Argentine Method” gave Gen. Alvarez Martínez his tools for interpretation as well as for torture. He used them to build an apparatus of repression and denial that was able to outlast the 1982-83 withdrawal of Argentinean aid and even the general's own 1984 ouster. Battalion 3-16's death toll was orders of magnitude smaller than those of Argentina, or the mass repression and violence next door in El Salvador and Guatemala, but its murders through the end

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<sup>179</sup> CODEH, “¿Conspiración y plan subversivo de las Fuerzas Armadas?” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 21, 1989.

of the decade even as Honduras democratized and came under increasing attention from the international press.

The methods of state and parastate violence developed in 1970s Latin America against civilians could also be directed against the military regime itself. This could be 1. ordered from the top, deliberately wielded against the more Constitutionally-bound military officers, as in Chile, or 2. from lower down in the hierarchy, with the secret police and death squads committing violence in order to undermine, discredit, and pressure the military or civilian leaders of the state—Brazil and Argentina. Battalion 3-16 likewise used Gen. Regalado’s 1986 restoration of state protection to turn their violence against the state itself, publicly attacking death-squad members who were threatening to defect and turn witness in the IACHR case—and eventually targeting Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Regalado themselves. Perpetrators (or their survivors) then turned to the human-rights groups they themselves had fought for protection. This is important not because of simple irony, or because Honduras was relatively unique in the era for conflicts among the covert perpetrators emerging into the open.<sup>180</sup>

These were the architects of a two-pronged system that imposed physical violence and then covered it up with rhetorical discredit, to undermine the credibility of anyone who might warrant witnesses that could tie the state to abduction and murder. Once they themselves became targeted, these officers went to the international press and to CODEH and made themselves into the witnesses they had spent years fighting. The “conversion” of perpetrators most exposed the gap between 1. the generals’ claims and 2. the force they resorted to instead.

Starting in 1968 Brazilian secret-police units launched false “terrorist” bombings to blame the guerrillas, and then in 1974-79 to undermine the plans of *de facto* President Gen. Ern-

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<sup>180</sup> The Sanctuary movement faced a new dilemma later in the decade: taking their usual risks, but now in bringing Salvadoran *perpetrators*, now threatened by their former squad members, to safety in Mexico or the United States—alongside their own victims.

esto Geisel for a managed transition to formal electoral democracy. These were not “rogue” units turning against the officers, but had the full protection of their immediate superiors and the military as an institution while they attacked its leadership.<sup>181</sup> In Chile, with its tradition of democracy longer by decades than any state (other than Uruguay), Gen. Pinochet used political murder to overcome the resistance to his personal rule from even conservative officers: rabid anticommunism and fascist terrorists were used as tools of power struggle within the military, as well as disarticulating civil society.<sup>182</sup> Salvadoran hardliners turned their protection racket against the oligarchical families that had built up the Army and paramilitaries for a century, and eagerly sent reformist junior officers to the frontlines of the fight against the FMLN.<sup>183</sup>

Gramscian analysis interprets the state as neither being just 1. an enforcement mechanism for the dominant classes, nor 2. a neutral arbiter for contending institutions or military factions, but 3. the *most* interested party in the exercise of power.<sup>184</sup> The internal conflict within the military was not over whether to use state violence to achieve certain ends, but what sort of state the country itself would be—a democracy that guaranteed human and civil rights, a military regime operating on “national security” or the logic of a “protection racket state,” or, in Honduras’s case, an electoral state serving as a façade for death squads and undeclared war against its neighbors. Top officers *had* to protect the death squads planting bombs under their own cars, because the state could not afford to have accountability and an end to impunity, regardless of internal

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<sup>181</sup> Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics* 1988: 19-20, 26-28, 31, 40-42.

<sup>182</sup> Operation Condor had little scruple targeting generals. Condor targeted Bernardo Leighton, Orlando Letelier, and Gens. Carlos Prats precisely because these exiles could bring the country’s various groups together—and undermine Gen. Pinochet’s self-presentation as the unquestionable personal embodiment of the military and the nation. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 42. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 244, 287, 314. David S. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2018): 28-29. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 411-13, 422-23. Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America*, trans. Paul E. Sigmund (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987): 241. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds* 2006: 55, 63, 106, 108. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 310-12.

<sup>183</sup> Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 167, 176-77, 180, 185, 207-09.

<sup>184</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 97.

consequences. Sgt. Florencio Caballero and Gen. Regalado were not victimized by some factional fight within the FF.AA., but forced to join the democratization process to prevent from being disposed of to maintain Battalion 3-16's secrecy. They were forced to personally legitimate a way of knowing that they had fought.

Steve J. Stern warns that remembrance is not aligned entirely with relatives of the disappeared and victims of torture, nor do the perpetrators rely only on forgetting, on preventing the production of knowledge and unmaking established facts.<sup>185</sup> He does not oppose *memoria* and *olvido* against one another, as a matter of simply ignorance versus knowledge.<sup>186</sup> Military regimes sought hegemony even if they could not achieve it over the long run, to portray their seizure of power as a restoration of law and order over chaos and terrorism.

Gen. Pinochet and his backers used “memory as salvation” where September 11, 1973, was a rescue from empty supermarket shelves and street violence—and from Salvador Allende’s secret “Plan Z” to unleash leftist death squads to “disappear” their own allies and blame the Army.<sup>187</sup> But such narratives and frames—all these justifications, assertions, positive claims that the state had to make in order to pursue hegemony—ran the risk of contradiction.

The literature on disappearance has already analyzed the fight for *memoria* between state and survivors, and most of this chapter has emphasized the side of the disappeared. But a new subgenre of *perpetrator* account has shed more light on the operations and motivations of the actual practice of *desaparición* in Chile and Argentina, exposing the movements and tensions within the state as it transitioned to a perpetrator of disappearance and cover-up.

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<sup>185</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* 2004: xxvii-xxviii, 89, 105.

<sup>186</sup> Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* 2013: 294.

<sup>187</sup> “Chile was being cleansed before its rebirth.” Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 67. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* 2004: 108.



Stern examines how the new system of political murder was imposed not just on civilian targets, but on armies and police forces with a tradition of holding themselves above “politics,” even if they had little regard for Uruguay or Chile’s stable democracies.<sup>188</sup> Gen. Pinochet’s Caravan of Death was sent to execute people who had turned themselves in to the Army or police in front of their own captors. Pinochet deliberately isolated his new Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA) from the regular military branches, giving the military plausible deniability against any revelations of terror, rape, and poisoning.<sup>189</sup>

While Chilean and Argentinean soldiers who showed uncertainty or reluctance over the disappearances were threatened or murdered, only one perpetrator went public of his own accord, Argentina’s death-flight pilot Lt. Cdr. Adolfo Scilingo. Stern found Chile’s 1973-90 perpetrators more open; Honduras saw three Battalion 3-16 members flee to Toronto in 1986.<sup>190</sup> Steve Fuller notes that there are certain points where someone holding an ideology—a worldview or system that distorts or obscures reality—discovers that the structures of meaning that once were able to handle contradictions or exceptions in reality were insufficient. “Perpetrator studies” can reveal what boundaries were crossed that allowed these soldiers to discover the falsehood, counterproductiveness, or danger of what they had previously believed.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Both countries nicknamed the “Switzerland of the Americas.”

<sup>189</sup> “Disappearance”—that is, deniable state terror and secret murder of prisoners—was aimed by Gen. Sergio Aréllano Stark at the officers who dissented from the practice of political murder introduced in September 1973. Róniger, “Olvido, memoria colectiva e identidades,” in Groppo and Flier, eds., *La imposibilidad del olvido* 2001: 167. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile* 2004: 41, 48, 56, 108-9. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 316.

<sup>190</sup> Gens. Pinochet and Videla had benefited from the precipitous replacement of more able and democratic generals—Gen. Schneider’s murder by Patria y Libertad and Gen. Prats’s removal, and Raúl Lastiri and Isabel Perón’s appointment of Gen. Videla. They had been named as leaders of their militaries only by the goodwill of the civilian Presidents they overthrew. The Honduran FF.AA. lacked the Argentinean military’s “bureaucratic authoritarianism” and “antipolitical” opposition to Peronism (see Chapter 6, “Alvarez Martínez: Beyond Condor,” n144), and Gen. Alvarez Martínez held power for only a fraction as long as Gen. Pinochet did.

<sup>191</sup> Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 35.

Between 1985 and 1989 the victims of the Honduran Alianza de Acción Anticomunista now included its own members who were threatening to divulge further details, and finally its founder Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez himself. Here the violence was not to threaten the populace, but to keep soldiers and death-squad members themselves in line, to prevent them from revealing details of state violence that would become public knowledge. Its own enforcers were trapped by a larger logic of secrecy, able only to find safety with the same survivors' and human-rights organizations they had been persecuting a few years earlier.

The first murder of an officer was that of the son of a death-squad leader of a prior regime. Ricardo Zúñiga Augustinus had been the power behind the throne of several military regimes between 1956 and 1982: he ran the *Mancha Brava* death squad of the 1960s and was a close personal associate of Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza and Guatemala's Mario Sandoval Alarcón (Chapter 6). Zúñiga had headed the Nationalist Party of Honduras, the civilian wing of the Armed Forces, for decades.<sup>192</sup> Nevertheless, his son Maj. Ricardo Zúñiga Morazán was cashiered, arrested, disappeared, and found stabbed to death by the Contras in "New Nicaragua" September 1985. The younger Zúñiga had openly denounced the CIA and Battalion 3-16, the disappearances, and the government's collaboration. He had traveled to Washington six times under Gen. López Reyes to present proof to Congressional aides that the CIA and Contras were behind over 200 kidnappings and murders.<sup>193</sup> His sister Elizabeth was also threatened with kidnapping

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<sup>192</sup> An "army-party" like Guatemala's Partido Institucional Democrático and Movimiento de Liberación Nacional or El Salvador's Partido de Conciliación Nacional. "Análisis: La caída del general," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 36 (April 1984). Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador's Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000): 151. Meza, *Honduras* 1982: 33. Richard L. Millett, "Historical Setting," in Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* 1984: 39. Morris, "Government and Politics," in *ibid.*: 167.

<sup>193</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 118. Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power* 1988: 5. Council on Hemispheric Affairs, "COHA's 1985 Human Rights Report," press release, Dec. 31, 1985. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 133. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 87, 133-35.

and murder and put on death lists, leading her to publicly endorse CODEH.<sup>194</sup> The Contras' murder of a Nationalist Party scion was not a conventional "disappearance," marking a crisis as the complex counterrevolutionary alliance in the country threatened to break down.<sup>195</sup>

The main death-squad member turned witness was Sgt. Florencio Caballero, who departed Battalion 3-16 October 1983; in 1984 he was cashiered and threatened with elimination, fleeing to El Salvador and then Toronto in June 1986 after almost being machine-gunned on the street by his former compatriots he recognized. As he said, "one could not leave by the same door ... Either one left dead or left disappeared." Battalion 3-16 had already murdered Sgt. Juan Constantino García October 1985 and then his brother. José Barrera Martínez was assigned to execute a fellow 3-16 member after he was jailed by FUSEP for drunkenness: the police found photographs of murder victims.<sup>196</sup> In 1986 Barrera Martínez was accused of treason for having friends suspected of leftism and one of them was murdered, and he deserted in September rather than be disappeared; he was detained 48 days and released after protests, fleeing to Toronto as well.<sup>197</sup>

Sgt. Caballero was the key witness for the IACHR detailing the death squads' structure, evolution, and intensive U.S. leadership and training. He repeatedly gave his warrant as a soldier

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<sup>194</sup> "Un cubano y dos contras en el asesinato de Zúniga Morazán," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 6, 1985. Beatriz López, "Contrarrevolucionarios asesinan a ciudadano hondureño," CENIH, *Honduras Hoy* 4:38 (October 1985). "Amenazan a muerte a columnista de *Tiempo*," *El Tiempo*, Sept. 8, 1986. COHA, "Republic for Rent," press release, Sept. 26, 1986.

<sup>195</sup> John Lofland, "Early Goffman: Style, Structure, Substance, Soul," in Ditton, ed., *The View from Goffman* 1980: 38.

<sup>196</sup> "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. "Confesiones de los torturadores," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 16-22. Tony Equale, "Fighting Subversion—Honduran Style," box 22; collection DG 174 (Central American Historical Institute Records, 1980-1993); Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Penn. McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005: 221.

<sup>197</sup> "Perpetrator studies" can shed some light on why so many Battalion 3-16 members took risks to emigrate and confess, whereas only one Argentinean torturer came forward: the FF.AA. simply threatened the bottom rank of its death squad, and their only justification was "'The screams were good for the country.'" The intricacies of the National Security Doctrine were simply not taught to the enforcers in Honduras's case. "Confesiones de los torturadores," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 16-22. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 116. Crelinsten, "In Their Own Words," in Crelinsten and Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain* 1995: 59.

to defend CODEH against the military's accusations it was subversive.<sup>198</sup> He testified that the torturers and executioners had been picked for their disrepute—specifically chosen from types who would least be believed, convicted murderers from Tegucigalpa's Penitenciaría Central. Members were always tailed when off the clock. Any member who departed or turned witness was dishonorably discharged to mark them as unreliable, and then killed as a matter of policy.<sup>199</sup> *Reaparecida* Inés Murillo (Chapter 7, "State Un-Disappearance") condemned Sgt. Caballero personally as a cruel executioner—a *verdugo*—but also affirmed that "not even a torturer can be deprived of his right to life or respect for his physical, psychological and moral integrity."<sup>200</sup> The *Madres* were already harder to deny and unwarrant than journalists or Jesuits: now the state faced its own members from Battalion 3-16 detailing the death squad and completely confirming the "rumor" of forcible disappearance. Sgt. Caballero's danger to the state's frames and narratives was high enough that *The Washington Post's* Julia Preston was expelled from Honduras in 1988, on grounds of "offenses to the dignity of the country," for having interviewed him. Americas Watch's Joseph Eldridge was hit with an arrest warrant, and he and reporter James LeMoyne were barred from the country after the former wrote about Battalion 3-16. Custodio was accused of paying Sgt. Caballero as part of a larger "campaign of discredit."<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> "Honduras and Contras," *This Week: Central America and Panama* 10:18 (May 11, 1987). "Honduras: Posturas políticas ante las maniobras militares," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987). "El papel de los Estados Unidos," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 75 (July 1987). "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. "Derechos humanos," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 91 (November 1988). "Reyes Caballero habla para *Tiempo*: No me pagó Custodio," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 8, 1988. "Confesiones de los torturadores," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 16-22. Amnesty International 1988: 17-18. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1988*: 13.

<sup>199</sup> "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. "Confesiones de los torturadores," *Desaparecidos*, special 5 (February 1996): 16-22.

<sup>200</sup> "For the Record: Inés Murillo Responds to LeMoyne," *Honduras Update* 6:9-10 (June-July 1988).

<sup>201</sup> Col. Manuel Enrique Suárez Benavides insisted Battalion 3-16 "had been a strictly technical organism, formed by lawyers, economists, psychologists, sociologists among other professionals ... [for] the preparation of analysis and processing of technical data" (a description that actually matches the non-death-squad aspect of its PROMITEC reincarnation under Gen. Regalado). "Carta abierta de ciudadanos canadienses al gobierno, Fuerzas Armadas y pueblo de Honduras en relación a la campaña de amenaza y calumnias en contra del Dr. Ramón Custodio y CODEH,"

On January 5, 1988, former Battalion 3-16 kidnapper and interrogator Sgt. José Isaías Vilorio was machine-gunned by four men, two weeks before he was scheduled testify before the IACHR on his role in abduction and torture. A Cinchonero flag was draped over his body and the alleged guerrilla movement placed a paid item in the newspaper. His widow, however, told reporters that she was entirely unconvinced that the “Cinchoneros” of 1981-82 even existed anymore, instead remarking on the professionalism of the hit.<sup>202</sup> The Honduran government immediately blamed a global communist conspiracy to create martyrs and discredit Tegucigalpa and the FF.AA. Chancellor Carlos López Contreras said that the murder is “probably an antecedent for something spectacular that the left has reserved for the start of the year.” Procurator-General Rubén Darío Zepeda blamed the killing on “bad Hondurans [who] try to confuse national and international public opinion,” like Custodio.<sup>203</sup>

By the end of the 1980s the FF.AA. was burdened with revelations of its criminality and corruption, unable to actually combat either Salvadorans or Nicaraguans (whether Contra or Sandinista). It was described in the press as a source of violence, rather than the only hope of stopping crime. The continued state violence underpinned a succession of reactionary Commanders-in-Chief—Gens. Regalado (1986-90), Arnulfo Cantarero López (1990), and Luis Alonso Discua Elvir (1990-95). Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Regalado had had to give the death squad enough power and deniability to be able to victimize the generals themselves, power over

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CODEH 6:48 (November-December 1988). “Derechos humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 92 (December 1988). Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 248-49.

<sup>202</sup> “1987 in Review,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). “Era miembro del 3-16 y testigo ante la CIDH: Vilorio fue asesinado,” *CODEH* 6:42 (January 1988). “La violencia sin control,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 81 (January 1988). “El inicio del año,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 11, 2nd epoch (January-February 1988): 17-25. “Las figuras del retablo,” *CODEH* 6:44 (April 1988). “ ‘Guerra de carteles’ contra el CODEH y su presidente,” *CODEH* 6:46 (July 1988). “State’s 1988 Country Report, With Notes,” *Honduras Update* 7:7-9 (April-June 1989). CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1988*: 9, 13-14. Leticia Salomón, “Honduras: Violencia y descomposición social,” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 23-32. Eric Shultz, “Court Finds Honduras Guilty,” *Honduras Update* 6:11-12 (August-September 1988). “Familiares del sargento no creen que guerrilleros lo hayan matado,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 7, 1988. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 226, 250.

<sup>203</sup> “¿Conspiración izquierdistas o terrorismo institucional?” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 8, 1988.

their own forms—consumed by the same logic they had unleashed. By 1989 testimony of the crimes of Battalion 3-16, and further crimes to silence those witnesses, extended from the lowest interrogator to the peak of military command, who had once held a place above even the President of the Republic. One after the other they had kept the metaphorical “uniform” intact,<sup>204</sup> even if the former wearer was condemning the entire system he had previously headed. The FF.AA. saw its generals “defect” to the human-rights groups.<sup>205</sup>

The country’s most unimpeachable anticommunists, the ones who had most firmly denied any reality other than the narratives that they proclaimed, who had declared that only those wearing uniform held the truth, were now condemning the paramilitaries they had commanded and helping legitimate human-rights groups. CODEH and COFADEH had built up a new epistemic warrant, one that survivors and even perpetrators sought out.<sup>206</sup> Perpetrator testimony had enough of Dick Pels’s impetus needed to overcome state resistance (especially a state without the necessary social capital) without the state being able to distort it.<sup>207</sup>

In 1987 Ramón Custodio had written that CODEH defended human rights regardless of affiliation or ideology, condemning the murders of death-squad members. CODEH was against injustice and oppression, not in favor of “leftism”—*izquierdista* was a term leveled against anyone pointing out torture and murder and to render those issues suspect in and of themselves. Custodio’s letter concluded that “*izquierdismo*” was not a political description, but a word used to attack freedom of thought and threaten bodily harm.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* 1997 (67, 72) has also noted this use of “the uniform”—there was no “body” of the general inside it, neither personality nor physicality beyond his surface social role.

<sup>205</sup> Jennifer Lackey, “Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others,” in Goldman and Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology* 2011: 73-74.

<sup>206</sup> Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 11.

<sup>207</sup> Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

<sup>208</sup> “CODEH; organización anti-democrática izquierdista,” *CODEH* 5:33 (February 1987).

Gen. Alvarez Martínez's return to Honduras—now as a Pentecostal preacher armed only with his Bible—certainly threatened to reveal Battalion 3-16's particular crimes and death-squad networks. More than that, he could threaten the decade's entire narrative of a defensive army faced with Cinchonero or FMLN terrorists hiding among the unwitting populace. Reporters and U.S. military advisors agreed that Gen. Alvarez Martínez's own assassination on January 25, 1989, showed all the indications of the professionals of the AAA—and not the phantom Cinchoneros whose flag was draped over the corpse. His wife publicly denied that he had been murdered by any new Cinchonero wave, putting herself on record as endorsing the CODEH investigation. The execution was noticeably free of even nominal police investigation.<sup>209</sup> COFADEH made a point of condemning the silencing of the same man who had murdered their loved ones, perpetrated to prevent a witness like the Vilorio and Pavón murders.<sup>210</sup> Even the blatant non-investigation of Alvarez Martínez's death had been a technique introduced 1981-84 to provide the impunity that had let the general blame the "left wing" for his own death squads.<sup>211</sup> One of the first people that Gen. Regalado phoned when his own sons were attacked by explosive in January 1993 was Ramón Custodio. True to the usual mode of denial, Commander-in-Chief Gen. Discua, one of Battalion 3-16's organizers, insisted that the bombing had been a false flag by CODEH's supposed armed wing, the human-rights death squad—just as Gen. Regalado himself had insisted during his tenure a few years earlier.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> "El terrorismo institucional sigue vivo y coleando," *CODEH* 51 (April 1989), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 3, 1989. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 250-51.

<sup>210</sup> COFADEH, "Parientes de desaparecidos no lloran muerte pero sí condenan hecho violento," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 26, 1989.

<sup>211</sup> Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 293.

<sup>212</sup> "Contra hijo de Regalado Hernández: CODEH investiga atentado porque no confía la policía," *El Tiempo*, Jan. 16, 1993. "Es parte de una campaña para desacreditar al CODEH: Custodio," *El Tiempo*, Jan. 26, 1993. "Supuesto grupo justiciero se responsabiliza de atentado contra hijo del general Regalado," *El Tiempo*, Jan. 26, 1993. "Comi-

Death squads consumed their own members, and then their own generals: surviving witnesses promptly turned to the same human-rights organizations they had spent the decade discrediting and persecuting. The logic of violence turned former oppressors into ironic recruits, short-circuiting any binary of domination versus resistance, *memoria* and *olvido*.<sup>213</sup> The literature on justice for human-rights violations and violators in Latin America has emphasized trial and punishment, or truth and reconciliation. But here death-squad members were converted into witnesses and survivors themselves, their former companions and subordinates victimizing them and forcing them to publicly declare that their old targets were correct: the military, not any phantom guerrilla, was the real threat facing the nation. It was not all a Soviet-created conspiracy theory (Chapter 8). Epistemologists describe how dramatic shifts in what remains tacit and unsaid—shifts which are “backstage,” not immediately obvious—can dramatically change the framing and meaning of what is argued in public.<sup>214</sup>

## Conclusion

The practice of state murder in the late 1970s and early 80s meant changes on even a grammatical level: *desaparecer* was made into a transitive verb—people did not “disappear,” they were “disappeared.”<sup>215</sup> Disappearance serves to 1. deny the deaths and 2. to intimidate the population with the same deaths: Stanley Cohen summarizes this process as “nothing happened, and they deserved it.”<sup>216</sup> The issue of disappearances remained potentially uncontrollable, requir-

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sionado de Derechos Humanos y el CODEH investigarán asesinato de Pavón y Landaverde,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 28, 1993.

<sup>213</sup> Vincent Druliolle, “Remembering and its Places in Postdictatorship Argentina,” in Lessa and Druliolle, eds., *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone* 2011: 16.

<sup>214</sup> Ackermann, review of Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, *Erkenntnis* 33:1 (July 1990): 134. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 52.

<sup>215</sup> To treat them as case-by-case murders only allows the perpetrators to divert attention and analysis from their organized, systematic violence.

<sup>216</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 84.



ing risky actions by Washington and Tegucigalpa. Human-rights activists and survivors were organizing themselves to provide domestic warrant for news of forced disappearance: the stories entering the international press from this small supposed backwater country were about the same type of state-concealed murder that had made Argentina into a global cause. CODEH and COFADEH started judiciary and historical processes that would provide the confirmation of their members' *testimonios*.

Disappearance requires more than simply concealing a crime or obfuscating its perpetrator: Cohen's "literal denial" negated the abduction of dissidents, but "interpretive denial" asserted a narrative that the perpetrators were not heavily-armed plainclothesmen in illegal vehicles who rebuffed the regular police: anyone on the street could see the Argentine Method in action, so some sophistication in denial was required. Gen. Regalado quickly accused human-rights figures of undermining Honduran democracy, fitting with Cohen's insight that democratization can be used to *support* denial as well as to allow for investigation and the pursuit of justice.<sup>217</sup> The death squad especially targeted witnesses to the IACHR case against the Honduran, eventually silencing Alvarez Martínez himself in 1989: his widow then turned to the same CODEH her husband had threatened 1981-84. Regalado still reverted to cruder modes of denial without making an effort to win any hegemony in 1986-90.

Gen. Alvarez Martínez's ouster allowed the FF.AA. to temporarily mix admission with further denial—blaming the now-exiled general to bury the disappearances. This used Cohen's "implicatory denial," diffusing responsibility, reframing state crimes as errors and excesses dur-

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<sup>217</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 10, 104. Peter Fourie and Melissa Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism: South Africa's Failure to Respond* (London: Routledge, 2010): 55, 200.

ing counterinsurgent actions once they were admitted.<sup>218</sup> Gen. López Reyes had attempted more sophisticated methods of separating the FF.AA. from the murders, but Gen. Regalado restarted the death squad and was left with only the crudest modes of denying the murders and asserting unconvincing narratives. The Honduran state was found guilty of forcible disappearance in international courts after 1986, but Gen. Regalado continued the murders—perpetrating as many in 1986-90 as during the more notorious 1981-84 period. But the murder of witnesses only drove perpetrators themselves into the proverbial arms of the human-rights groups—providing CODEH with unprecedented warrant: “perpetrator-victims” became the most warranted survivors/witnesses. So while Gen. Regalado’s regime could still murder IACHR witnesses and get the press to report that the newspapers and human-rights movements were commanded by the KGB (Chapters 3 and 8), even he had to flee its car bombs.

Unlike Latin American regimes like El Salvador, Chile, or Argentina, whose death squads generally maintained the types of silence necessary to their continued impunity, Battalion 3-16 provided numerous perpetrator testimonies, which were crucial to the Organization of American States’ ruling that the Honduran state was guilty of *lèse-humanité* (without hedging clichés like “extremist violence” or the “fog of war” when fighting guerrillas). Latin America’s 1985-92 period of democratization was accompanied by a series of truth-and-reconciliation commissions, judicial inquests, and trials of officers. But historians have critiqued the ensuing wave of official reports to serve the transition from dictatorship to democracy—that they only reworked the state’s crimes into national myths used for the re-founding of new civilian republics, that they preferred catharsis over justice, admitting them only as shocking events but not

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<sup>218</sup> Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* 1989: 72.

going any further.<sup>219</sup> By contrast, activists sought national accountability rather than national reconciliation—a *nunca más* that meant what it said, without any deal or barter, *ni olvido ni perdón, no impunity*.<sup>220</sup>

Bodies were hidden and then deliberately revealed, people kidnapped or brought out alive as a “show” to prove nobody had been disappeared at all. Terror by the state was used to claim terror by its victims and by dissidents, to insist on a narrative that the country was on the brink, threatened by the far left and (perhaps) the far right, with only the military able to preserve human rights. But by the end of the decade the generals themselves would be forced to personally legitimate the same organizations they had persecuted.

The July 1988 IACHR ruling was the first judgment on Honduras’s disappearances, drawing on extensive amounts of in-depth testimony from perpetrators as well as survivors; the court ruling was close to Argentina’s 1985 Trial of the Juntas, and paved the road for the 1995 trial of the officers responsible for Battalion 3-16 in Honduras.<sup>221</sup> That is, the IACHR verdict was one of the most detailed moral and legal reckonings outside the Southern Cone. Eleven officers and a dozen more involved in Battalion 3-16 were charged by Carlos Roberto Reina’s government—at real risk to the prosecutors’ lives. The officers fled to various bases and the

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<sup>219</sup> Stephen, “Testimony in Truth Commissions and Social Movements in Latin America,” in Detwiler and Breckenridge, eds., *Pushing the Boundaries of Latin American Testimony* 2012: 111.

<sup>220</sup> For Chile, the 1991 Rettig Report framed Gen. Pinochet as a consequence of polarization and left-wing intolerance, as a breakdown of governance rather than a military faction attacking a pluralistic democracy headed by Salvador Allende. Both victims and perpetrators were treated alike, and the premises were closer to the *golpistas*’ than to the survivors’. Argentina’s reports likewise blamed a breakdown of tolerance on both sides of one unified political spectrum—a rupture of Argentina’s unitary, consensual political culture. For Guatemala, the genocidal massacres of 1970-86 were depicted as an eruption of violence, a breakdown of the state, a failure of Liberal social guarantees. The analysts insisted that the state and its successive modernizations were founded in and formed by violence, especially the “counterinsurgent democracy” that was left as the legacy of the 1985 transition, relegating the left wing outside the electoral spectrum. The transition process that began in Honduras in 1981 was managed by the armed forces no less than in Vinicio Cerezo’s Guatemala. Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 259, 332. Greg Grandin, *Who is Rigoberta Menchú?* (London and New York: Verso, 2011): 40, 45-46, 53-54, 56, 72.

<sup>221</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 329.

FF.AA. insisted that civilian courts had no jurisdiction: the officers remained on the bases for years.<sup>222</sup> Criminal trials for soldiers outside the military's own separate *fuero* jurisdiction started with the 1991 murder of student Riccy Mabel Martínez, providing a precedent that provided the first scratch in the impunity the FF.AA. had built around itself.<sup>223</sup>

The *de jure* end to military impunity in Honduras came in 1995-98 at the same time that Argentina's systems of amnesties and pardons was falling apart, especially after Lt. Cdr. Adolfo Scilingo's 1995 perpetrator-testimony of the sedated victims of his death flights.<sup>224</sup> But there was no conclusive end to the FF.AA.'s political violence, nor any formal truth-and-reconciliation process: 1980s murders of political dissidents by Nicaraguan and Honduran soldiers transitioned into the thousands of teenagers murdered in "social cleansing" under President Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé 1998-2002 after Hurricane Mitch: the police blamed their mothers.<sup>225</sup> The 2009 coup reinstated a *democracia de fachada* under an unbroken series of *narco*-Presidents—and was itself endorsed by CODEH's Ramón Custodio, who denied all human-rights violations while the FF.AA. unleashed a wave of rape and murder.<sup>226</sup>

Information about the state's disappearances was strictly limited inside the institutions responsible: the Honduran civil government in Tegucigalpa, and the headquarters of the U.S. State Department and CIA at Foggy Bottom and Langley, were treated as the targets of secrecy by Gen. Alvarez Martínez or Amb. Negroponete, rather than as its enforcers. The testimony of Inés Murillo and others about CIA involvement reached the U.S. press only in 1995, with *The Balti-*

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<sup>222</sup> Binns, *The United States in Honduras* 2000: 308.

<sup>223</sup> Elías Ruíz, *El Astillero: Masacre y justicia* (Tegucigalpa, Editorial Guaymuras: 1992): 74. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 70-71, 95-96, 127. Torres Calderón, *Honduras, la transición inconclusa hacia una democracia* 2011: 34.

<sup>224</sup> Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* 2016: 259.

<sup>225</sup> Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard* 2008: 48-49, 57-60. See also Martin Mowforth, *The Violence of Development: Resource Depletion, Environmental Crises and Human Rights Abuses in Central America* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

<sup>226</sup> Custodio himself came to deny the 2006 coup against Manuel Zelaya and the murders and disappearances that resumed: the situation went beyond Tábora's thesis rivalry between men running militant party politics.

*more Sun*'s investigative reports. The 1997 report by the Frederick P. Hitz of the CIA was prompted by *The Sun*, the Father Guadalupe Carney case (Chapter 7, "Real Guerrillas"), and Gary Webb's 1996 FDN cocaine-trafficking in *The San Jose Mercury News*. But the Inspector-General himself describes being repeatedly stonewalled, and his report was censored from even the Honduran state: President Carlos Roberto Reina and Human Rights Commissioner Leo Valladares were unable to see any more than what was left uncensored for public consumption. Even today in 2023—a quarter century—the CIA report continues to conceal the names of all FF.AA. and Contra CIA assets involved in the disappearances, the Honduran state not trusted with the names of which of its own officials and officers were responsible, while U.S. officials full well know their names. Tegucigalpa remains dependent on Washington to learn what the state itself had done.<sup>227</sup> "Epistemic injustice" is defined as harmful not simply because certain testimony is doubted or lacks the vocabulary for full expression. The confirmation and transmission of true knowledge is crucial to democracy, to bring the process of democratization beyond simply voting.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> This strongly parallels Hondurans' complaints that they had to find out from *foreign* press what was happening in their own country! (See Chapter 5, "Azcona: Two Holy Weeks.") This reverses the flow of the main subject of this dissertation—how information about events in Honduras did/did not flow from local observers to the international news to the U.S. public sphere. Vernon Loeb, "CIA Won't Name Hondurans Suspected of Executing Rebel," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 4, 1998. Valladares Lanza and Peacock, *In Search of Hidden Truths* 1998: 64.

<sup>228</sup> Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* 2013: 3-4.

## Chapter 8

# A State Conspiracy Theory: Anticommunism in Theory and Practice

### Introduction

Honduras's decade-long involvement in the counterrevolutionary Contra War, and the Honduran state's multifaceted denial of stories and undermining of witnesses and those institutions warranting them, were components of the longer Latin American Cold War—one that extended back to even before World War II, to the massacres in Argentina 1919-22, Colombia 1928, and El Salvador 1932. To the continent's *campesinos*, students, politicians, clergy, and tens of thousands more, anticommunism was not a political doctrine or a geostrategic concern over influence by Moscow or Havana, but a foreign-supported military machine that subjected hundreds of thousands to torture, murder, and general atrocities on a scale of inventive sadism not recorded since perhaps the Dirlwanger Battalion. As an ideology, 1970s and 80s anticommunism in Latin America had to justify use of force against the working class, aimed not against guerrillas, but at their civilian populations.<sup>1</sup>

In Guatemala, escalating political violence since the 1960s ended with outright genocide against the Maya of Guatemala, with over 100,000 murdered in the span of seventeen months in 1982-83. Since the 1969 “Soccer War” against Honduras, El Salvador's forces turned an accelerating wave of violence against *campesinos*, the middle class, and even the oligarchy that had funded the military for a century to reduce the lower classes to landless laborers, repeatedly and by force. This culminated in 75,000 deaths between 1979 and 1992, peaking in a second *Matan-*

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<sup>1</sup> The Cold-Warrior faction put in charge of the Central American covert warfare were almost entirely veterans of Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, especially the Phoenix Program, which killed over 25,000 Vietnamese as associates of the National Liberation Front/Vietcong, targeting civilians (see Chapter 6, “Introduction,” n2). Jonathan Joseph, “On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations: A Scientific Realist Account of Hegemony,” in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 78. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 51. Nick Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Co.: 2013).

za that murdered 10,000 in 1980 alone. The violence was cyclonic—bayonetting of infants, teens castrated and flayed for having a Delegate of the Word as their father, children forced to pull the pin of a grenade hung around their father’s neck, raped and murdered women’s underwear kept as trophies hung on barbed wire, youths seized for their age and executed, hundreds of children herded into the village church being decorated for Christmas and filled with bullets from the Lake City Ordnance Plant, Missouri.<sup>2</sup> Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Argentinean clergy, even archbishops, were routinely murdered (Chaper 6, “Doctrines of National Security”).

Robert Sierakowski details the ideological formation of Nicaragua’s soldiers, their training and identity as a counterrevolutionary force before and after their reconstitution in Honduras. As they fled across the border they acquired a “visceral hatred of the civilian population” that greeted them with cheers since they had disguised themselves as FSLN fighters: their belief that the populace had betrayed the state helped drive the violence that killed over 25,000 Nicaraguans 1978-79—cities flattened, massacres of whole hamlets and patients and doctors alike in hospital wards. As the “Contras” they remained unable to face FSLN forces, favoring civilian “soft targets”: and “any foreigner who voluntarily aids in development and reconstruction projects is considered an enemy,” one commander warned. Dewey Clarridge blithely testified 1984 that the Contras routinely murdered “civilians and Sandinista officials in the provinces, as well as heads

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<sup>2</sup> Claudia Bernardi, “An Angel Passes By: Silence and Memories at the Massacre of El Mozote,” in Marjorie Agosín, ed., *Inhabiting Memory: Essays on Memory and Human Rights in the Americas* (San Antonio, Tex.: Wings Press, 2011): 28-50. Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 24, 32-33, 142-50, 320. Noam Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (Tucson, Ariz.: Odonian Press, 2005): 39. Leslie Cockburn, *Out of Control: The Story of the Reagan Administration’s Secret War in Nicaragua, the Illegal Arms Pipeline, and the Contra Drug Connection* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987): 111. Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985): 83. Ed Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1991): 25-26. Armin Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* (Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 163. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *War Against the Poor: Low-Intensity Conflict and Christian Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989): 15. Paul Ramshaw and Tom Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial: The New York War Crimes Tribunal on Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1987): 24. Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012): 206-13, 288, 305.

of cooperatives, nurses, doctors and judges,” but, “After all, this is war.” The ex-Guardsmen’s go-to method was to force the whole village—or the women, children, and seniors left while the men were in the fields or Militia service—to assemble; then the village teacher, clinician, pharmacist, or agronomist was taken aside and shot in front of everyone, or buried up to their neck.<sup>3</sup>

Anticommunism was not simply a motive for repression, but a way of understanding and interpreting the social world. Being an ideology, anticommunism had to be able to be used by states to maintain narratives, rationalize unexpected surprises, and handle potentially-discrediting events.<sup>4</sup> Like Goffman’s “framing,” it supplies meaningfulness to events: it allows plausible alternative explanations for them<sup>5</sup>—such as Cohen-style denials—or conceals events that might

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<sup>3</sup> Between 1981 and 1984 329 government employees, 49 health workers, 89 adult-education teachers, 15 primary-school teachers, 436 cooperative peasants, Delegates of the Word, and Miskito, and 3,500 children and teens were recorded killed by the Contras in Nicaragua. Clarridge insisted this did not violate Executive Order 12333 banning assassinations—since the targets were not heads of state. Ronald Reagan’s campaign rhetoric that not one U.S. citizen would be victimized again by foreigners decidedly did *not* apply to Ronni Moffitt 1976, Bill Stewart 1979, Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, and Jean Donovan 1980, Michael P. Hammer, Mark D. Pearlman, and Stanley Rother 1981, Dial Torgerson 1983, or Ben Linder 1987. Americas Watch, *Human Rights in Central America: A Report on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua* (New York: Americas Watch, 1984): 24. David Basano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012): 266-69. E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987): 54. Eva Gold, ed., *Invasion: A Guide to the U.S. Military Presence in Central America* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, National Action/Research on the Military-Industrial Complex, 1985): 8. Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007): 116. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 185-87. International Court of Justice, *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America): Affidavit of Edgar Chamorro* (The Hague: International Court of Justice, 1985): 7, 16. Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua, the Price of Intervention: Reagan’s Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 39. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 131-32. Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 117. Roger C. Peace, *A Call to Conscience: The Anti/Contra War Campaign* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012): 21. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 134, 193. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 335. Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: 75-76, 96-98, 103-04. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 103, 117, 357.

<sup>4</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 28, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992): 118-20.



contradict the narrative, which Chomsky emphasizes.<sup>6</sup> Ideology-critique emphasizes its roles in preventing knowledge: it is not simply a collection of dominant distorting ideas, but mystifies, prevents recognition, bars inquiry, restricts the permissible.<sup>7</sup> Chomsky notes that the media is the main obstacle to public understanding of foreign policy, allowing the Administration to act without public or Congressional oversight.<sup>8</sup> However, it does not have to be all-encompassing and universal, fending off all challenge, but, like hegemony, deal with exceptions—preventing stories, evading detail.<sup>9</sup>

Ronald Reagan, Otto Reich, and Gen. Humberto Regalado all claimed that accurate reports of the Central American counterrevolutionary war were 1. propaganda planted by the Soviet bloc and 2. proof that the information-transmission networks of the “free world” were themselves tools of a grand plot directed by the FSLN, FMLN, and the Kremlin. U.S. authorities designated even certain dialects of Spanish, or a story’s human or geographical sources—“guerrilla” territory—as reason enough not to follow up on a story. This chapter analyzes the elements—and, ultimately, the vulnerabilities—of the state attacks on individual witnesses and on warranting institutions.

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<sup>6</sup> Anticommunism was identified among Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s five big “filters” of how the press mediated all foreign news to the U.S. audience: however, it remained unexamined by them, almost taken for granted. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 1974: 207. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 1, 29-32, 91. Piers Robinson, “Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?” in Joan Pedro-Caraña, Daniel Broudy, and Jeffery Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness* (London: University of Westminster Press, 2018): 56. Walter C. Soderlund et al., *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality: The Caribbean Basin, 1953-1992* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2001): 286.

<sup>7</sup> Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 180.

<sup>8</sup> In the cases of most all members of the U.S. public (except Witness for Peace and other solidarity travelers, see Chapter 3), foreign policy is qualitatively different from economic, educational, or racial issues, for instance. It can only come into their experience through the media—Presidential speeches, journalists on-site, commentary by experts or by think tanks; years later they can re-experience it, as “history.” Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 53-55, 57.

<sup>9</sup> James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 150. Charles W. Mills, “Ideology,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 104.

Anticommunism, particularly that developed in the 1950s-70s United States and Argentina (Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security”), blamed the remotest unrest on Soviet or Cuban machinations. The same ideology could easily be used to attack contrary news about those same wars as “active measures” planted by the Eastern Bloc. But hegemony and ideology also require that their premises and operations remain tacit and inexplicit—that is, unexamined.<sup>10</sup> U.S. and Honduran officials were faced with public debate over a foreign policy they could not defend or even admit, and made explicit claims against the media.

One of the Gramscians’ definition of hegemony is that it must allow a state to be able to withstand the fallout from the failure of its ideology<sup>11</sup>: in the case of Iran-Contra, one interpretation of why Reagan survived was Congress’s own anticommunism and reluctance to involve itself too much in foreign policy or initiate a second Watergate, now reframed as negative—challenging a President cleared of personal misdoing, and during a time of international crisis.<sup>12</sup> But “ideology” or Chomsky’s “narrative” does not have to be widely held by the public: Reagan did not have to *convince* the public toward supporting the Contra War, only reframe the issue to control the salience of particular stories, to lower the need for outright denial, to delay response rather than withstand sustained scrutiny or contradictory revelations.<sup>13</sup> The New Right had been

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<sup>10</sup> Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 150.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 51. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation* (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 4.

<sup>12</sup> W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1988): 55, 58. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 64. Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989): 5-7, 86. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 22, 257. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 146-47, 153-54.

<sup>13</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 34. Karen S. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 190. Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996): 170-71.

voted into power 1980, but had not been able to secure mass public support for their policies.<sup>14</sup> Unable to build widespread support for the wars in El Salvador or Nicaragua,<sup>15</sup> the U.S. and Honduran states focused on securing a narrower sort of hegemony—not over the sum of positions and narratives shared by the public, but determining the limits of the print and broadcast media discussion.<sup>16</sup> Mark Hertsgaard’s conclusion is that Reagan’s “audience” was the press—not the public that read, heard, and viewed the media it produced. Rather than winning them over with massive popularity, or charisma as an actor, the White House pressured the media against any potential negative coverage: Reagan relied on the media to provide him with his metaphorical “Teflon.”<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the need to provide a *post-facto* response to distant incidents, the White House and the Honduran state used their media access to denounce the selfsame media for reporting and investigating the stories in the first place. This process was stronger than Goffman’s conceptualizations of “looping” or Cohen’s denialism: it targeted analyses independent from those of the state. Anticommunism worked not just to socially marginalize the witnesses but exclude them

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<sup>14</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 1. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 23-24. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989): 203.

<sup>15</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson in fact had decided to throw men into South Vietnam 1964 to save the Great Society’s programs from the supposed deranged warmonger Barry Goldwater—but the Administration was quickly made aware that Indochina was unwinnable (Chapter 1, “3: The Specter of Failure”). David M. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005): 9-10. James C. Cox and Alvin I. Goldman, “Accuracy in Journalism: An Economic Approach,” in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 193, 198, 205, 212. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008): 69. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 306. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 95. Willard C. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 214. Gregory A. Olson, George N. Dionisopoulos and Steven R. Goldzwig, eds., “The Rhetorical Antecedents to Vietnam, 1945-1965,” in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *World War II and the Cold War: The Rhetoric of Hearts and Minds* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018): 335-37. Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 179, 189.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing* 2005: 1-4.

<sup>17</sup> Especially Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 203.

from discourse, from communication and knowledge-building.<sup>18</sup> Their so-called “evidence” simply did not have to be examined, because they were not making an independent observation but repeating a global discredit campaign aimed at the Contra War: this framing was intended to turn the stories into further proof of the Kremlin conspiracy.<sup>19</sup>

Labeling the press as threats to democracy and as apologists for terrorists and state enemies not only “reframed” stories but was targeted at the entire apparatus of coverage itself, manipulating what gave news its meaning.<sup>20</sup> Instead, witnesses, church groups, the press, NGOs were all serving as dupes and plants of a wily, intractably-hostile, all-subversive Enemy conspiracy, which could express itself in any way imaginable and hide itself from all detection, leaving no trace.<sup>21</sup> This is classic conspiracy theory—the nation’s enemies are everywhere and the remaining patriots are besieged by Soviet agents in the press pool and even the House of Representatives.

The need to fight the press and Congress clashed with the need to avoid specificity, for hegemonic narratives to be presented as taken-for-granted<sup>22</sup>: Chomsky’s “narrative” puts forward no proof or argument, and therefore cannot be challenged.<sup>23</sup> But he notes the wilder accusations

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<sup>18</sup> Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., “Introduction,” *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 1. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 3-4. Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 279.

<sup>19</sup> Robert K. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 36.

<sup>20</sup> Goffman noted that framing is an infinitely -recursive process, and so just one reframing (the “global Communist smear campaign,” in this case) could be used to rekey the entire “structure.” Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 9. A. Javier Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 40.

<sup>21</sup> The White House and its far-right affiliates tried to “un-peer” Central American and U.S. witnesses trying to tell their stories in the United States—they were not fellow conversants describing what they had seen and been told, but vectors, plants and dupes of an irreducibly hostile, constantly subversive, infinitely cunning enemy greater than Hitler. Alvin I. Goldman, “Social Process Reliabilism: Solving Justification Problems in Collective Epistemology,” in Jennifer Lackey, ed., *Essays in Collective Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 20.

<sup>22</sup> Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 207.

<sup>23</sup> What was “Communist” was defined as eternally and unswervingly opposed to everything that could be imagined on the side of “capitalism,” the “West,” the “Free World.” But even if journalists and officials stuck to the “correct”

against Managua drew comment by the same U.S. newspapers that carried them—but still managed to serve the function of preventing alternative interpretations. Even if the press demurred about the most extravagant 1984-86 tales of drug-running Sandinistas and EPS T-55 tanks two days' drive from Harlingen and Brownsville, Texas, it never gave the Latin American Studies Association or the Council on Hemispheric Affairs any level of coverage close to the what they gave Administration claims.<sup>24</sup> Eventually a Sandinista victory would make “the map of Central America covered in a sea of red, eventually lapping at our own borders.”<sup>25</sup> Even while this White House approach ran tremendous risks—especially the cover-up of the Río Sumpul and El Mozote massacres—it provided the Administration with a flexibility against true stories that was preemptive, proactive, and pervasive. This resiliency must also be understood as separate from Administration “credibility” or simple opinion polls.<sup>26</sup>

Hegemony is harder to accomplish for a military regime or police state: without the ability to obtain public backing, Machiavelli's metaphorical centaur canters toward force, outrunning

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interpretation or toed the same line, they were not spontaneous nor automatically enforced: Cold-War secrecy was key to promoting a certain, tacit interpretation of the world. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 118. Robinson, “Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?” in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 56.

<sup>24</sup> Reagan even joked that “the Sandinistas would make it about as far as the shopping center in Pecos before [quarterback] Roger Staubach came out of retirement ... teamed up with some off-duty Texas Rangers and the front four of the Dallas Cowboys, and pushed the Sandinistas down the river, out across the Gulf, and right back to Havana where they belong.” Opponents of White House policy still acceded to its terminology, narrative, or paradigm: the Sandinista buildup is unacceptable, Communist expansionism must be stopped, if even half of these allegations are true ...—only the means, not the ends, of foreign policy were disputed. (See Chapter 3, “The Reagan Doctrine,” n144). Reagan, “Remarks at a Campaign Fundraiser for William Clements in Dallas, Texas,” Mar. 23, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-campaign-fundraiser-william-clements-dallas-texas>. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 46-47. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 77-78. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 21, 205. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 61. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: xi, 34, 140, 298. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 205. William LeoGrande, “The Contras and Congress,” in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Milton, U.K.: Routledge, 1987): 214, 222-23. LeoGrande, “The Controversy Over Contra Aid, 1981-90: A Historical Narrative,” in Richard Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy Over Contra Aid* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993): 101-04, 120. Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 190.

<sup>25</sup> “Remarks to Jewish Leaders During a White House Briefing on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” Mar. 5, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-jewish-leaders-during-white-house-briefing-united-states-assistance>.

<sup>26</sup> Elliott Abrams and J. Edward Fox, interviewees, “Public Opinion and Reagan Policy: Administration Commentaries,” in Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy* 1993: 106, 112-15.

any efforts to convince.<sup>27</sup> Without hegemony, a state has force—but lacks other strengths more important for long-term durability.<sup>28</sup> Neither the Reagan Administration nor Gen. Regalado avoided making detailed claims in 1984-86, despite the absence of a U.S. or Honduran public consensus for the war. At the same time, the scandal that started when Eugene Hasenfus was shot down—in Barry Seal’s own former airplane—did little to interrupt Congress’s 1985-88 aid votes for the Contras. So I argue not whether or not the White House and FF.AA. successfully constructed a consensus by mid-decade, but that they 1. believed that their hegemony over press coverage was endangered but 2. kept falling back on crude Red-baiting and visible force—false guerrillas and tanks on the streets.

### Marches for the Fatherland: The Un-Civil Right

Throughout the 1980s officials of the Honduran government and armed forces expressed an anticommunist and anti-Salvadoran rhetoric, largely connected to the regional counterrevolutionary war project they had joined and taken advantage of. By 1981 the regimes in Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, and Guatemala had shuttered legislatures and massacred professors and journalists, leaving formal politics and the public sphere in ruins—but also without the opportunity for the military regime to start building consensus or mobilize the populace. Honduras was the first Latin American country to make the “democratic transition” that characterized the continent in the 80s; this reversed the 70s’ process when Latin America’s armies stopped backing the Liberal state and civil society, breaking the dominant coalition and resorting to force un-

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Bocoock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 28. Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology* 1987: 53-55, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Leon Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge: A Comparative Study in the Theory of Ideology* (New York: Lang, 1994): 56.

shielded by the consensus or hegemony that could give a patina of plausibility to military declarations that dissidents were all antisocial terrorists and godless outlaws.<sup>29</sup>

Under pressure from the Carter and Reagan Administrations Gen. Policarpo Paz García's 1978-81 regime held fair elections in 1980 and 1981, installing a Congress and a civilian President for the first time in nine years: at that point, Honduras had had a civil government for only seven years since *el Dictador* Tiburcio Carías's 1933 election. Paz García agreed not to rig the 1981 election for longtime FF.AA. henchman and death-squad leader Ricardo Zúñiga Augustinus, nor to conduct a coup against the tractable President Roberto Suazo Córdova and his military *protégé* Col. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez. Despite his Liberal Party's longstanding tradition of resisting military rule since the 1930s, Suazo Córdova agreed with the U.S. Embassy to escalate Honduran involvement in the neighboring wars.<sup>30</sup>

Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead define a "demonstration election" in terms of 1. restricted political representation truncating the available electoral spectrum and 2. voting for a *de jure* civil government in order to obtain U.S. military funding, with narratives of a "fledgling democracy" and "mutual self-defense."<sup>31</sup> In other words, democratization was started in order to get state force behind it—levels of militarization and murder unseen in any previous FF.AA. regime, even *el Dictador* Tiburcio Carías 1933-49. The National Security Doctrine circumscribed democracy, reducing it to the most formal and formulaic elections, leaving no space for civilians to actually go against the government. Honduras's 1980-81 transition fits the definition of a

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<sup>29</sup> Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World," in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 128. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, trans. Pedro Sette-Câmara (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012): 173.

<sup>30</sup> And purged his party of opponents to the Somozas and the Contras such as Modesto Rodas Baca (see Chapter 5, "López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial," n129).

<sup>31</sup> Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984): viii, 11-16, 104, 119, 133-34, 157-58, 183-92, 219-21.

tightly-managed “militarized democracy.”<sup>32</sup> The “public sphere” of 1980s Honduras was not an independent field opposed to state force. Honduras’s generals, landowners, and commercial class had little to fear economically or politically from a return to formal democracy under either the conservative Nationalist and Liberal Parties. El Salvador’s civil war became a nonissue with the next demonstration election, in 1982.

1980-81 saw a “managed transition” where the Constitution placed the Commander-in-Chief above the President on the chain of command: the FF.AA. was guaranteed impunity for prior crimes and control over “security” affairs and its own budget independent of oversight by the Honduran Congress. Even Honduran funding was dwarfed by the half a billion U.S. dollars Washington directly gave to the FF.AA. during the decade.<sup>33</sup> Military officers set the terms and boundaries of civilian politics in the 1980s. The decade of the Contra War began not with the stuffing of ballot boxes but marches in support of the two FF.AA.-subordinated, pro-Contra parties. The *de jure* civilian government and formal free press would formally operate even after the 2009 coup, however weakly.<sup>34</sup>

This changed the rhetoric—Gen. Alvarez Martínez would cite the “democratic system” as much as Argentina’s “Western Christendom”—but he and his successors relied on force against Honduran civilians, of varying levels of openness.<sup>35</sup> Use of military strength exposed state weakness: repression and cover-ups revealed which stories the Honduran state was most threat-

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<sup>32</sup> Leticia Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1992): 45, 116.

<sup>33</sup> The departure of the generals from the *de jure* presidency while keeping *de facto* power over the state has been well-studied for Argentina 1983, Brazil 1985-90, Chile 1991, El Salvador 1982-94, and Guatemala 1985-93 (see Chapter 5, n2; and Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context,” n35). Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994): 278.

<sup>34</sup> *Golpista* advocates made much of Roberto Micheletti’s (2009-10) civilian status, arguing that even if it was a coup, it was not a “military coup.” Tim Padgett, “Why Obama Won’t Use the M-Word for Honduras’ Coup,” *Time*, Sept. 5, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 47.



ened by, and discredited the official discourse's constant rhetorical flourishes invoking peace, democracy, and freedom.

The FF.AA. was forced to rely on the elected façade state to handle unexpected challenges, to supply justification for itself when the military “showed its hand” by using force.<sup>36</sup> Coercion, whether direct or implied, revealed that the state had not achieved domestic hegemony but instead blamed on what was framed as a breakdown of order, criminal elements, or outside subversion.<sup>37</sup> These frames and narratives were “ideological” in that they justified state use of force against the working class, or against non-marginalized, middle-class dissidents: professors, journalists, priests, and human-rights activists.<sup>38</sup>

To serve Honduras's new geopolitical role and to “conservatize” the country against public self-organization, Gen. Paz García's military government and its private backers constructed a network of official accusation, sponsored protest, sanctioned rumor, and conspiracy theory. Their narrative was of Honduras as bulwark of peace, freedom, and democracy defending itself against terrorism and Communism being spread by Nicaragua like a contagion to El Salvador. Instead of suspending legislatures and occupying public spaces, the FF.AA. *mobilized* the people to vote and protest—under careful management by the state and its civilian backers in the bipartisan commodity-export circle that owned *La Tribuna* and *El Heraldo*<sup>39</sup> (which would be formally constituted as Gen. Alvarez Martínez's “state within a state” APROH (*Asociación para el Pro-*

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<sup>36</sup> In parallel to U.S. foreign policy's thorough lack of friendly liberal hegemony, instead relying on backing local state forces—and whatever semi-independent agendas they might bring along. Hyug Baeg Im, “Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci,” *Asian Perspective* 15:1 (Spring-Summer 1991): 138. Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis* 1998: 126. Nico Stehr, “Knowledge Societies,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 307.

<sup>37</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 52.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Joseph, “On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations: A Scientific Realist Account of Hegemony,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 78.

<sup>39</sup> A summary of this educated and reformist export class is Darío A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

*greso de Honduras*) in 1983-84 (Chapter 9, “Alvarez Martínez: ‘Moonie’ Substitution”). The Marches were well-coordinated, -funded, and –covered.<sup>40</sup>

Diana Taylor interprets one of the goals of the 1976 Argentinean coup as the usurpation of all public space, replacing Peronist mobilization with its own military spectacle, reducing *el pueblo* to observant civilians rather than participating citizens. Contrariwise, Honduras’s FF.AA. used its control of public space to mobilize thousands, in order to lend credibility to its presentation of the opposition as foreign-directed terrorists and abstentionists in the (mandatory) elections.<sup>41</sup> To support the April 20, 1980, election for the Constituent Assembly, election officers and businessmen arranged for several “Marches for Freedom” in the country’s two main cities, peaking at around 15,000 in San Pedro Sula.<sup>42</sup> The military put on a spectacle of protecting or even creating a representative civil society out of thin air<sup>43</sup>: the Marches and the elections were accompanied by a naked show of arms, underscoring the two bourgeois parties’ reliance on the

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<sup>40</sup> APROH was a bipartisan “shadow Cabinet” preparing Suazo Córdova’s economic and political decisions: it included magnate and drug kingpin Miguel Facussé Barjum, 1990-94 President Rafael Callejas, UNAH rector and 1990-92 President of the Supreme Court Oswaldo Ramos Soto, and many of the top figures in media, union, industry, banking, and commerce including the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada, and Federación Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Honduras. The *sampedrenses* represented banking, trading, and real estate interests, whereas the large landed interests—especially beef and dairy—came from “backward” departments like Intibucá and Lempira. “La coyuntura hondureña: Julio-diciembre 1983,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 7 (January 1984). “APROH: Origen, desarrollo y perspectivas,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 9 (March 1984). J.M. Ramos Chávez, “¿APROH tiene candidato?” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 44, 2nd epoch (April 1986). Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 8. Víctor Meza *et al.*, *Honduras: Poderes fácticos y sistema político*, 2nd ed. (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 2008): 10, 12.

<sup>41</sup> In the 20th century, democrats, populists, progressives, and leftists referred to *el pueblo*, while the elitist officer class saw them as *masas* tricked by one demagogue or another, and the army’s task was to push them back to preserve state and society. In 1976-82 Argentina crowds were whipped up—military parades, the 1978 World Cup, or Gen. Leopoldo Galtieri’s ecstatic declaration of war in 1982. Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 82-83. Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 72-73, 82, 115-16. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 33, 81, 117. Alfredo Martín, *Les Mères «folles» de la Place de Mai: Maternité, contre-institution, et raison d’état* (Paris: Renaudot, 1989): 78. Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s “Dirty War”* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997): 60, 62, 77-78, 94, 114-16, 137.

<sup>42</sup> “Laberinto político,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 22, 1980.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context,” n33.

FF.AA., and visibly suggesting the civil government weakness and dependency.<sup>44</sup> Under a civilian government, the FF.AA. would commit more violations and gain more institutional independence in the 1980s than in any previous decade of military rule.<sup>45</sup>

The 1980 Marches were used by FUSEP Col. Alvarez Martínez to define which parties and policies would be permitted. He surrounded the Marches with snipers, plainclothesmen, and low-flying helicopters for “protection.”<sup>46</sup> In September 1981, Alvarez Martínez sent out riot-control police against a supposed threat of far-left violence against the upcoming election, to give the appearance of a leftist guerrilla threat that the people was bravely standing up against.<sup>47</sup>

These “Marches for Freedom” or “Reencounters with the Fatherland” took place March 16-18,

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 4.

<sup>45</sup> Honduras provided a model for the rhetoric of the “managed transition” or “fledgling democracy,” where the military defended its violence as guaranteeing electoral democracy against outside interference and internal subversion. The Gramscians also point out that the “dominant bloc” must include the subordinated as well as the moneyed: this reflects how even the Argentinean “Process” or Nazi Germany depended on concealment and euphemism as the state conducted murder by the thousands or millions. Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 57. Brian Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 13-34, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Three years later, Gen. Alvarez Martínez likewise surrounded the Congress building with troops and helicopters—allegedly for its own protection—as he took the podium and declared how he had already signed the agreement to open the Centro Regional de Entrenamiento Militar (CREM) at Puerto Castilla to train Salvadoran officers, which the legislature approved *post facto* after the U.S. advisors had already arrived. “También en la capital dijeron ¡democracia sí! ¡comunismo no!” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 29, 1980. Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988): 117. Renato Camarda, *Forced to Move* (San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1985): 88. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 98, 105. James A. Morris, “Government and Politics,” in James D. Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984): 199. Margarita Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy: Sociedad y crisis política* (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Documentación de Honduras and Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, 1987): 60, 69.

<sup>47</sup> These themes were particularly reused for the 1982 Salvadoran election, after the Nov. 27, 1980, annihilation of the Frente Democrático Revolucionario that prompted the unification of the FSLN into a military force. U.S. coverage focused on the alleged guerrilla threats against voters, reframing a mandatory ballot enforced by the military and with the opposition underground in hiding into a voluntary mass movement to legitimate a democratic government, even if at the risk of their own lives. Nonvoters were vulnerable to the state forces because they visibly lacked indelible invisible ink on their fingers. In such a war-torn country it was hardly surprising that 700-800,000 voters could produce 1,500,000 votes. What was important was U.S. media reports of all El Salvador bravely standing up against FMLN’s “couple of thousand terrorist thugs” that had oppressed them since 1980—and then sweeping the country from the U.S. headlines altogether. Jack R. Binns, *The United States in Honduras, 1980-1981: An Ambassador’s Memoir* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co., 2000): 262. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 10-16, 118-33, 141-72. Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 112-13.

26, and 30, 1980; August 7, September 13 and 22, and October 18, 1982; and July 1 and August 1, 1983.

The “*fiestas democráticas*” were staged to give the appearance of mass support for the new state (and of course the upgraded military protecting it). The governing junta covered US\$50,000 of the March 1980 Marches’ cost, and the other US\$100,000 came from the merchants who would form APROH<sup>48</sup> and the far-right ranchers of FENAGH (*Federación Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Honduras*).<sup>49</sup> Hundreds of trucks and buses and the entirety of Honduras’s railway system were employed to bring the marchers into San Pedro Sula from the departments of northwestern Honduras.<sup>50</sup> Attendees in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula received 80,000 free lunches and 50,000 soft drinks.<sup>51</sup> This reflected the typical “Honduran style” of conducting elections—a literal *fiesta cívica*, attended in large part because elections were the only time campesino voters would have meat, with steers roasted in each village by the two traditionalist parties.<sup>52</sup> The 1980 and 1981 elections were no exceptions: critics such as the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras’s (UNAH) student union likened the March to campesinos voting for “five lempiras [US\$2.50] and a little *guaro*” for the latest unrepresentative repre-

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<sup>48</sup> The characteristics of this Central American class have been examined in detail—that they saw themselves as 1. reformist and modern but 2. unfairly challenged and criticized, forced to endure outside agitation of the illiterate *campesinato* and its repression by the armed forces. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic* 1997 and Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> “Laberinto político,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 22, 1980.

<sup>50</sup> “Mario Belot: ‘Marcha de la Libertad’ proclamará la vocación democrática del pueblo,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 12, 1980. “Fuerzas vivas están listas para ‘Marcha de Libertad,’” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 15, 1980. “Segunda ‘Marcha de la Libertad’ pretenden realizar en Tegucigalpa,” *La Prensa*, Mar. 18, 1980. “Otro éxito del patriotismo,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 31, 1980. Carlos Moya Posas, “Se lucieron los ceibeños: En trenes, carros, goletas y a lomo de mula llegaron miles de personas a Marcha de la Libertad en La Ceiba,” *La Prensa*, Mar. 31, 1980. Honduras’s railways are restricted to the North Coast.

<sup>51</sup> “Encuesta especial: Las elecciones en Honduras: Antecedentes y posibilidades,” *Presencia Universitaria* 8:63-64 (April-May 1980). Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación de El Progreso, “Honduras: Panorama político,” *Presencia Universitaria* 8:63-64 (April-May 1980).

<sup>52</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 76.

sentative, chosen for them by the obscure internal machinations of the Liberal and Nationalist Parties.<sup>53</sup>

The military's act of assertion of power over public space and of its ability to summon up civic mobilization meant entertainment as well as refreshments. The Marches condemned dissent that went beyond approved bounds as inherently antidemocratic.<sup>54</sup> Floats carried false walls with a hammer and sickle, in front of which bearded and beretted theater actors portraying guerrillas held prisoners in chains.<sup>55</sup> Supposed Honduran Sandinistas were condemned with the mottos "Brain-suckers," "Child-robbers," and "Down with the *vendepatrias*"; "Marx is good where he is ... in Hell!"<sup>56</sup> Carlos Rigoberto Soto's anti-Cuba speech at a March 1980 Reencounter blamed Havana for all Central American unrest and proclaimed that the tiny number of Communist Party of Honduras members—"the enemies of the culture of the West and of the Christian system of life"—were poised to strike, but would never conquer Honduras from within if the people and the Army stood united.<sup>57</sup>

Speakers declared that the populace would be braving alleged anarchy to repudiate far left and far right alike with their vote, to refuse to be silenced by tiny violent minorities, to stand

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<sup>53</sup> Punned as a system of "*dedocracia*." "¿'Marcha de la libertad'?" *Presencia Universitaria* 7:61 (February 1980).

<sup>54</sup> Sgt. Florencio Caballero testified that the violent rhetoric of 1980-82 directly influenced the commanders and members of his Battalion 3-16 death squad. "Honduras: Posturas políticas ante las maniobras militares," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 74 (June 1987). "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. See also Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 162.

<sup>55</sup> "¡No! al comunismo dijo Honduras ayer," *La Prensa*, Mar. 17, 1980. Héctor Manuel Herrera, "Quedó evidenciado en la Marcha de Libertad: El anhelo de un pueblo en procura de los más acendrados postulados," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 17, 1980.

<sup>56</sup> The notoriously inflammatory right-wing cartoonist Roberto "Rowi" Williams of the pro-Nationalist *Prensa* spent the decade drawing Honduran Communists and Nicaraguan Sandinistas as literal demons—simian baby-eaters with claws and fangs. Roberto Williams, "A la marcha todos!!!" *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 13, 1980. Billy Peña, "Caricaturistas," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 2, 1987.

<sup>57</sup> "Lic. Carlos Rigoberto Soto: Estamos unidos para la defensa de la democracia," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 27, 1980.

up and make their voice heard and freely choose their next government.<sup>58</sup> The Marches' main slogan was Honduras as an "Oasis of Peace," though still in danger of communist-fed civil war like its civil-war-wracked neighbors.<sup>59</sup> Foreign evildoers and "alleged Hondurans" bearing exotic ideas were about to take over Honduras, with the goal of drowning it in blood and chaos and imposing a totalitarian Red police state.<sup>60</sup> Self-contradiction was no obstacle, the threat so great it did not need mere *coherency*: communism's "fascist claw" was about to impose a "totalitarian anarchy."<sup>61</sup> The March's narratives were of gathering all the true Hondurans together under a "democratic spirit"—a clean, orderly, and disciplined populace happy with their new rulers.<sup>62</sup> Critics complained that the Marches' speakers were inflammatory and antidemocratic, blaming all Honduran problems on a spectral Communism and ignoring all the actual issues.<sup>63</sup>

The "evidence" cited for the supposed Red campaign of terror and treason included factory strikes,<sup>64</sup> and campesinos forming cooperatives<sup>65</sup> or retaking Agrarian Reform land stolen by planters and ranchers.<sup>66</sup> According to the speakers, Honduran unions and media were all under

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<sup>58</sup> "La 'Marcha de la Libertad' en gráficas irrefutables," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1980. Víctor Cáceres Lara, "Actitud antitotalitaria," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 21, 1980. "Los partidos políticos calorizan la 'Marcha de la Libertad' que se realizará en Tegucigalpa," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 26, 1980.

<sup>59</sup> Rigoberto Padilla Rush, "La situación política actual," *Patria* 6:225 (Nov. 7, 1981).

<sup>60</sup> "Hondureños no quiere vivir bajo el yugo del comunismo," *La Prensa*, Mar. 15, 1980. "La cita es hoy viernes a las dos de la tarde: Pueblo capitalino únete a la Marcha de la Libertad: Defiende ahora la paz y tranquilidad en que vives," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 28, 1980. "Hoy en Tegucigalpa: La Marcha de la Libertad, un no rotundo al comunismo," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 28, 1980. "Campaña contra Honduras," *La Prensa*, Nov. 13, 1980. See also Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 156.

<sup>61</sup> "Clama el campesinado en 'Marcha de la Libertad': ¡Ya basta! de contemplaciones para quienes quieren el caos, la violencia y la anarquía," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 19, 1980.

<sup>62</sup> "En Tegucigalpa: Alegría, orden y limpieza después de la Marcha de la Libertad," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 31, 1980.

<sup>63</sup> Lisandro Quesada, "Las ideas exóticas," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 16, 1980. Miguel Carías, "¿Marcha de la Libertad?" *Patria* 4:165 (Mar. 22, 1980). José María Espinoza, "La Marcha de la Libertad," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 10, 1980.

<sup>64</sup> "Lo que será y lo que no: La Marcha de la Libertad," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 15, 1980.

<sup>65</sup> "Rubén Solano Díaz: Queremos mejores condiciones de vida, pero las queremos en paz," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1980.

<sup>66</sup> "Marchemos a la libertad hondureños: Una firme invitación para el viernes 28," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 24, 1980.

direct control from Moscow<sup>67</sup> in order to subject the *patria* to “the contagion of foreign ideas.”<sup>68</sup> Nonvoters were called violent enemies of democracy and, since abstention was outlawed and voting was legally mandatory, also threatened with jail.<sup>69</sup> This was aimed at the Frente Patriótico Hondureño’s 1980 and 1981 election boycotts after third parties and the Liberal Party’s more democratic currents had been restricted from enrolling.<sup>70</sup>

The elections and marches were used as platforms for rhetoric that identified the military and its leaders with the *pueblo*: the Army, not the “Communists who call themselves spokesmen of the people,” represented the masses.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, the marches and elections provided public forums for organizations and popular movements to condemn the military and its civilian frontmen on militarization.<sup>72</sup> While the Marches functioned to discredit or coopt dissent as Communist, they allowed a space for speakers who condemned the country’s “inequitable distribution of material goods,” a new government free of partisanship or patronage<sup>73</sup> giving the poor and marginalized political participation,<sup>74</sup> and as a blow to the *de facto* regime that had arranged for the Constituent election and the Marches itself.<sup>75</sup> Several Liberals marched for Gen. Paz Gar-

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<sup>67</sup> “¡No! al comunismo dijo Honduras ayer,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1980.

<sup>68</sup> “Con voz estruendosa el pueblo capitalino vivo el proceso electoral,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 31, 1980.

<sup>69</sup> “La campaña contra el boicot a los comicios,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 16, 1980. Héctor Manuel Herrera, “Quedó evidenciado en la Marcha de Libertad: El anhelo de un pueblo en procura de los más acendrados postulados,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 17, 1980. Marión Bey Avendaño, “¡Pues es cierto lo que dijeron aquellos ‘El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!’” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 20, 1980. “Fuerzas Democráticas Metropolitanas: Exigieron al ejército y al gobierno amplias libertades para comicios,” *El Heraldo*, Mar. 29, 1980.

<sup>70</sup> Frente Patriótico Hondureño, *Lineamientos*, Tegucigalpa (1981). Edgardo Antonio Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña en la década de los ochenta* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Elena, 2005): 271.

<sup>71</sup> “¡No! al comunismo dijo Honduras ayer,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 17, 1980.

<sup>72</sup> Against the “canonical” 18th-century British, French, or U.S. models of Jürgen Habermas’s “public sphere” challenging a monarchy, a weak state meant a *weaker* civil society and *stronger* enforcement arms that could turn against state and society—the more “Italian” or “Latin” model of bayonet rule and political and press clientelism. Otto Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratization: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 227.

<sup>73</sup> “Rafael Pastor Zelaya: Manifestaciones de la libertad deben realizarse en todo el país,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 19, 1980. “Marcharemos para exigir se garantice nuestra libertad,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 25, 1980.

<sup>74</sup> “Carta abierta a la mujer hondureña,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 15, 1980. “Importantes opiniones sobre ‘la Marcha de la Libertad,’” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 28, 1980.

<sup>75</sup> “Un compromiso patriótico,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 15?, 1980.

cía's regime to respect the results and refrain from a coup to install National Party candidate Ricardo Zúñiga Augustinus.<sup>76</sup> The centrist Liberal Carlos Orbin Montoya insisted that the March was a spontaneous rejection of economic and electoral exploitation, a refusal to be used against Nicaragua "as cannon fodder for extranational objectives."<sup>77</sup>

On September 17, 1982, the Cinchoneros took the San Pedro Sula Chamber of Commerce and Industry hostage: the Chamber was the main venue for the influential commercial class and an APROH nucleus. The guerrillas' motive was the disappearances launched by Gen. Alvarez Martínez's Battalion 3-16 (Chapter 6) after the Cinchoneros' March 27, 1981, plane hijacking and their conditions included the release of the disappeared (if they were still living).<sup>78</sup> Col. Balí Castillo said that the disappeared were leftist militants who had exfiltrated to join a guerrilla cell in Mexico, or had gone underground in Honduras: it was a deliberate tactic to get the international news behind the elaborate world conspiracy to create prejudice against Tegucigalpa, a Moscow-run global misinformation campaign to go with the aggression from Nicaragua. Naturally he concluded that "the 'disappeared' are part of the communist strategy to come to power."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "Atlántida respaldó Marcha de la Libertad," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 31, 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Ubodoro Arriaga spoke for the Liberal Party, praising the FF.AA. for the 1972-78 Agrarian Reform that had allowed Honduras to avoid the revolution and chaos that marked its neighbors. Héctor Manuel Herrera, "Quedó evidenciado en la Marcha de Libertad: El anhelo de un pueblo en procura de los más acendrados postulados," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 17, 1980. "Fuerzas Democráticas Metropolitanas: Exigieron al ejército y al gobierno amplias libertades para comicios," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 29, 1980.

<sup>78</sup> One of Battalion 3-16's captives released after the siege was Arquímedes Antonio Cañada, "Comandante Montenegro" in the FMLN's Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, captured August 1982 and turned against all Central American guerrillas. "No está preso el terrorista Montenegro," *La Prensa*, Sept. 20, 1982. "Lo deportamos; no sabíamos que era Montenegro: Suárez," *El Tiempo*, Sept. 23, 1982. "Testimonios: Desertor relata atrocidades de los escuadrones de la muerte: Testimonio de Florencio Caballero," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 12-31. U.S. Department of State, "Revolution Beyond Our Borders": *Sandinista Intervention in Central America*, Special Report 132 (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 1985): 9, 41.

<sup>79</sup> "Denuncia el comandante de la FUSEP, coronel Bali Castillo: 'Desaparecidos' responden a un plan de izquierda para asaltar el poder," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, May 9, 1983.



The state organized a second wave of Marches, with 80,000 transported for free to San Pedro Sula: as in 1980, the goal was to identify the people with the Army and to seize popular mobilization.<sup>80</sup> The Liberal Roberto Williams's cartoon renamed *Derechos Humanos*, "Human Rights" organizations, to a bin of *Desechos Humanos*, "Human Garbage," to imply that the advocates for the disappeared were complicit with the hostage-takers.<sup>81</sup> The Cinchoneros were specifically used to discredit human-rights organizations, demanding that they fall in line with the government by condemning the "left," to let the state dictate what was unacceptable.<sup>82</sup> Such a concession from CODEH would provide the state with warrant for its boundary-setting powers, "proving" that even the most critical dissidents of the government found the "far left" to be unacceptable, beyond the permissible bounds of democracy and attention.

### The Militarized Media

Gen. Alvarez Martínez hoped to purge and remake the media, the universities, the Armed Forces itself, in order to defeat the enemy's alleged attack on internal "ideological frontiers," its "disinformation campaign" of adverse news.<sup>83</sup> Over 1981-84, his newly-ideological state overtly targeted stories carried by the university media, leaving a noticeable gap on the UNAH shelves: student thought was one of his top targets. The FF.AA. represented "true Hondurans," so contradiction was not just a political threat but went against what all *good* (and sane) Hondurans thought (see Chapter 6, "Doctrines of National Security"). Unlike Gens. Pinochet or Videla, Al-

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<sup>80</sup> "Encuesta especial: Las elecciones en Honduras: Antecedentes y posibilidades," *Presencia Universitaria* 8:63-64 (April-May 1980). "75 mil personas dijeron ¡No a la violencia terrorista! Enérgica repulsa a guerrilleros izquierdistas en San Pedro Sula," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 22, 1982. "Hasta los oídos de los terroristas llegó el grito de libertad del pueblo," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 22, 1982.

<sup>81</sup> Roberto Williams, "Al descubierto," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 25, 1982.

<sup>82</sup> "La Paz: Próxima cita de la democracia contra el totalitarismo comunista," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 12, 1982. "Acusa vocal de la Cámara de Comercio de Tegucigalpa: Autoproclamados defensores de Derechos Humanos callan ante actos de terrorismo," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 22, 1982. Roberto Williams, "Marchando por la libertad y la democracia," *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 22, 1982.

<sup>83</sup> Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* 1992: 52, 55-56, 58, 64, 72.

varez Martínez was faced with a limit to how overt the FF.AA. could be when shuttering periodicals: in other words, justifications had to be made for the media crackdowns, in the name of defending a free “fledgling democracy” against disinformation, rather than simply quashing civilian opposition in order to seize and synchronize all that was public.

The effort to take over student thought is evident in the archives: on-site reports of Contra presence ceased after 1982 (Chapter 5, “Alvarez Martínez: The Pivot to Nicaragua”).<sup>84</sup> The only commercial newspapers remaining to conduct investigations were San Pedro Sula’s *Tiempo* and Tegucigalpa’s *Tribuna*.<sup>85</sup> Judging by the collections at UNAH and the Hemeroteca Nacional remaining in 2012, numerous other journals that had been permitted to print even under the 1978-82 junta stopped circulation: *El Cronista*, the Frente Patriótico Hondureño-associated *Patria*, and the satirical student periodical *Tornillo sin Fin* did not survive past 1982. The only exceptions surviving to be archived were what CODEH, COFADEH, the Catholic Church, and the unions printed: otherwise, there were to *be* no alternative sources of information for the urban and the literate. Before 1983, the UNAH student union’s magazine *Presencia Universitaria* had a track record of publishing stories written by Hondurans, including investigative journalism and analyses by professors. Under the FUUD for the rest of the decade its issues became sporadic, the contents dominated by translations from Unification Church members, U.S. neoconservatives, and hair-raising anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic diatribes.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Compiled from the Hemeroteca Nacional and the UNAH library in Tegucigalpa, UCLA, or the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas.

<sup>85</sup> Mario Amaya and Mario Posas, interviews by author, Tegucigalpa, July 2012.

<sup>86</sup> The former leader of the Communist Party of Honduras, Roberto Domínguez Agurcia, had been expelled in 1960 after becoming visibly disturbed and mystically-obsessed; now *Presencia Universitaria* hosted his rants against “those ‘deicides,’ those Masonic ‘builders’ of the pseudo-Jewish Sanhedrin whose eagerness is that of *empowering themselves with the great powers of the world to enslave humanity*. ... The BASIC FIGHT THAT AGITATES THE WORLD FOR MANY CENTURIES is that caused by the WAR THAT JUDAISM MAKES AGAINST CHRISTIANITY, trying to *enthroned the so-called ‘Jewish race’ in an enslaving empire of humanity*” using “WORLDLY GOLD and of the FOOLISH BUT PERVERSE AND TRICKY AID OF THE MASONRIES.” But even anti-Semitism itself was a tool of those “RECONCILING THEMSELVES WITH PAPIISM IN THE NEW STRATEGY

Ambassador John Negroponte had personally demanded in 1982 that Dr. Juan Al-mendáres Bonilla be deposed from his office as UNAH rector. The entirety of the National University of Honduras—student and faculty bodies and administration—had been taken over by force in 1983, with the far-right United Democratic University Front (*Frente Unido Universitario Democrático*) installed by means of direct FF.AA. intervention in University elections, FUSEP arresting FUUD’s rival candidates. FUUD—really the academic arm of the military’s hardliners—unleashed a wave of violence against students and faculty nationwide, from 1979 into the early 1990s. Its use of force ranged from mobs on and off campus to electrical torture, and members—even faculty—sporting .50-caliber machine guns on campus.<sup>87</sup>

The Honduran press was subject to more overt forms of intervention. Edgar Chamorro testified at the Hague that he personally paid dozens of Honduran journalists \$50 or \$100 a month as a retainer, to spike potentially-dangerous stories, condemn the FSLN, and support the Contras.<sup>88</sup> As in Argentina 1976, even Honduran politicians had to hide or incinerate books and materials that the COBRA special police might deem subversive during the warrantless house-to-

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SECRETLY DIRECTED BY JUDAISM” to take over the world under “THE ‘JUDAIZED’ NEO-PAPACY, OVER A RED EUROPE AND WITH [ITS] SEAT IN JERUSALEM AND NEO-COMMUNIST BOOTS OF ‘AUGUSTINIAN’ TYPE (*The City of God*)” “La opinión cristiana,” *Presencia Universitaria* 11:79 (April 1983). Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 39.

<sup>87</sup> “Bandas paramilitares,” *Patria* 4:183 (Aug. 16, 1980). “Amenazan con llevarlos a los tribunales: Militantes del FUUD causaron destrucción en la Universidad,” *La Tribuna*, May 5, 1981. “En la UNAH: Estudiantes afiliados al FUUD protagonizan actos vandálicos,” *El Tiempo*, May 5, 1981. “En UNAH: Pistola en mano estudiantes del FUUD pretenden disolver mitin,” *El Tiempo*, May 25, 1981. Cristóbal Valdez, “La izquierda y las elecciones de la FEUH,” *Patria* 5:220 (Aug. 29, 1981). Alejo Cárdenas, “La crisis de la Universidad,” *Patria* 2:221 (Sept. 5, 1981). Ramón Nuila, “El primer año del gobierno liberal,” *Frente* (February-April 1983): 3-9, from *Alcaraván* 17. “Honduras Under Military Trusteeship,” *Latin Perspective* 1:7 (May 13, 1983). “Discurso inaugural del II Congreso Extraordinario ‘Francisco Sierra Montoya,’” *Frente* 3:5 (July-September 1983): 10-14. “En elecciones de la FEUH: Con pistolas y metralletas atacan estudiantes del FUUD: Un herido,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 18, 1989. “El terrorismo del FUUD y el sistema represivo,” *El Tiempo*, May 10, 1990. “El poder absoluto y la barbarie en la UNAH,” from *El Tiempo*, Sept. 8, 1990, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 113 (September 1990). “Suma y sigue: La violencia en la Universidad,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 134 (June 1992). Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 259-61, 268-69. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 236-37.

<sup>88</sup> The most positive journalists, of course, were the ones who never needed any cash payment in the first place. “La contra en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 7 (April 1987). Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987: 36.

house searches they conducted in 1982.<sup>89</sup> Teachers were arrested for having books of what FUSEP described as “materialist philosophies, the same that are [among] the fundamental concepts of socialism.”<sup>90</sup>

The junta’s enforcers shared a particular mistrust of the international and highly learned and mobile Society of Jesus. In July 1981 four Jesuit seminarians were arrested at Toncontín on charges of “introducing arms and subversive material” and held without *habeas corpus* for thirteen days.<sup>91</sup> The immigration agency collected their “subversive books”—works by and about Archbishop Romero, the theology of the Nicaraguan Revolution, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*. The agency said that importing these books was a “cultural aggression” because Honduras was a neutral country. The seminarians were accused of violating international treaties, but they pointed out that equally-neutral Mexico had had no problem letting them in.<sup>92</sup> In 1987 Belizean Garífuna seminarian Allen Palacio was arrested by Army intelligence, G-2, for possessing the book *Jesuitas, Iglesia y marxismo*—a “rabidly anti-Marxist” and anti-Jesuit work by the right-wing Ricardo de la Cierva. Jesuit Superior Boado said that apparently the semiliterate agent just saw “the magical and damned word ‘Marxism’ ” and had concluded that any churchpersons concerned with the poor had to be Reds.<sup>93</sup>

These campaigns continued during and after Gen. Regalado’s term. While Col. Leonel Riera Lunatti insisted at the start of 1988 that “here nobody is persecuted for their political ideas,” vice president of Confederación de Cooperativas Hondureñas Leonidas Ávila Chávez was arrested for having boxes with “subversive” books, and this was happening constantly. 200 of his

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<sup>89</sup> “Honduras: A Question Mark in Central America,” *Honduras Update* 1:3 (1982), from *The Washington Office on Latin America Update*. Taylor 12.

<sup>90</sup> “Acusa la policía: Fichados como espías nueve maestros y una periodista,” *El Tiempo*, July 16, 1982.

<sup>91</sup> “Derechos humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 2 (July 1981).

<sup>92</sup> Raúl H. Moya and César Jerez, “Jesuitas víctimas de represión,” *Patria* 5:219 (Aug. 22, 1981).

<sup>93</sup> “La Iglesia en el acontecer nacional,” Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Informaciones* 8, 2nd epoch (May-July 1987): 23-29. Faustino Boado, “Editorial: Un ‘subversivo’ ejemplar,” *CODEH* 5:38 (July 1987).

books were subsequently seized by the police for being “of Communist cut.” Priests noted that in no religion is it a sin to have certain books. Chief Justice Salomón Jiménez noted that he himself had Marxist books, and that the right-wing UNAH Rector and FUUD leader Oswaldo Ramos Soto had thousands of them as well.<sup>94</sup> In 1989 230 books were seized and destroyed as subversive, taken from San Pedro Sula’s post office: FUSEP chief Lt. Col. Diómedes García said that such literature should not be sold in public and the city’s postmaster said that the law had to be broken here because “there is correspondence that could be prejudicial if the youth read it.” Despite them remaining entirely legal, the police continued to forbid Marxist books in the country and possession often meant the arrest of the readers.<sup>95</sup>

Even after Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s ouster, officers and pro-military sources continued circulating a conspiratorial view of the media. *La Tribuna*’s Antonio Pineda Green claimed that “the governments, the universities, the churches, the big corporations and all the mass communications media have been infiltrated. [...] the conspiracy seeks to dissolve the family through irreligiousness, disobedience, drugs, pornography, abortion and divorce.”<sup>96</sup>

Top officers announced that the surest sign that Honduras was riddled with Communist infiltrators was the existence of delinquency on the streets. “Destabilizers” “intermix vandalism and common crime with the maneuvers of political crime. Our war is small and everyday. Crime does not sleep,” new FUSEP chief Col. Leonidas Torres Arias declared upon replacing the promoted Gen. Alvarez Martínez in 1982.<sup>97</sup> Drugs, violence, and sex were all sure signals of Com-

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<sup>94</sup> “Presidente Corte Suprema: No hay ley que prohíba la tenencia libros marxistas,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 29, 1988. Faustino Boado, “Sr. presidente, ¡yo también tengo libros marxistas!” *El Tiempo*, Feb. 1, 1988. “La actitud militar ante las ideas políticas,” Partido Comunista de Honduras, *Voz Popular* 6:119 (February 1988).

<sup>95</sup> “Derechos humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 100 (August 1989).

<sup>96</sup> Antonio Pineda Green, “Hay una vasta conjura comunista en marcha,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 6, 1983.

<sup>97</sup> “Nuevo comandante de la FUSEP: Estamos empeñados en una lucha a fondo contra los intentos desestabilizadores,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 2, 1982.

munism, appearing in every home: they were to be interpreted as evidence of a Kremlin plot, never social failure.

The other aspect of the “militarization” of media was more literal, with the foundation in 1979 of the FF.AA.’s dedicated military magazine, *Proyecciones Militares*—an ideological and theoretical vehicle, in the professionalized and politically-oriented South American style.<sup>98</sup> Honduran military officers and newspaper columnists (and officer-columnists) painted an image of a total subversion, extending into sexuality and family as well as theology (Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security”; Chapter 9, “Regalado: Theological Usurpation”) or journalism.

In October 1984 *Proyecciones Militares* warned military readers that the Reds were undermining the Honduran family-nation through “free love based on marriage in mutual sexual attraction; [and] supporting the disrespect of children toward their parents.”<sup>99</sup> According to an even more embroidered article in November, global Marxism-Leninism plans “to annihilate the structures of representative government of popular sovereignty and the democratic base of societies” by “infiltrating the mentality of the youth, through the educational systems in all the levels, with the end of denaturaliz[ing] their concepts about the legitimate values of nations, sowing hatred and conduct prone to violence in new generations, destroying their faith in God.” Confrontations between economic classes, kidnappings, contraceptives, and “the organization and manipulation of bands of common criminals, used to perpetrate assaults and robberies” were all tools of the communists.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> For more on how to “read” these specialized military magazines and their positioning in a Latin American tradition of insisting that the Army was above or “anti-politics,” see J. Samuel Fitch, “Military Attitudes Toward Democracy in Latin America: How Do We Know if Anything Has Changed?” in David Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 59-87.

<sup>99</sup> Maj. César Augusto Zelaya Estrada, “Terrorismo e ideología,” *Proyecciones Militares* 5:44 (October 1984): 25-28.

<sup>100</sup> Maj. Roberto Morales Hernández, “El comunismo y su estrategia,” *Proyecciones Militares* 5:45 (November 1984): 23-24. See also Langland, “Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela

Even more of a direct threat to the press than the unusual accusations of a Moscow-directed media conspiracy was the repeated description of journalism and terrorism as two arms of the same entity.<sup>101</sup> In 1986 *Proyecciones Militares* insisted there were “millions of subversive Latin American and European students, prepared or specialized in all fields of subversion; ‘Popular Journalism’ or ‘alternative journalism,’ jurists, doctors, philosophers, economists, artists, theater, painting, dance, poetry, sociologists etc.” The editorial concluded that “terrorist journalists [...] have managed to place themselves in key directing posts in the most important means of communication of the country.”<sup>102</sup> The pointedness of these threats in a well-funded, militarized *narco*-state underscore the need to put media studies into a larger context of state power<sup>103</sup>—the forcible animal part of Machiavelli’s centaur as well as its rhetoric-making human half.

As the country underwent a genuine democratization away from Alvarez Martínez’s reign of terror, the succeeding Commanders-in-Chief had to deal with a less fearful and subdued popular movement, and the Contras showed little sign of winning—or of providing a sustainable stream of dollars. Gen. Humberto Regalado began his 1986-89 rule as Commander-in-Chief by reiterating the claim that terrorists were in charge of the Honduran media—that critics were even committing journalistic terrorism. He labeled opposition to political repression and to the Contra and U.S. military presence as a campaign of destabilization.<sup>104</sup> When Gen. Regalado’s half-

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Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 2008.

<sup>101</sup> “FFAA denuncian campaña difamatoria urdida por el comunismo internacional,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, July 5, 1982.

<sup>102</sup> “La subversión y su influencia en los medios de comunicación en Honduras,” *Proyecciones Militares* 7:62 (April-May 1986): 22-23.

<sup>103</sup> See above, “Marches for the Fatherland,” n72.

<sup>104</sup> “PINU afirma: Defender soberanía es patriotismo,” *CODEH* 4:27 (August 1986). “H. Regalado denuncia campaña pro tiranía,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 17, 1987.

brother Lt. Col. Marco Tulio Regalado was arrested with 11 kilograms of cocaine in Miami<sup>105</sup>

Employees of the national airline TAN-SAHSA were arrested to divert the blame but also to demonstrate just how far the infiltration by “narcosubversives” had reached.<sup>106</sup>

### False Guerrillas

Between the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution and the 1984 ouster of Gen. Alvarez Martínez, the FF.AA.’s narrative of the Communist threat to Honduras was aimed at supposed guerrilla movements launched from Nicaragua. However, the Commander-in-Chief eventually decided against exploiting the only actual guerrillas to appear (Chapter 7, “Real Guerrillas”). The Armed Forces turned instead to announcing imminent attacks or ongoing wars by imaginary guerrillas, justifying acts of state and Contra violence, for new repression or ongoing militarization, and a way to repeatedly target opposition directly as supporting or even covertly commanding terrorists (Chapter 7, “Regalado: The Human-Rights Death Squads”). The guerrilla threat was figured not in terms of Honduras’s old Communist parties, informational subversion, or the Nicaraguan EPS, but as guerrilla cells infiltrating city and countryside to unleash coordinated terrorist attacks.<sup>107</sup> Victims of Battalion 3-16’s disappearance were made to “reappear” to confess guerrilla

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<sup>105</sup> “Capturan coronel con cocaína,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 85 (May 1988). “Algo más sobre narcotraficantes: Capturan coronel con cocaína,” *CODEH* 6:45 (May-June 1988). “Introducción: *La Coyuntura*,” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:5 (June 1988): 2-3. Gen. Regalado’s sister was also a *narco* (Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 272).

<sup>106</sup> There were even rumors of a second garrison coup against Gen. Regalado after the arrest. “Regalado: Absurdos acusan de criminales a las FF.AA.,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 26, 1988. “El despertar de nuestro pueblo por la defensa de la soberanía y la dignidad nacional,” Partido Comunista de Honduras, *Voz Popular* 6:129 (June 1988).

<sup>107</sup> The CIA counted respectable Honduran businessmen, bankers, lawyers, doctors as Communist Party of Honduras sympathizers just because they had been student or campesino activists, and opposed Gen. Oswaldo López Arellano for overthrowing the U.S.-backed Ramón Villeda Morales. The Moscow-line Communist Party was left with only 500 members after the pro-Beijing faction split off, and most of the PCH members fled 1981. Adding up the Movimiento Popular de Liberación “Cinchonero,” Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos—Honduras, Fuerzas Populares Revolucionarias “Lorenzo Zelaya,” Frente Morazanista para la Liberación de Honduras, and trained PCH cadres would have totaled only 400 adequately-trained and -armed guerrillas—but the parties were divided and remained vanguardist. Only the *non*-militants of the Unión Revolucionaria del Pueblo, like Tomás Nativí, Fidel Martínez, and Dagoberto Padilla would be murdered (Chapter 6, “Alvarez Martínez: Beyond Condor”).



activities in order to “prove” that a tremendous, dangerous movement was undermining society while libeling the FF.AA. as it tried to protect innocent Hondurans’ lives and freedoms (Chapters 6 and 7). The state’s political murders were reframed as aggression against the state in service to the Kremlin.

The FF.AA. definitely preferred fabricated opponents to real ones: phantom guerrillas were more useful for propaganda purposes and provided some nominal plausibility, and commanders could keep control of the specifics or keep other details necessarily vague. The false operations also allowed the military to reinforce its “warranting” ability in remote rural areas—a military commander, not Jesuit radio or *El Tiempo*, could declare whether there was a guerrilla threat.

The Honduran state was left with an inherent paradox it itself had created: it was important to maintain the narrative of the hoax guerrilla that the FF.AA. and FUSEP staged for the media, but each incident was exposed in short time while the state tried to assert only it could warrant news of new guerrilla insurgencies.<sup>108</sup> Actual guerrilla movements—the Cinchoneros of 1981-82, the PRTC-H of 1983, and Fuerzas Populares Revolucionarias “Lorenzo Zelaya” in 1988-90—showed that the FF.AA. was incapable of stopping armed domestic rebellion, taking the high command by surprise: this parallels the loss of credibility caused by 1. asserting that the FDN was finally in Nicaragua (only to be thrown back across the border on an annual basis (Chapter 5, “Discovery, Then Denial”)) or 2. by FUSEP’s inability—and involvement—in common and organized crime, having pursued the agenda of national security rather than citizen

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Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 145, 220-30. Robert E. White, “Too Many Spies, Too Little Intelligence,” Craig Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity: U.S. Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 46, 48.

<sup>108</sup> After the junior officers’ 1979 coup the Salvadoran National Guard headquarters were found to contain cells with a camera and guerrilla flag on the wall for faux kidnappings of businessmen. This was a simple deception used to enforce a narrative, but still a component of a larger network of doubt and discredit. Dickey, *With the Contras* 1985: 58.

safety (Chapter 7, “Regalado: The Human-Rights Death Squads”).<sup>109</sup> Attempts to buttress a narrative of left-wing menace coming from every conceivable angle reinforced the perception of its own impotence.

The first misidentifications of guerrillas by the FF.AA. were made in response to the Nicaraguan Revolution. During the 1978-80 period, the Honduran military and its friendly media launched a campaign against Nicaraguan civilians fleeing the Nicaraguan National Guard, scapegoating them as assaulting banks, spreading venereal disease, and trafficking drugs.<sup>110</sup> These Nicaraguan refugees returned across the border with the Sandinistas’ victory in July 1979, but were succeeded by an even-larger 1980-81 influx of increasingly-heavily-armed Guardsmen. This group of Nicaraguans *did* introduce crimes that had never before been widespread in Honduras: armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, holding up banks, even cattle rustling. These misdeeds were all blamed on phantom left-wing guerrillas (well before the Cinchoneros announced their existence).<sup>111</sup>

The Cinchoneros’ April 1982 hijacking of a TAN-SAHSA flight spurred Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez to begin executing the illegal prisoners that Battalion 3-16 had abducted (Chapter 6); but he was unable to prevent the real guerrilla’s public taking of scores of hostages

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<sup>109</sup> “Street violence” also cut against the state’s supposed need for a “monopoly of force,” but organized crime, “random” violence, paramilitarism, and vigilantism not commanded by the state all had the effect of increasing the power of the state’s enforcement apparatus over society in general and over the civil government in particular. The increase in violence weakened society against those who were able to use force, but also increased the delegitimation of the FF.AA. Salomón, *Policías y militares en Honduras* 1994: 16, 61, 72. William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).

<sup>110</sup> Partido Socialista de Honduras, *Análisis de la situación nacional: 1978-79*, Documentos Políticos 1: 21-22.

<sup>111</sup> There was no real guerrilla activity before the Mar. 27, 1981, Cinchonero hijacking. Juan Ramón Martínez, “¿Debemos morir defendiendo a los contras?” *La Tribuna*, May 25, 1985. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 513. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005.

at the San Pedro Sula Chamber of Industry and Commerce that September.<sup>112</sup> In August 1983 U.S. forces were deployed to join the FF.AA. sweep against the PRTC-H. This mission was followed by another joint U.S.-Honduran counterinsurgency offensive in November 1983, in the mountains of Colón Department, against supposed guerrillas<sup>113</sup>: this was supposedly aimed against a new wave of Cinchoneros, though that particular guerrilla group all left September 1982 and none had returned from Havana.<sup>114</sup>

José María Reyes Mata's Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos—Honduras infiltrated from Nicaraguan territory into Olancho Department in August 1983 (Chapter 7, "Real Guerrillas"). But, once faced with an actual guerrilla column, the FF.AA. did not emphasize the story over the long term: initially Gen. Alvarez Martínez specifically airlifted foreign correspondents into Nueva Palestina by helicopter to "witness" the battle in the mountains to the east.<sup>115</sup> This state attempt to literally cart in witnesses proved only temporary. The numbers of fighters reported quickly fell from 3,000 to 776, and then to less than 100.<sup>116</sup> The incursion was downplayed after the mass execution of forty captives that the high command believed to be politically irredeemable.<sup>117</sup> The state murder of Father James "Guadalupe" Carney proved particularly threatening to the FF.AA., and the PRTC-H affair was relegated off the headlines until CIA Inspector-General Frederick Hitz's 1995-97 investigations.

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<sup>112</sup> "Coinciden altos oficiales: Ejército está listo para rechazar a la subversión," *La Prensa*, July 26, 1982.

<sup>113</sup> ACAN-EFE, "Inician los ejércitos conjuntos de EEUU y Honduras: Ofensiva antiguerrillera en las montañas selváticas de Trujillo," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 22, 1983.

<sup>114</sup> The Cinchoneros were also entirely urban in their doctrine. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005: 208.

<sup>115</sup> George Black and Anne Nelson, "The U.S. in Honduras: Mysterious Death of Fr. Carney," *The Nation*, Aug. 4-11, 1984: 81-84.

<sup>116</sup> "Con procedencia de Cuba y Nicaragua: Grupo de 776 guerrilleros más se apresta a venir a Honduras," *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 27, 1983.

<sup>117</sup> Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 229.

Compared to Gen. Alvarez Martínez, the FF.AA. under Gen. Humberto Regalado deployed more sophisticated strategies: accusations against the media, exploitation of street violence, false guerrillas, even paid television campaigns. The hoaxes were used to reinforce the narrative that Honduras, just like the rest of the region and the world, was facing an East–West war at all levels, down to sleepy provincial towns where insurrectionists could spring up without warning.<sup>118</sup>

The FF.AA. now also had a part to play in the White House’s 1984–86 rhetorical campaign against the Nicaraguan government, including allegations that that the internationalist terrorists of the entire Eastern Bloc were converging on Central America—that Nicaragua was a guerrilla springboard against its neighbors, a veritable playground of global terror, from the Irish Republican Army to the Palestinian Liberation Organization.<sup>119</sup> Two Spanish visitors to Honduras were tortured to force confessions that they were in the Basque Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in 1985.<sup>120</sup> The U.S. bombing of Tripoli, Libya, in April 1986 also generated a joint U.S.–Honduran declaration that a Libyan attack was imminent on Palmerola base—in the middle of

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<sup>118</sup> “A punto de una nueva insurgencia,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 91 (November 1988).

<sup>119</sup> See also the case of Claire Sterling’s *The Terror Network* (1981), written with CIA sources and “assistance,” which CIA chief William Casey in turn cited regularly to the press. She asserts that most all guerrillas and terrorists around the world were created by the Soviet Union, through direct funding and direction or through its “surrogates” (Chapter 1, “0: Premises” and “1: Refusal of Neutrality”). “Declaraciones exclusivas a ABC del presidente de Honduras: Roberto Suazo Córdova denuncia la presencia de ‘expertos’ de ETA en Nicaragua,” *El Tiempo*, June 18, 1984. “Militarismo en Honduras: El reinado de Gustavo Alvarez: 1982–1984,” CEDOH, *Cronologías 2* (August 1985). Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association,” July 8, 1985, <https://reaganlibrary.gov/major-speeches-index/33-archives/speeches/1985/4752-70885a>. Reagan, “Remarks to Jewish Leaders During a White House Briefing on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance,” Mar. 5, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1986/30586c.htm>. Reagan, “Remarks at the Heritage Foundation Anniversary Dinner,” Apr. 26, 1986, <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/2016-09-07-20-42-25/34-archives/speeches/1986/5491-42286f>. Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981–1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988): 52.

<sup>120</sup> Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “COHA’s 1985 Human Rights Report,” press release, Dec. 31, 1985.

the country.<sup>121</sup> State officials were always able to make statements that would always be carried by the press, regardless of the subsequent reception.

The Honduran state produced an especially large wave of false claims of guerrillas in spring and summer 1985 when the FF.AA. and 3,000 U.S. soldiers combed the mountains of Yoro Department for supposed guerrillas.<sup>122</sup> These joint exercises, named Operation Chicatic, actually targeted at the Jesuits and the campesinos on Agrarian Reform land, especially in Yoro Department (Chapter 9, “Regalado: Counter-Jesuit Counterinsurgency”). In October 1986 Gen. Regalado claimed a guerrilla nucleus around El Pijol Mountain in Yoro, accusing the phantom group of having planned kidnapping, sabotage, and bank robberies.<sup>123</sup> A local thief “admitted” to burying U.S.-made guns for the guerrillas<sup>124</sup> and the commander of the 4th Battalion claimed they were using heavy bazookas against his forces.<sup>125</sup> CODEH and the Church expressed their skepticism, and there was no evidence that this particular guerrilla cell ever existed.<sup>126</sup>

In August 1987 off-duty U.S. soldiers were bombed at Comayagua’s China Palace disco, injuring seven of them and seven Hondurans. FUSEP arrested a member of the Liberal Party’s dissident and reformist Movimiento Liberal Revolucionario. They tortured him into falsely con-

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<sup>121</sup> The same gambit would be repeated by Washington and Tegucigalpa in the 21st century. Associated Press, “Alerta en Palmerola ante amenaza de ataque libio,” *El Heraldito*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 18, 1986. Associated Press, “Qaeda Eyeing Honduras?” Aug. 23, 2004, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/qaeda-eyeing-honduras>. Anna Mahjar-Barducci, “Al-Qaeda in Honduras, Way-Station to U.S.,” May 25, 2011, Gatestone Institute, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2145/al-qaeda-honduras>.

<sup>122</sup> “En una acción real: Soldados hondureños y norteamericanos buscan guerrilleros en montañas de Yoro,” *El Tiempo*, Aug. 28, 1985. “Maniobras militares conjuntas EEUU-Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 70 (February 1987).

<sup>123</sup> “Sabotajes, secuestros y asaltos efectuaría célula guerrillera,” *El Tiempo*, Oct. 27, 1986. “¿Guerrillas en Honduras?” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 66 (October 1986). “En Las Minas, Atlántida: Chocan de nuevo FFAA y célula guerrillera,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 4, 1986. “¿Un plan terrorista en Honduras?” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 82 (February 1988).

<sup>124</sup> “A juzgado ‘enterrador’ de armas contratado por célula guerrillera,” *El Tiempo*, Oct. 29, 1986.

<sup>125</sup> “Usaron bazucas de piso: ‘Cinchoneros’ estallan bombas en zona Norte,” *La Tribuna*, Nov. 5, 1986.

<sup>126</sup> None ever would be found: Rodríguez’s in-depth survey is entirely empty of even minor actions in Honduras between the 1983 destruction of the PRTC-H and 1989. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 215-16).

fessing that M-LIDER's leader Jorge Arturo Reina (brother of the 1994-98 President Carlos Roberto Reina) had ordered the attack and three more were arrested. The arrest and torture had been ordered by officers who knew that he was an innocent passer-by to the bombing.<sup>127</sup> Human-rights activists with CODEH and other NGOs were customarily arrested arbitrarily after a murder or bombing, to generate an atmosphere of guilt by association: with enough "smoke," as the expression goes, people might start believing there was fire.

In October 1987 fourteen members of the Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo from La Estancia, Yoro, were captured and tortured as to the whereabouts of a supposed revival of the Fuerzas Populares Revolucionarias "Lorenzo Zelaya." The local CNTC leader Carlos Ramírez Martínez confessed to having seen Zelaya himself a few days before. Unfortunately for FUSEP's case, the FPR's namesake had been shot by Gen. Oswaldo López Arellano's regime in 1965.<sup>128</sup> Ramírez Martínez also certified a list of "guerrillas," all CNTC officers, and the police had triumphantly discovered "abundant subversive material" in their houses—but the owners and residents of those homes all turned out to be illiterate. FUSEP even asked the court to return the weapons that they had planted in the "guerrillas' " houses. Ramírez Martínez quickly recanted his "confession": he had only made it in order to avoid being beaten until he lost the use of a

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<sup>127</sup> The FF.AA. blamed a summer 1988 shooting attack against U.S. servicemen leaving a San Pedro Sula disco, which hospitalized seven, on the vanished Cinchoneros. *Sampedrense* rumor had it that it had been local men jealous of the *estadounidenses* taking Honduran women on dates, rather than any resurgent leftist guerrilla. "Explosión en discoteca hiere a seis militares norteamericanos," *El Tiempo*, Aug. 10, 1987. "El COFADEH alerta a la opinión pública nacional ante el terrorismo institucional," *El Tiempo*, Aug. 31, 1987. "¡Libres los cuatro acusados de 'terroristas'!" *CODEH* 5:40 (September 1987). "La campaña antisubversiva: Caso La Estancia," Centro de Investigación e Información Regional, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 16-26. "Azcona Does Nothing for Peace," *Honduras Update* 6:1 (October 1987). "En Honduras la muerte forma parte del paisaje," from *El Tiempo*, Sept. 29, 1987, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 78 (October 1987). "Honduras-EEUU," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 87 (July 1988). "La policía miente," Partido Comunista de Honduras, *Voz Popular* 7:146 (February 1989).

<sup>128</sup> This precisely parallels an incident where Nicaraguan Guardsmen being treated by a Sandinista doctor saw a portrait of Augusto César Sandino and asked, " 'Is this the man they want to be president?' I had to tell them, 'No, this man is dead already. Your boss's father killed him [in 1934]' What ignorance they kept these people in!" Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 191.

limb, like some of the other campesinos had been. “I had to say that I knew this Lorenzo Zelaya and that I had seen him fourteen days ago in Santa Rita.”<sup>129</sup>

Direct incitement of political violence against the “Reds” extended even to the traffic cop: FUSEP’s General Direction of Transit shocked Tegucigalpa’s residents in 1987 by hanging up the banner “The only good Communist is one who’s dead. Ensure that all Communists are good [ones] or the dead one will be you” in its office<sup>130</sup>—which Gautama Fonseca described as an official summons to vigilantism, an “invitation to kill” by the state itself, a return to Tiburcio Carías’s truncheon-backed intolerance.<sup>131</sup>

On February 5, 1988, the military released an “intelligence report” saying that Cinchonero cells in five cities were preparing to bomb power plants and bridges “and to murder high level officials of the Honduran Armed Forces and Government and to kidnap businessmen” in order to pressure the military to overthrow Azcona and the Congress.<sup>132</sup> Listed among the supposed terrorists in academia and media were two people of recognized prominence and probity—Professor Aníbal Delgado Fiallos and Jesuit Father José María Ferrero. Both were respected

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<sup>129</sup> Reginaldo Zúñiga Cruz, one of the men arrested in 1987, would be murdered in 1990. The prisoners were tortured at the *hacienda* of Danilo Velásquez, one of Yoro’s largest landowners, by G-2 military intelligence. Earlier in the 1980s Gen. Alvarez Martínez had paroled murderers to work for Velásquez at his *hacienda* for Battalion 3-16. “Confiesa campesino acusado de subversivo: Tuve que confesar que había visto hace 15 días al tal Lorenzo Zelaya,” *El Tiempo*, Oct. 9, 1987. “La lógica militar es realmente ilógica,” *CODEH* 5:41 (October-December 1987). “Dirigente campesino asesinado había sido acusado de subversivo,” *El Tiempo*, Jan. 27, 1990. Tony Equale, “Fighting Subversion—Honduran Style,” box 22, collection DG 174 (Central American Historical Institute Records, 1980-1993), Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Penn.

<sup>130</sup> “El comunista bueno es el muerto,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 77 (September 1987). Roger Isaula, “Azcona: A mitad de su mandato (Un balance general),” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 1-17.

<sup>131</sup> 1987 was also the year when intentional homicides surpassed accidental deaths—permanently, creating a new “violence regime.” Gautama Fonseca, “Invitación a matar,” *CODEH* 5:40 (September 1987), from *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 30, 1987. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1989* (Somerville, Mass.: Honduras Information Center, 1990): 8.

<sup>132</sup> “Regalado’s Letter to Wright,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

newspaper columnists, and the newspapers responded with disgust and outrage against the FF.AA.<sup>133</sup>

Backing the Liberal candidate Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President Azcona insisted in 1989 that all street crime was “being skillfully taken advantage of by the sectors of the extreme left and of the right” to “promote chaos and violence”: only further militarization would save Honduras from these extremists that believed only in force.<sup>134</sup> Street crime was always portrayed by officials as external—from subversives, the “bad sons of Honduras” and implicitly their mothers<sup>135</sup>—never from any actual conditions in the country. But the inability to deal with actual street violence was the most potent factor in the challenge to the FF.AA.’s legitimacy and even existence,<sup>136</sup> making the state resort to rhetorical foes rather than real ones. While the state could blame the violence of state-tied cartels on dissidents and phantom subversives,<sup>137</sup> Elaine Scarry and Adrienne Pine argue that violence reshaped individual subjectivity, by dominating the body into a new human condition defined by violence.<sup>138</sup> The state could increase political violence, but its rhetoric in the face of national realities eroded its reputability, its rhetorical power.

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<sup>133</sup> The pattern here was similar to Gen. Regalado’s repeated—and repeatedly-mocked—claims of an imminent Jesuit-led coup (Chapter 9, “Regalado: Counter-Jesuit Counterinsurgency”). “Informe involucra profesionales y sacerdotes: Plan terrorista revelan FF.AA.” *La Tribuna*, Feb. 6, 1988. “¿Un plan terrorista en Honduras?” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 82 (February 1988). Leticia Salomón, “El caso Matta: (Radiografía de la violencia),” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 52-69.

<sup>134</sup> The Liberals and the Nationalists running for President in 1981, 1985, and 1989 would Red-bait one another—entirely unconvincingly, but the accusation was so versatile as a discrediting tool precisely *because* of its emptiness, its absence of reference to reality. “Honduras: Coyuntura 1989,” Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Informaciones* 12, 2nd epoch (January-February 1990): 1-34.

<sup>135</sup> (See also Chapter 7, “Mothers Versus the Pater Patriae,” n61.) “Gobierno trabaja mientras malos hondureños tratan de subvertir paz nacional,” *La Tribuna*, Aug. 7, 1982. “75 mil personas dijeron ¡No a la violencia terrorista! Enérgica repulsa a guerrilleros izquierdistas en San Pedro Sula,” *El Heraldo*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 22, 1982. “Mercedarios y malos hijos de Honduras amenazan la democracia: López Grijalba,” *El Tiempo*, June 15, 1987.

<sup>136</sup> “La ‘zona recuperada’ vuelve a manos de los nicaragüenses,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 46, 2nd epoch (June 1986).

<sup>137</sup> José Miguel Cruz, “Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 53:4 (Winter 2011): 1-33.

<sup>138</sup> Grandin, “Living in Revolutionary Time: Coming to Terms with the Violence of Latin America’s Long Cold War,” in Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence During Latin America’s Long Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010): 7.



The decade's constant claims of guerrillas were not directly used to discredit the media or prevent any story from escaping Honduras's orbit. But the claims of a constant covert rural leftist menace, combined with several pointed threats, was easily turned against campesinos, or the clergy and journalists who could warrant their stories. The state's violence was covered up with further state violence: a self-reinforcing logic<sup>139</sup> of state violence blamed outside agitation for street crime and the organized crime (which the same FF.AA. was deeply involved in).

### A Right-Wing Student Riot

The level of drug involvement of the CIA with the state-protected cartels of Mexico, Panama, and Honduras and with Cuban and Nicaraguan traffickers has been important in Contra-War historiography.<sup>140</sup> Honduras's kingpin, Juan Ramón Matta Ballesteros, had funded Gen. Policarpo Paz García's 1978 garrison coup against Gen. Juan Alberto Melgar Castro, and was the "number two" for Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, *el Padrino* of Mexico, who sent a share of the profits from his unified Mexican cartel to the Contras. This was on top of any trafficking that Edén Pastora's *Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática* (ARDE) and Col. Ricardo Lau's *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense* did themselves. U.S. Customs and Drug Enforcement Agency offices and agents were regularly warned off by "visitors" sent by the White House, or roused from Mexico and Central America if they got too close to friendly kingpins. Inspector-General Hitz found that the White House and Langley arranged for a secret understanding with the Department of Justice "to ignore any drug associations as long as those [CIA assets] involved were indeed supporting the secret war against the Sandinista regime," getting a *post-facto* waiver for the

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<sup>139</sup> "Azcona: A mitad de su mandato (Hacia un balance general)," *Frente* 6:14 (January-May 1988): 4-11.

<sup>140</sup> Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (1992) 2000: 54.

general Federal requirement to report traffickers.<sup>141</sup> Contractors for the Senate’s Nicaraguan Humanitarian Aid Office loaded lethal shipments at Ilopango Airport to land at El Aguacate, and then continued to South America for their “payment.”<sup>142</sup> But once U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency mole L.Cpl. Enrique “Kiki” Camarena was tortured over thirty hours with the help of amphetamines and power tools until he was buried alive in 1985, Félix Gallardo could no longer be released from jail on the insistence of U.S. officials, and arrested for good in 1989.<sup>143</sup> Matta Ballesteros was seized by Azcona’s government in 1988 and flown north, causing a riot that burned down an annex to the U.S. Embassy.

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<sup>141</sup> The only real technicality was that CIA *agents* (and, after 1986, *paid* assets) were not exempted from being reported if they ran drugs. The Pentagon and then the CIA relied on Matta’s SETCO airline as the Contras’ main supplier since 1983. Other Medellín Cartel contacts paying for Nicaraguan and Salvadoran counterrevolutionary violence included Bay Islands kingpin Alan Hyde, Panamanian money launderer Ramón Milián Rodríguez, Bolivian trafficker Roberto Suárez Gómez, who financed Argentina’s military operations in Central America 1978-81. The CIA knew that sixty FDN and ARDE Contras they worked with were traffickers, up to Col. Enrique Bermúdez and Comandante “Zero” Edén Pastora. Gen. Bueso Rosa surprised at being made an exception. Needless to say, just one “bust” of the Contra-supply planes delivering cocaine to the United States would have been a tremendous scandal. (See also Chapter 3, “The Global News War,” n57.) Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America* 1997: 88. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 151. Jack A. Blum, “Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem,” in Eisendrath, ed., *In the Name of Security* 2018: 88. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 147, 310-11. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987: 25, 42-90, 96-99, 106, 128, 139, 142-50, 176. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 42, 50. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 157. Joy Hackel and Daniel Siegel, eds., *In Contempt of Congress: The Reagan Record on Central America: A Citizen’s Guide* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987): 45. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 356, 369-70, 396-98, 410-14, 418-19. Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994): 25-46, 205-07, 265-73, 362-66, 397-420, 467. Kombluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 202. Alfred W. McCoy, “Mission Myopia: Narcotics as Fallout from the CIA’s Covert Wars,” in Johan Lidberg and Denis Muller, eds., *In the Name of Security—Secrecy, Surveillance and Journalism* (London: Anthem, 2018): 133-38. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 480. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 218, 535, 551-55, 558-63. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 9-10, 37, 39-42, 56, 87, 92, 111-19, 138, 155, 176-77. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988: 76, 164-65, 254-55, 281-95, 393.

<sup>142</sup> See Chapter 5, “Conventional Military Deception: Nicaragua,” n137.

<sup>143</sup> The murder would provide the motive for one of the White House’s Drug-War centerpieces, Red Ribbon Week. Manuel Noriega, the *de facto* leader of Panama, also lost the protection of North and Casey with Iran-Contra and he was indicted in Miami 1988 for the trafficking and money laundering that netted him US\$4 million a month—all on charges from before 1984: “It had nothing to do with suddenly discovering that he was a gangster and a drug-peddler—that was known all along,” Chomsky notes. After all the denial the photograph alone of Bush conversing with Noriega from one of their in-person meetings was enough to almost cost the Vice President the 1988 election. Langley was reluctant over the trial since it would point straight back to them, paying him hundreds of thousands of dollars for his role against Nicaragua. Panama was invaded 1989 by his former Contra-War associate, George H.W. Bush, to depose and arrest its *de facto* leader. Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency* 2005: 179, 181. Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (1992) 2000: 51. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 318-19. Persico, *Casey* 1990: 480. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 34-42, 72. Benjamin T. Smith, *The Dope: The Real History of the Mexican Drug Trade* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021). Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 423-25.

Drugs and terrorism were particularly salient accusations against Managua—and themselves issues that made Iran-Contra particularly threatening to the White House.<sup>144</sup> Since the 1960s officials in the Americas blamed the trafficking of heroin, cannabis, or cocaine on global Communism, as an ingenious destabilizing tactic aimed at the youth of the Western world.<sup>145</sup> At the same time drugs were extensively trafficked by anticommunist forces with heavy levels of active acceptance or even connivance by agents of the U.S. government, most notoriously Hmong and Cubans (Chapter 1, “5: Criminality and Extremism”).

In 1981 U.S. Attorney Robert W. Merkle, Jr., indicted trafficker Carlos Lehder, saying he was a revolutionary using cocaine to destroy America, citing a cellmate who claimed he was a Marxist who “wanted to tear down” the United States through drugs. His case was cited to blame Managua<sup>146</sup>—but instead Lehder turned out to be a megalomaniac with no particular ideology.<sup>147</sup> Accusations of trafficking were one of the mainstays of the White House’s 1984-86 push to win positive support for its war against Nicaragua (Chapter 3)—not to shift opinion, but to restore funding for actions already being taken behind the backs of the Senate and the public, for quagmires already entered. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz insisted 1984 that the drug trade was “part of a larger pattern of international lawlessness by communist nations ... Cuba and Nicaragua are prime examples of communist countries involved in drug trafficking to support guer-

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<sup>144</sup> Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 81.

<sup>145</sup> Argentina and Bolivia’s general staffs met in Buenos Aires 1988 and agreed that the drug problem was an expression of the greater East-West confrontation: it was part of the undoubted (if unprovable) campaign of “provoking social imbalances, eroding community morale, and corrupting and disintegrating Western society, as part of the strategic objective of promoting the new Marxist order.” Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 219-21. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 23-24.

<sup>146</sup> Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider’s View* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1985): 47, 138-39, 167, 175.

<sup>147</sup> Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 95

rillas in Central America.”<sup>148</sup> The DEA and the CIA had Barry Seal land briefly in Nicaragua in 1984 in order to secretly photograph the process of his plane being reloaded with cocaine, to claim that the Sandinista state was behind the trafficking coming through Central America. Two years later, Eugene Hasenfus was shot down in the same C-123 Provider that the recently-assassinated Barry Seal had used for the 1984 “sting.”<sup>149</sup>

In 1985 Reagan said Nicaragua was “exporting drugs to poison our youth and linking up with the terrorists of Iran, Libya, the Red Brigades, and the PLO.”<sup>150</sup> Many of the allegations were in fact discounted by U.S. officials before they were publicized<sup>151</sup>—but there was little direct contradiction to Reagan and little restraint on the Administration’s ability to make such allegations in the national press. The Nicaragua-bashing peaked with President Daniel Ortega’s May 1985 visit to Moscow after the White House had worked to get Western European sources to cut off arms for the EPS.<sup>152</sup> On March 16, 1986, Reagan publicized the Seal photograph and announced,

I know every American parent concerned about the drug problem will be outraged to learn that top Nicaraguan Government officials are deeply involved in drug trafficking. This picture—secretly taken at a military airfield outside Managua, shows Federico Vaughn, a top aide to one of the nine commandantes [*sic*] who rule Nicaragua, loading an aircraft with illegal narcotics, bound for the United States. No, there seems to be no crime to which the Sandinistas will not stoop; this is an outlaw regime.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Lt. Col. Alvin D. Cantrell, “Drugs and Terror: A Threat to U.S. National Security,” U.S. Army War College, Mar. 23, 1992: 12-18, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA251824.pdf>. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 23-24.

<sup>149</sup> See Chapter 5, “Conventional Military Deception: Nicaragua,” n137.

<sup>150</sup> Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on Central America,” Feb. 16, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/radio-address-nation-central-america>. Kornbluh, *Nicaragua* 1987: 193. Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution* 2001: 107.

<sup>151</sup> In fact the campaign on the FSLN’s supposed anti-Semitism rested on anti-Semitic grounds: Edgar Chamorro reported that it had been pushed by Jewish *somocistas* who said that, since the U.S. media was rumored to be controlled by Jewish millionaires, the anti-Semitism angle would be the best approach. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection* 1987: 102-03.

<sup>152</sup> This was despite the fact that “the Sandinistas had visited the Soviet Union in the past without much fanfare in Washington” before—and Reagan himself would follow soon after. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 310. Ledford, “The Iran-Contra Affair and the Cold War” 2016: 49.

<sup>153</sup> Reagan, “Address to the Nation on the Situation in Nicaragua,” Mar. 16, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-situation-nicaragua>.

But without being aware of it, the White House was courting a disaster that would cause a Presidential “scandal” potentially larger than Watergate; Iran-Contra also undermined Reagan’s previous project of reinterpreting the Cold War as a Manichean showdown between the forces of light and darkness.

While Honduran Presidents and generals repeated similar accusations against Managua, the FF.AA. began reemerging as cocaine traffickers in its own right 1987. Drug-related violence increased atop the wave of more common street crimes, fueled in part by the arms sold by the Contras, thrown back by the EPS since 1986.<sup>154</sup> By 1988, the agenda of the Reagan Administration’s War on Drugs—and the dwindling chances of overthrowing the Sandinista government—meant that the previous level of tolerating trafficking was replaced by heavy pressure against states perpetrators from Bolivia to Mexico and the Caribbean. This process extended even to the 1989 invasion against Panama to depose its *de facto* ruler Manuel Noriega—and to extradite a longtime U.S.-friendly cocaine middleman, arms supplier, and money launderer for the Contras.<sup>155</sup>

In early 1988 the U.S. State Department privately demanded the extradition of the head of Honduran organized crime, Juan Ramón Matta Ballesteros—or else it would reveal the names of five “dirty colonels” who ran drugs and handled millions in Contra aid, to substantial profit.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> “1987 in Review,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1989* (Somerville, Mass.: Honduras Information Center, 1990): 8.

<sup>155</sup> See above, n143.

<sup>156</sup> The names of these five—G-2 military-intelligence chief Col. Roberto Núñez Montes, Minister of Defense Col. Wilfredo Sánchez, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair Col. Roberto Martínez Ávila, Inter-American Defense Board delegate Col. Carlos Reyes Barahona, and Navy commander Col. Leonel Gutiérrez Minera—were leaked to Radio América anyway: though never confirmed by the State Department, this was a significant moment of stigma/discredit for the FF.AA. The DEA had known them since late 1987, but had been persuaded not to publicize them to not jeopardize FF.AA. cooperation in the Contra War. Matta in fact had made Honduras the world’s first “narcostate,” backing the 1978 garrison coup and making the country central to the Medellín Cartel’s networks. “‘The Military Can Throw Them Out at Any Time’: Juan Arancibia Calls for U.S. Support of Arias Accord,” *Washington Report on the Hemi-*

The dilemma was analogous to that of the 1986 and 1988 Holy Week incidents (Chapter 5): either retain Matta and admit to being a *narco*-state, or break the Honduran Constitution to prevent proof of being a *narco*-state from being made public. In turn, U.S. government agencies found themselves reliant on a Honduran state that they had given power, which it was able to turn to against U.S. interest, by using the same mechanisms necessary to deny stories and undermine witnesses.

Azcona authorized the unconstitutional extradition to avoid embarrassment to the FF.AA., leading to a violent protest that burned down the U.S. Embassy's annex on the night of April 7/8, 1988. Azcona imposed martial law, suspended rights of assembly, travel, and freedom from detention, seized all radio and TV stations for nearly a week, and closed several newspapers: even radio stations from the United States were jammed. Only one rioter was arrested that night—compared to the hundreds of unarmed left-of-center students arrested in the following week on Azcona's orders. CODEH's offices were repeatedly attacked by the self-proclaimed Alianza de Acción Anticomunista while soldiers patrolled every street and enforced a tight curfew (Chapter 7, "Regalado: The Human-Rights Death Squads").<sup>157</sup>

The next morning, over the 140 radio stations seized by the military, Azcona announced that left-wing "narcosubversives" had personally paid the rioters in this "vast plan that terrorist

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*sphere* 8:18 (June 8, 1988). Salomón 1988. Eric Shultz, "Honduras and the Drug Trade," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 64.

<sup>157</sup> One Embassy spokesman insisted that the Contra and U.S. presence were "totally unrelated" to the violence. A U.S. news story called the riot "an unusual spate of anti-Americanism in the normally placid, staunchly conservative, pro-American country. Polls have shown a high percentage of Hondurans approve of the U.S. military role in Honduras." Robert Collier, ["A bomb threat emptied the U.S. Embassy Saturday and a tense calm settled on the capital's streets"], United Press International, Apr. 9, 1988. "Azcona justificará hoy mordaza ante dueños de medios de prensa," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 11, 1988. "Gracias a la ley mordaza impuesta por gobierno: Emisoras del exterior informan al pueblo lo que pasaba en Honduras," *El Tiempo*, Apr. 11, 1988. Larry Rohter, "Anger at Suspect's Expulsion to U.S. Smolders in Honduras," *The New York Times*, Apr. 11, 1988. Larry Rohter, "Honduran Anger at U.S. is Product of Washington Policy, Officials Say," *The New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1988. "State of Emergency," *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988). "Esa acusación es irresponsable: CODEH," *El Tiempo*, July 22, 1988. "Vinculan a policía con paramilitares que amenazan a dirigentes populares," *El Tiempo*, July 27, 1988. "Ante la historia," *CODEH* 6:48 (November-December 1988). Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 167, 237-38.

elements serving foreign ideas, in conjunction with international drug traffickers, planned to carry out to sow chaos and disorder.” He demanded that Hondurans “together slam the door on the penetration of Marxism-Leninism in our country.”<sup>158</sup> “Real” Hondurans could not possibly do anything other than repudiate the riot—and any claim that there were any dirty colonels.<sup>159</sup> By definition, only Red terrorists could run drugs, and any talk of *narco*-officers was of course further proof of Moscow’s black-propaganda media tentacles<sup>160</sup> in Tegucigalpa, Washington, Miami, and New York. He also used an older flavor of xenophobia, also blaming Salvadoran-born guerrillas and schoolteachers’ “dangerous infiltration of Marxist indoctrination, hate, terror and destruction” into Honduras’s public-school students.<sup>161</sup>

It was quickly revealed that the march had been begun by the Frente Unido Universitario Democrático—the UNAH administration captive to the FF.AA.<sup>162</sup>—rather than some all-encompassing yet invisible leftist conspiracy. The students had been quickly joined by passers-by and progressive students, driven more by nationalistic than political energies.<sup>163</sup> The military’s involvement and protection of the crowd was also blatant: FUSEP dawdled for two hours and soldiers halted the firefighters just around the corner, literally while U.S. officials were repeatedly begging Azcona for help over the phone.<sup>164</sup> Instead of exposing an inability to protect Tegucigalpa’s ostensible U.S. ally, the riot was a show of force by a corrupt FF.AA.

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<sup>158</sup> Douglas Grant Mine, “Police, Tanks Patrol Rubble-Strewn Streets to Block Further Rioting,” Associated Press, Apr. 9, 1988. Medea Benjamin, “Anti-American Sentiments Explode in Honduras,” *In These Times*, Apr. 20-26, 1988.

<sup>159</sup> Leticia Salomón, “El caso Matta: (Radiografía de la violencia),” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 2:3-4 (February-April 1988): 52-69.

<sup>160</sup> “‘Sorprendido’ por campaña: Azcona califica de ‘burdas’ publicaciones USA de prensa,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 17, 1988. “Return to Status Quo Resisted,” *Honduras Update* 6:8 (May 1988).

<sup>161</sup> Freddy Cuevas, “Troops, Tanks Patrol Streets in Army Crackdown on Protests,” Associated Press, Apr. 9, 1988.

<sup>162</sup> Salomón, “El caso Matta,” *Coyuntura* (1988): 52-69.

<sup>163</sup> “State of Emergency,” *Honduras Update* 6:6-7 (March-April 1988).

<sup>164</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 237-38.

The seized and shuttered presses were the opposite of hegemony, which is meant to disguise power,<sup>165</sup> and instead revealing an urgent crisis, the state “showing its hand” and exposing its loss of consensus.<sup>166</sup> In other words, Honduras was successfully militarized and the opposition was blamed for everything, but the use of force reveals a critical weakness: the state was internationally embarrassed and lost legitimacy at home and in the Reagan Administration.<sup>167</sup> According to Leticia Salomón, Donald E. Schulz, and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, the government flagrantly overreacted to the riot to try to conceal the range and diversity of those condemning the FF.AA. for trafficking, repression, and its overall inability to defend Honduran territory—right and left, Church and press. Criticism of the military had to be framed as negligible leftists, a “measly minority” to Azcona.<sup>168</sup> The state could arrest students, but it was also trapped in its own red-baiting rhetoric long after the *narco*-colonels were revealed anyway.

#### Soviet Threats (Without a Soviet Union)

George H.W. Bush’s November 1988 election shifted the approach to Central America from Cold-War ideology to pragmatic negotiation and insistence on submission to political-economic neoliberalism. Mikhail Gorbachev’s rapprochement with Reagan had already shifted the President far from his original Cold-War stance, but his country vanished by 1992. Still, there was little letup in the state-sanctioned anticommunist conspiracy theories during the era of the Contras’ defeat in the field, and even after their return to Nicaragua, the Sandinistas’ electoral loss, and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and then the Soviet Union itself.

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<sup>165</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 32.

<sup>166</sup> Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 126.

<sup>167</sup> Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 34.

<sup>168</sup> Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 100. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 208.



In 1988 Defense Minister Col. Wilfredo Sánchez warned the Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada that the organization was being infiltrated by communist capitalists conspiring to divide the business sector, and that there was no proof because the leftists were operating so subtly. COHEP President Jorge Gómez Andino concurred, saying “some businessmen have their exotic ideas [and] therefore they have their heart in Nicaragua, their money in Miami and [their] body in Honduras [...] In Honduras there are certain Communists who have their great capital [here].”<sup>169</sup> Such obviously-paradoxical statements rendered “Communism” an empty signifier—but were no blunder. The Argentinean secret police had believed each colonel and banker abducted as a “Red” proved how far the infiltration had spread.

Leticia Salomón concludes that there was a sense that the FF.AA. was *trapped* in the same script it had written a decade ago, unable to escape the inevitable debunking except with further conspiracy theories. She cites an “end to fear” among press, politicians, and populace after Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s ouster, which allowed for real democratization (Chapter 5, “López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial”), allowing exchange and verification of true information. Cartoons showed a new critical, or even ribald, atmosphere. Loss of control over the discourse was crucial to ending the fear that had given the military forces their impunity, their overwhelming dominance above the civilian state in the 1980s. The FF.AA. was trying to consolidate some position amidst renewed calls for cuts in budget and personnel or even outright abolition after 1986. The first soldiers were subjected to civilian trial and there were calls for a civilian police and accountability for the crimes of colonels and generals since the 1970s.<sup>170</sup> The Contra War under Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Regalado brought a new vigor to anticommunism in Honduras, and Red-baiting proved useful to making claims that proponents knew were not only false but

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<sup>169</sup> “Militarismo,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 85 (May 1988).

<sup>170</sup> Leticia Salomón, “La pérdida del miedo en la construcción cultural de la democracia,” CEDOH, *Puntos de Vista* 7 (May 1993): 53-71.

doomed to exposure, but which would still provide justification for repression and discrediting of opponents.

In 1990 Commander-in-Chief Gen. Arnulfo Cantarero declared that the FF.AA. itself had been infiltrated by subversives<sup>171</sup> and blamed civilian subversives for proposals to cut the military's budget; Ramón Custodio was burned in effigy before Congress by a staged student pro-conscription march under the FUUD later that year.<sup>172</sup> However, Honduras was the first country in Latin America to abolish obligatory military service in 1994, ending the FF.AA.'s habit of roughly seizing young men off the streets or in theaters and striking at its strength in everyday violence and preventing the process of democratization after the Cold War from losing its momentum.<sup>173</sup>

Violence was still blamed on the left into the 1990s; prisoners were still coerced into "confessing" for the cameras that they had been the ones who had killed the military's victims, still used to finger progressive groups.<sup>174</sup> The tanks would regularly roll into the streets, citing a communist threat Moscow, as late as 1993 (despite the fall of the Soviet Union). In January 1993 the FF.AA. announced to the media that CODEH was operating a far-left armed movement, a human-rights death squad, though Gen. Regalado himself promptly called upon Custodio when his own home was bombed (Chapter 7, "Perpetrator-Victims").

The fear of reprisal faded in the early 1990s, with civil society and the popular movements gaining strength with every military concession and every new revelation in the media. The FF.AA.'s legitimacy, reputation, and self-confidence collapsed.<sup>175</sup> It was unable to either

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<sup>171</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 280.

<sup>172</sup> "El tigre y los estudiantes," *CODEH* 65 (June 1990).

<sup>173</sup> Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1997): 141-50.

<sup>174</sup> Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 286-87.

<sup>175</sup> J. Mark Ruhl, "Redefining Civil-Military Relations in Honduras," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 38:1 (Spring 1996): 33-66.

intimidate or justify its existence any more, its thinking trapped in the Cold War, blaming a phantom left wing for all ills as its prerogatives began to shrink—even as it was able to besiege the country with roadblocks whenever Congress proposed a budget cut.<sup>176</sup> The Honduran Army was locked into a logic of violence, which left it hemorrhaging legitimacy and vulnerable to discursive attacks that it could combat only with more rhetorics of violence. However, Honduras’s popular movements could delegitimize the military, but themselves had to face the surging state and street violence after 1986, and the civil/*narco* regimes installed by the 2009 coup.

“ ‘Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. The third time it’s enemy action.’ ”

—Ian Fleming, *Goldfinger*, 1959

## Conclusion

The developments of actual left-wing and progressive politics in 20th-century Latin America were not creations of the Soviet state, were not dedicated to expanding any superpower bloc. Instead they derive from the continent’s broad, independent socialist movements, from student, labor, and campesino organization; from movements against military dictatorship and exclusive U.S. economic and military domination and in favor of self-determination, or for “*tercermundista*” nonalignment or neutralism. José Carlos Mariátegui, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, Salvador Allende, Mario Roberto Santucho, Ernesto Cardenal, Comandante Ana María, or Subcomandante Marcos could innovate concept and practice for an *American* context.<sup>177</sup> They created vigorous new visions for society, joined by thousands or millions of work-

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<sup>176</sup> Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 81, 93-94.

<sup>177</sup> Abraham Acosta, *Thresholds of Illiteracy: Theory, Latin America, and the Crisis of Resistance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). Juan José Arévalo, *Antikomunismo en América Latina: Radiografía del proceso hacia una nueva colonización* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Palestra, 1959). Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* 1985: 67. Stephen Gill and David Law, “Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 100. Andrea Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador’s Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992*, Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2016). Fernando López, *The Feathers of Condor: Transnational State Terrorism, Exiles and Civilian Anticommunism in South America* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016). Peace, *A Call to Conscience* 2012: 146. Rodríguez, *La izquierda hondureña* 2005. Steve J. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile: On the Eve of London, 1998*, Latin America Otherwise

ers and campesinos—but also junior officers and members of the middle class.<sup>178</sup> Their analyses explicitly offered a new way of knowing, able to bring power, politics, and economics into the open, to contest the status quo.<sup>179</sup> Anticommunist ideology in Central America and the Southern Cone motivated repression beyond “rationalist” protection of the material interests of any one sector.

In Honduras, the internal logic of anticommunism would trap the FF.AA. The effort to ban certain modes of analysis, to earn stigma by accusing Church and media of Communism for carrying certain stories. Over the 1980s Honduran civil and military leaders repeatedly refused to take an overall pragmatic approach like Gens. Oswaldo López Arellano or Walter López Reyes. Gens. Humberto Regalado and Luis Alonso Discua Elvir had less control of the apparatus of state terror than Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, and were trapped in a visible cycle of diminishing credibility, but unable to change the ideology that left them unable to understand their failure to gain any hegemony or to find a way out of the vortex.

Many states in Latin America did make some reformist moves in response to these new options for action and social organization, before swinging towards repression and genocide: as in South Vietnam, land reform in El Salvador or “civil defense” in Guatemala were initiated to

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(Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 19. Stehr and Meja, “Introduction,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 11. Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992). To intellectual historians, even the most Stalinist orthodoxy represented the ossification of a field of thought extending before 1917, 1848, or 1789, beyond Nazareth or even the first agrarian dispute on the Euphrates, the Yellow River, or the Tehuacán Valley. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, trans. P.S. Falla (New York: W.W. Norton, [1978] 2005): 10-67. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 1-26.

<sup>178</sup> The classic Gramscian “organic intellectuals,” mediating between subordinated groups and preventing conflict between them. Carlos Nelson Coutinho goes so far as to say his view of the state and his insistence on democracy in Marxian thought shook the global Left harder than the Sino-Soviet Split over Mao’s tactics! Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 57. Branwen Gruffydd Jones, “‘Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories’: Possibilities and Contradictions of Emancipatory Struggles in the Current Neocolonial Condition,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 209-28. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 85. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 136, 168. Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought* 2012: 168-70.

<sup>179</sup> Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 106.

divert the *campesinato* from the guerrilla movements, but instead quickly became vehicles of atrocity, murdering tens of thousands.<sup>180</sup> The reactionaries were able to seize the state from civilian governments and the more pragmatic officers, but resorted to crude stereotypes and self-contradictory conspiracy theories, in their understanding of global “Communism” attacking youth culture or murdering tens of thousands of civilians—all Gramscian “maneuver” and no “position.”<sup>181</sup> The continent’s most hardline officers were simply unable to understand the new sort of challenge to their tightening rule: instead they fell back on clichés of Stalinists with nothing to offer the campesinos that they were threatening or duping—*somocistas* declaring that they were fighting “the imperialism of our time, International Communism.” Nicaraguan Guardsmen recalled how their superiors described the Sandinistas as merely drug addicts who would take all the harvests and abduct every child in the country to Cuba for indoctrination. They could not conceive that the guerrillas had actually convinced anyone, let alone successfully mounted a war of maneuver against the Somoza state structure.<sup>182</sup> Cold-War anticommunism was an ideology: it attacked true stories and left the planners of covert wars fundamentally unable to understand events for decades, unable to recognize failure.

In the United States, anticommunism was central to the process of discrediting stories of the war against Central America even if “warranted” by clergy or lawyers. The attacks could be

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<sup>180</sup> Charles D. Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty: Agrarian Transformation and Political Conflict in Central America* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988): 142. Peter Alonso Enamorado, “The Revolution That Wasn’t: Honduras’ Political Stability Between the 1970s and 1980s,” M.A. thesis (Yale University, New Haven, Conn., 2017). Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 105-08, 142-44. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 30, 179-81, 194-95.

<sup>181</sup> Explicitly reformist generals include Oswaldo López Arellano’s 1972-75 term in Honduras, Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-75) of Peru, Juan José Torres (1970-71) of Bolivia, and Omar Torrijos (1968-81) of Panama. Even less-political personalists like Gens. René Barrientos (1964-69) and Alfredo Ovando Candía (1969-70) of Bolivia and Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1950-58) of Venezuela postured as *populachos* against an elitist elected civil government they had overthrown.

<sup>182</sup> Likewise Cold-War hardliners returned over and over to clichés any reform or Détente in Moscow was a play for time and a disguise of “refined Stalinism.” But the ex-Guardsmen’s foreign-armed, -funded, and -commanded attack from Honduras against Nicaragua *did* indeed lead to conscription, rationing, inflation, and disputes with Church and civic opposition, which to some analysts indeed drove the strongest domestic opposition to the Sandinistas. Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 192-93, 243.

1. explicit, attacking religious and human-rights groups as being duped by a global campaign of slander and disinformation, or (more risky) overtly insisting on sinister motives, notably the case of Raymond Bonner's reporting of El Mozote. 2. The implicit angle was subtler: even if White House accusations against Managua were not necessarily *believed* by the journalists repeating them to the public, they still *were* being presented and thus given a minimum degree of warrant.<sup>183</sup> The Honduran and U.S. states used narratives and media-management technique against specific stories or to generate a broader "atmosphere" necessary to stifle future stories. But the states' efforts also *reveal* where consensus could have broken down, the potential weak points that could have been probed and pursued: massacres, drug trafficking, and flouting Congressional law required the largest reactions to suppress, because they were the most stigmatizing and discrediting potential stories if they did "escape."

One Gramscian definition of hegemony is that the narratives and empty set phrases produced by the interests in charge of the state are used and referred to by the press and even the opposition. In the most extreme scenario, a narrative or ideology can be "hegemonic" even if nobody—not the official speakers, not the reporters duly recording their words—believe in them in private. As long as any comprehensive rebuttal was never allowed the same level of discussion in public, dissent would lack the context and distribution to challenge it—to create *counterhegemony*. Reagan's continued popularity depended on his personal figure being insulated by the press from his own unpopular policies (Chapter 3, "A War on News"): his Administration's secret (and illegal) activities were at odds with even his most hawkish rhetoric.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 13.

<sup>184</sup> Had the press *not* treated him as the "Teflon President," he would have ceased to be exempted from criticism: thus the Administration's ability to pressure and condemn the press was largely self-inflicted. Augelli and Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations," in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 140. Bennett, *News*, 2nd ed., 1988: 100. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 32. Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002): 31. Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee* 1989: 203. Lee and Solomon, *Unreliable Sources* 1990: 148, 150.

This chapter explicitly frames the White House–FF.AA. campaign of accusations against world media as a “state conspiracy theory.” Conspiracy theories are most broadly best characterized as requiring 1. centralized, coordinated action kept secret from most of the public; 2. deliberate concealment of premeditated planning, sinister motive, and true knowledge (kept from even elected presidents) that would be opposed by the public if made explicit<sup>185</sup>; and 3. hidden connections between seemingly-coincidental events at home or around the world (though the conspiracy theorist can come to a shadowy grasp of some of what was going on about what was “hushed up,” by gathering clues, making free associations, and resisting the narratives of mainstream sources).<sup>186</sup> Now these three characteristics all indeed fit the narrative that U.S. and Hon-

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<sup>185</sup> The criterion of intent would indicate that all White House, CIA, Pentagon claims of threats to the U.S. since Guatemala or Cuba were simply cynical lies. Under a “conspiracist” interpretation, Reagan and his spokespersons ranted 1984-86 about Sandinista genocide and cocaine trafficking, all while being fully aware of the Atlacatl Battalion gunning down a churchfull of hundreds of children or L.Cpl. Enrique Camarena’s protracted murder by the FDN’s funder Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo. In terms of ultimate historical analysis, it simply may not *matter* if the patriotic patter simply a cynical and knowing lie for the masses—or whether they believed wholeheartedly. 1. Reagan and Lt. Col. North really believed their own Cold-War rhetoric; 2. Amb. Binns disavowed the Reagan Doctrine but even in 2000 dismissed the Sumpul Massacre as a coached fabrication by the FMLN and CISPEs fooling liberal Democrats inexperienced in Central America (Chapter 4, “The Sumpul Massacre: The U.S. Embassy”); 3. José Azcona cynically manipulated accusations of communism. But it was always the *same* ideology: anticommunism kept its hegemonic position by acts specifically aimed at excluding, attacking, and doubting contradictory facts. It was the same *mode* of discrediting stories; accusations of conspiracist thinking are always about “derision, disqualification, and dismissal”—about *discredit*: under one interpretation, a “conspiracy theory” is “not even wrong” and thus does not have to even by analyzed to debunk it—it is simply declared unfalsifiable, beyond the distinction between truth and falsity. Conspiracy theory promises that its warranting is a sure thing, but still secret—until enough citizens hear about it and independently agree with its premises. Jack Z. Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008): 3. Jaron Harambam, “Against Modernist Illusions: Why We Need More Democratic and Constructivist Alternatives to Debunking Conspiracy Theories,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 25:1 (2021). Ginna Husting and Martin Orr, “Dangerous Machinery: ‘Conspiracy Theorist’ as a Transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion,” *Symbolic Interaction* 30:2 (Spring 2007): 140-41. Charles Pigden, “Popper Revisited, or What is Wrong with Conspiracy Theories?” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 25:1 (March 1995).

<sup>186</sup> Both “xenophobic” and “state” conspiracy theories have been collected and studied in Bratich, *Conspiracy Panic*: 2008. Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Donald T. Critchlow, John Korasick, and Matthew C. Sherman, eds., *Political Conspiracies in America: A Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). David Brion Davis, ed., *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971). Lance deHaven-Smith, *Conspiracy Theory in America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013). Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories* 2008. Goldberg, *Enemies Within* 2001. Erik Kirschbaum, *Burning Beethoven: The Eradication of German Culture in the United States During World War I* (Chicago: Berlinica, 2015). Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the*

duran officials deployed, insisting that stories of massacres, secret wars, trafficking, disease, or small-town embezzlement were all secretly part of a massive centralized discredit campaign by the Kremlin. But these characteristics are also standard operating procedure for worldwide covert warfare, including Honduras's actual use against El Salvador and then Nicaragua in a network of connections extending to Chile, Italy, Iran, Israel, and South Vietnam. Therefore, further distinctions must be made to outline the specific, *epistemic* role anticommunism played: the systems maintaining secrecy and giving the plausibility to denial, that allowed spreading of accusations and denial of true stories about the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan counterrevolutions.

The literature on conspiracy theorizing breaks them down into 1. xenophobic “takeover” conspiracies and 2. state conspiracies. The first alleged an insidious foreign (or ideologically-alien) organization was aiming to take over—the reactionary aristocrats of “Old Europe,” Freemasonic lodges, the Catholic Church and immigrant “hyphenated” Americans, the loans and cultural subversion of “world Jewry,” or global Communism. They were on the brink of suborning Washington and permanently altering national culture, politics, and society, everything that made the United States a republic, the envy of the whole world.<sup>187</sup>

Earlier analysts reckoned the “takeover” conspiracy theorists as psychologically pathological and dangerously antidemocratic, fringe intrusions into a respectable political mainstream, the “vital center,” and little more. But later writers found that the basic elements of these theories have been a constant in political culture since even before 1776, shared by Abraham Lincoln as

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*Progressive Era* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008). Olmsted, *Real Enemies* 2009. Specific war propaganda—spy hunts, cultural purges, exaggerated (or true) atrocity stories, reports of the *Kaiser's* German dirigibles over Montana 1917—is a category more simple and limited in scope. The conspirators' goals are variously speculated on, especially for state conspiracy theories: to launch foreign wars and entanglements, hide the fabricated origins of a religion, crack down on free flow of true information, steal elections, indebt the middle-class majority into state or corporate dependency, divide family, confiscate small arms, dismember society.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*



well as Joe McCarthy<sup>188</sup>—and by the “Great Communicator” as well as the original “pathological candidate,” Barry Goldwater.<sup>189</sup> As tropes, narratives, and “folk devils,” they are recycled regardless of the supposed antagonist, reemerging decades after being seemingly abandoned.<sup>190</sup>

Even the most extreme Cold-War-hawk ideologies still count as hegemonic, the unstated limits beyond which Congressional and mass-media debate did not extend.<sup>191</sup> Regardless, Reagan’s hardliners—conspiracists and conspirators at once—were only able to come into power in 1981 on the coattails of a candidate whose anticommunist views still received pushback as so hawkish that they were outside the political “mainstream,” despite his personal popularity. Therefore key elements of the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan counterrevolutions had to be hidden from the public and Congress. But the U.S. and Latin American figures who used—and believed—narratives of a grand Soviet plot were not “extremist” outsiders, rabble-rousing demagogues, or isolated “cranks,” but Presidents, generals, legislators, think tanks, the Beltway press pool.

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<sup>188</sup> Striking is the *similarity* between the alleged goals of all these supposed plots in Davis, ed., *The Fear of Conspiracy* 1971. The Second-Red-Scare allegations of W. Cleon Skousen or Joseph P. Kamp resemble the fantasies of Judeo-Bolshevik subversion a generation earlier, and those back once *more* to an anti-Catholicism shared by both the Ku Klux Klan’s Alma Bridwell White and by the reformist Thomas Nast ... and so on. This unified centuries-old imagined enemy also is a contrast to Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *The American Monomyth* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1977).

<sup>189</sup> Richard Hofstadter’s “paranoid style,” of conspiracist demagogues erupting into an otherwise-functioning centrist Establishment, was specifically coined for the paleoconservative 1964 candidate. Goldwater was even remotely diagnosed by over 1,000 psychiatrists as unfit for the upcoming election for *Fact* magazine. Both Goldwater, Reagan, and their campaigns *were* long correlated to the conspiracist John Birch Society. By contrast even Reagan’s most alarming 1980 statements did not generate the 1964 level of public concern that he was dangerously unsuited for office. The results of Reagan’s policies would shock and anger even Sen. Goldwater. The Kerry Committee and Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh pointed to enormities of trafficking and murder bigger than any allegation in Watergate, but again did not reignite the scandal after 1988. Many opponents of conspiracy theories treat them as dangerous because they might persuade voters to elect outsiders who had lost touch with reality—but Reagan, despite arming terrorists and murderers from Afghanistan to Nicaragua, has not been analyzed in this U.S. political tradition.

<sup>190</sup> A key characteristics of a moral panic is that it is repeated without needing specific evidence, effectively chasing its own story, citing itself in perpetuity; it stigmatizes a group as an internal social threat, redefining what was formerly neutral as now dangerously deviant. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Routledge Classics (London: Taylor and Francis, 2011).

<sup>191</sup> Robinson, “Does the Propaganda Model Actually Theorise Propaganda?” in Pedro-Caraña, Broudy, and Klaehn, eds., *The Propaganda Model Today* 2018: 56. Soderlund *et al.*, *Media Definitions of Cold War Reality* 2001: 56

The second broad category of conspiracy theory concerns the U.S. state and secret domestic or global elites. Instead of threatening to take power, the threat to the republic has been there from the beginning, writing the rules and then offering the public only the illusion of choice. These theories do not have that much to do with the tropes of earlier centuries of theories, tending more towards subjects such as the 18th-century Bavarian Illuminati, the Slave Power of the U.S. South or the Abolitionists of the North, the Federal Reserve Bank, the United Nations, and the moneyed elite in general.<sup>192</sup>

This category of conspiracy theories in U.S. culture has drawn more sympathetic analyses than xenophobic attacks on immigrant groups: suspicions against the peak of state power—and beyond—are easier to “recuperate,” as a gesture (however limited) towards actual state crimes. Under this interpretation, even the most pathological conspiracy theory is simply a hypertrophy of common ways of thinking and pattern recognition in the face of the national-security state—a recreation drawn from real data, however extreme and speculative.<sup>193</sup>

State-centered conspiracy theories emerged in the late 20th century,<sup>194</sup> with the Manhattan Project of World War II followed by the 1963 John F. Kennedy assassination and the know-

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<sup>192</sup> These particular conspiracy theories indeed tack closely—in form and content—to anti-Jewish theories, and easily merge with earlier theories about takeover by the Freemasons, Jesuits, Communists, or a Nazi “Fourth Reich.” A most curious conjuncture is the 1930s House Un-American Activities Committee under Rep. Samuel Dickstein—the only Congressman paid by the NKVD—pursuing far-right figures who would become prominent in the Second Red Scare, with HUAC as its centerpiece. Gary Alan Fine and Terence McDonnell, “Erasing the Brown Scare: Referential Afterlife and the Power of Memory Templates,” *Social Problems* 54:2 (May 2007): 170-87.

<sup>193</sup> *I.e.*, as describing a reality (however distorted), as being able to produce real knowledge rather than merely replicate an ideology by assigning it to a mythicized foreign force, as xenophobic conspiracy theories did. This is a common dilemma in epistemology: the most basic empiricism holds that an observer can only trust what you witness yourself (and that not even *that* can be trusted). Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge* 1994: 114. Bocock, *Hegemony* 1986: 15, 59. Matthew R.X. Dentith, ed., *Taking Conspiracy Theories Seriously* (London, U.K., and Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). Emma A. Jane and Chris Fleming, *Modern Conspiracy: The Importance of Being Paranoid* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). Bill Moyers, “The Secret Government: The Constitution in Crisis,” the Public Broadcasting Service, Nov. 4, 1987, <https://billmoyers.com/content/secret-government-constitution-crisis>. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 86.

<sup>194</sup> “State” conspiracy theories could even be conceived as protective and benevolent—detecting and annihilating insidious hidden enemies: this came close to the covert Cold Warriors’ own self-image. State conspiracy theories are also where the more outré allegations appear: sparking ethnic warfare, collapsing the world population, sowing drugs and disease, media and mind control, collaborating with extraterrestrials, devouring the youth for Satanic ritu-

ing lie of the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident.<sup>195</sup> In 1975 Congress official documented the secret wars on every continent, entrenched involvement in organized crime, the overthrow of democratic governments, assassinations, surveillance, and human experimentation by the CIA and other state agencies. U.S. covert warfare has meant state murder reaching from heads of state to tens of thousands of peasants, decided upon by a small set of executive officials independent of the knowledge or oversight of Congress or even the Administration: Guatemala, Indochina, Indonesia, Congo, Cuba (Chapter 1). The Casey Doctrine was only a further instance of an unaccountable national-security state that practically signed its own “black budget.”

One frame used for the Contra War was that it was “an actual conspiracy *caused* by a conspiracy theory,” subverting the entire concept of a representative, electoral republic itself. The Cold Warriors truly believed that the United States itself was a “helpless giant” or the “last domino,” that the country was equally vulnerable at every and any spot on the globe. To the hawks, any reformist leader, guerrilla movement, or news report of U.S. involvement could only be interpreted as a potential or de facto KGB tool. Any massacre could be exaggerated and staged, any absence of evidence of Cuban advisors in El Salvador or Nicaraguan smugglers in Honduras only proof of how well the operation was hidden, any social change in the United States or the remotest hamlet of Laos or Mozambique was part of the Kremlin masterplan (Chapter 1, “1: Refusal of Neutrality”).<sup>196</sup>

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als, or ending the world in service to the Antichrist, or simply by launching World War III. A domestic or global elite is more nebulous than a specific, “foreign” opponent, allowing for far more plots to be considered possible. Stephen Kinzer, *Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2019). Jesse Walker, *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory* (New York: Harper, 2013).

<sup>195</sup> These developments were simultaneous and very rapid: what had been the darkest fears and rumors of 1963-64—secret government involvement in mass murder, terrorism, and drug trafficking—were commonplace by the end of the 1960s. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 256. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 236.

<sup>196</sup> More extremely, the Cold-War hawks and especially the neoconservatives can be easily described as a radical, isolated *camarilla* that took over foreign policy, caused millions of deaths on every continent, advocated strategic

The claims by the White House or the FF.AA. that mainstream stories of massacres, drug-running, or venereal disease were plants by a worldwide (yet undetectable) Soviet disinformation network had a double advantage: they 1. created a “chilling effect” to slow investigation and response to each true story, but 2. without having to directly engage with the details, witnesses, and warrantors of the stories—dismissal and diffusion, more than denial. A Stanley Cohen-style model of denial requires 1. covert coordination within the state to conceal evidence, while publicly asserting witnesses 2a. colluded to lie or 2b. were manipulated by the warrantors or more shadowy foreign forces. Cohen-style denial requires a positive *assertion*—spinning new narratives that engage with, explain, and dismiss an event. Denialism is also ideological, in that ideology is a system of obscuring a certain portion of reality being witnessed, seconded, and transmitted by some.

Hegemonic anticommunism in the United States allowed tacit acceptance of the Administration’s conspiracy theory of KGB officers (who, after all, *were* in each major city worldwide) planting stories (which, again, was distinctly within the realm of possibility). As long as critics hesitated and the political scandal remained limited, the White House and the involved agencies achieved their key goal. The anticommunist conspiracy theory of a helpless United States, saturated by Kremlin agents of influence and deceived by “active measures,” was a key condition for the state attacks on the press that aimed to keep the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan Wars “covert” (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare”). The xenophobic conspiracy theory aimed to cover up a state conspiracy by targeting the press, churches, universities, and NGOs that transmitted and certified the stigmatizing stories.

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and tactical use of nuclear first strikes, downplayed the risk of global thermonuclear war, and causally justified breaking of any law, all predicated on an explicit belief that the public must be routinely lied to and that policy cannot be left up to mere Senators and Presidents. At the same time they remained wholly ignorant of local realities, rejecting any pragmatism or even attention to local realities. Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 273.

In one interpretation, conspiracy theories only allow a superficial and nonspecific distrust against the state, that the conspirators are few and individual, leaving the greater culture and society intact from their corruption.<sup>197</sup> However powerful, the perpetrators are still framed as deviating in secret from a social norm—which remains uninterrogated.<sup>198</sup> In this criticism of conspiracy theorizing, the focus on finding the “smoking gun,” the “man behind the man,” or the proverbial “smoke-filled room” implies that the rest of state activity—the usual actions of elected officials, appointed civil servants, officers, and officials—are aboveboard, free from the taint of gangsters and mercenaries. In the first interpretation, officials committed illegal activities; under the second, secret executive action was inherently criminal—the norm, not the exception.<sup>199</sup> Investigating the secrecy required to deny, delay, defuse, and ultimately render moot the atrocities

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<sup>197</sup> One critique of state conspiracy theory is that it focuses on a handful of figures (mostly in one agency, at Langley), and cover-ups quashing one or two whistleblowers, rather than pervasive and systemic secrecy and corruption—that there was only one “omnipotent and malevolent force that controlled world affairs from the shadows.” The 1986-88 phase of Iran-Contra as a Presidential scandal (Introduction, “Iran-Contra Literature Review”) indeed suffered from narrowing the focus downwards to a few individual agents or events: Reagan’s personal knowledge of diverting Iranian to the Contras (a “smoking gun” using the Watergate scandal as its model), the 1984 La Penca bombing attempt against Edén Pastora, the share of cocaine paying for the FDN under CIA agents (rather than the “retired” Félix Rodríguez or the National Security Council’s Lt. Col. North). This also allowed specific investigators such as Martha Honey or Gary Webb to be reframed as isolated and a bit eccentric, questing after the one key evidence that could start the dominoes falling by force of its undeniable factuality and crucial importance. However, without “theorizing” about the concealed connections between state crimes they become a decontextualized litany. Joe Bryan, “Trust Us: Nicaragua, Iran-Contra, and the Discursive Economy of Empire” in Carole MacGranahan and John F. Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018): 350-68. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 88. Olmsted, *Real Enemies* 2009.

<sup>198</sup> Daniel Jolley, Karen M. Douglas, and Robbie M. Sutton, “Blaming a Few Bad Apples to Save a Threatened Barrel: The System-Justifying Function of Conspiracy Theories,” *Political Psychology* 39:2 (April 2018): 465-78.

<sup>199</sup> The most recent histories of actually-conspiratorial political violence emphasize 1. the lack of direct connection between 1a. state officials and 1b. the actual executors and 2. the lack of clear-cut divisions as would be expected if the state was simply *using* violence against opponents. Tacuaras and Red Brigadists simply do not appear to have any clear idea of who they were “working for.” The 1976 junta eagerly used right-wing Peronists to hunt down their left-wing fellows, and left-wing Montoneros to (unsuccessfully) sabotage the British at Gibraltar, or spared to advise Adm. Massera on his presidential campaign. Deutsch and Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right* (1993). Wolfgang S. Heinz, “The Military, Torture and Human Rights: Experiences from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay,” in Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995): 74. Guido Giacomo Preparata, “A Study in Gray: The *Affaire Moro* and Notes for a Reinterpretation of the Cold War and the Nature of Terrorism,” in Eric Wilson, ed., with Mark Findlay and Ralph Henson, *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex* (Burlington, Vt.: Routledge, 2012): 213-71. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991: 78.

and illegalities of the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan counterrevolutions can show how these processes of protection allowed state collusion with death squads and drug traffickers.

These uninterrogated norms are clearly—if unwittingly—spelled out by the most pointed Congressional critics of the Contra War themselves. Rep. Edward Boland (D-Massachusetts) angrily wrote in 1984 that the Contras’ political-warfare and assassination manual (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”) was “the doctrine of Lenin, not Jefferson. It embraces the communist revolutionary tactics the United States is pledged to defeat throughout the world.”<sup>200</sup> Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) lectured Lt. Col. Oliver North (who had spent months expressing his open contempt of any elected oversight to Congress) that

You have eloquently articulated your opposition to Marxism and communism, and I believe that all of us ... on this panel are equally opposed to Marxism and communism. But should we, in the defense of democracy, adopt and embrace one of the most important tenets of communism and Marxism: the ends justify the means? ... Unlike communism, in a democracy such as ours, we are not afraid to wash our dirty linen in public.<sup>201</sup>

Liberals using Red-baiting to condemn the Cold Warriors was an almost perfect illustration of the narratives forming the boundaries of hegemonic, *acceptable* public argument. North and R.Adm. John Poindexter could successfully frame themselves as fighting terrorism and totalitarianism, even if they had stepped a bit too far in their zeal.<sup>202</sup> Under this narrative or ideology, U.S. foreign intervention is still driven by good intentions, criminality is an exception to a fun-

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<sup>200</sup> Robert Parry, “Intelligence Committee Chairman Denounces CIA Manual,” Associated Press, Oct. 17, 1984. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 389.

<sup>201</sup> This reflects Sen. Frank Church’s 1976 insistence that “The United States must not adopt the tactics of the enemy”: the CIA had acted as an un-American *alien*, not as representatives of U.S. foreign policy. Even El Salvador’s 1982 election was compared to those of the *Eastern Bloc* when it was found out that there were 1.5 million votes but only 1.3 million eligible voters, rather than to those of Latin America. “Sen. Daniel Inouye Closing Remarks,” *The Washington Post*, July 5, 1987. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 31. Herman and Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* 1984: 130-31.

<sup>202</sup> Even the Church Committee condemned the CIA—as adopting un-American, Soviet-style tactics. Gray Cavender, Nancy C. Jurik, and Albert K. Cohen, “The Baffling Case of the Smoking Gun: The Social Ecology of Political Accounts in the Iran-Contra Affair,” *Social Problems* 40:2 (May 1993): 159. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 238.

damentally-democratic government, secrecy is still an operational necessity. Assassination and trafficking were what the *Reds* did.<sup>203</sup>

The Iran-Contra affair, if interpreted as a “conspiracy theory that turned out to be true,” certainly provides a motherlode—constitutional crisis, open contempt for any Congressional role or public knowledge in covert wars around the globe, assassins and kingpins, plans to round up and intern professors as well as Salvadoran refugees. The European and Latin American actors of Iran-Contra were even more shadowy: an international network of *golpistas*, intelligence officers, secret-police death squads, and dismissed CIA officers, whose members had openly ousted democratic leaders from Seoul to Ankara and La Paz. Networks such as the World Anti-Communist League were key to the Central American counterrevolution under both Buenos Aires and then William Casey.<sup>204</sup>

It could even be argued that the framing of Iran-Contra as a (true) “conspiracy theory” itself contributed to the *non*-revival of Iran-Contra as a scandal in the 1990s, despite the further investigations. A “conspiracy theory that came true” would still be in the same frame or conceptual category alongside UN Black Helicopters or Queen Elizabeth II as the world’s heroin king-

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<sup>203</sup> Noam Chomsky’s criticism of press and politics has been itself criticized as relying on Cold-War premises: that he simply compared *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* as the U.S. parallel to *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*—a caricature intended to shock U.S. audiences, rather than an analysis that accounted for Soviet readers’ reputation for skepticism. Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* 1988: 49. Christopher Sharrett, review of *Manufacturing Consent* by Chomsky, *Cinéaste* 28:1 (Winter 2002).

<sup>204</sup> Iran-Contra (indeed the continent-wide counterrevolution in 1970s and 80s Latin America) is deeply tied to the World Anti-Communist League, the rogue Propaganda 2 Masonic lodge of Italy, the *brujo*-minister José López Rega who created the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, antidemocratic colonels in Greece and Turkey, and revanchist U.S. hawks. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America* 1997. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018. Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras* 1987. Cockburn, *Out of Control* 1987. Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War* 2014. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 343-77. Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* 1988: 144-66. Honey, *Hostile Acts* 1994. Krishnan, *Why Paramilitary Operations Fail* 2018: 61. López, *The Feathers of Condor* 2016. Marshall, Scott, and Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection* 1987. David S. McCarthy, *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2018). McSherry, *Predatory States* 2005. Oñate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy* 2016: 181, 200-01. Persico, *Casey* 1990. Santiago Pinetta, *López Rega, el final de un brujo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Abril, 1986). Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 546. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* 1991. Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* 1988. Eric Wilson, ed., *The Dual State* 2012.

pin. But the controversy against Gary Webb's 1996 series on direct trafficking into the United States by the FDN is an issue of historical record.<sup>205</sup> Despite North's own role in trafficking he was swiftly pardoned in 1992, and foreign policy continued beneath state secrecy, security institutions unreformed after the end of the Cold War, and public acceptance of the hawks' narratives.<sup>206</sup>

The various possible definitions of "conspiracy theory" play a role in the process of maintaining secrecy from the U.S. press, no less than practices such as numbered Swiss bank accounts or concealing a combat death as a "truck accident" in Honduras. Mark Fenster noted that there are few *a priori* grounds for distinguishing a warranted exploration of covert action from conspiracy theories fueling reactionary violence, no way to immediately spot a true breaking report from a wrong first impression—at least initially.<sup>207</sup> Carter's State Department first successfully exploited this epistemic uncertainty between 1. reports of a hidden and far-off atrocity and 2. false or even planted rumors with the 1980 Sumpul Massacre. The new Reagan White House was thus able to repeat the manipulation with El Mozote in 1981, preventing the highly-stigmatizing story of U.S.-trained special forces annihilating an entire community from erupting

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<sup>205</sup> They remain "conspiracy theories" in the sense of haggling backwards conceptually, to how *true* the preceding theory was and speculating how much more of it might be found true in the future. The 1990s were distinguished by a surge in state-focused theories that lacked the Cold War's ideological elements. The popularization of the internet allowed for conspiracy theories but also a source of true news no longer restricted to library archives. Persico (*Casey* 1990) and Burke (*Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018) partially distance themselves from the earlier Woodward (*Veil* 1987) and Scott and Marshall (*Iran-Contra Connection* 1987; *Cocaine Politics* 1991). Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics* 2008: 80-95. Ryan Devereaux, "How the CIA Watched Over the Destruction of Gary Webb," *The Intercept*, Sept. 25, 2014, <https://theintercept.com/2014/09/25/managing-nightmare-cia-media-destruction-gary-webb>. Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories* 2008: 2-4, 43, 55, 117-25. Goldberg, *Enemies Within* 2001: 55-65, 232-44. Olmsted, *Real Enemies* 2009: 189-93.

<sup>206</sup> Iran-Contra figures such as Otto Reich and John Negroponte all returned for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, using the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as justification (themselves a by-blow of *another* effort to fund *narco*-terrorists, Operation Cyclone in Afghanistan, Chapter 1).

<sup>207</sup> Even the image of a government conspiracy covertly acting off *false* knowledge rather than coolly setting a secret agenda into motion—*fooling* themselves rather than fooling the public—turns the entire definition of "conspiracy theory" on its head: atrocities and complicated crimes, predicated on the crudest conspiracy theories about omnipresent Soviets (Chapter 3). Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories* 2008: 10.



into a scandal like the murders of four U.S. Churchwomen. Conspiracy theories played both truth-seeking *and* truth-obscuring roles in the case of Iran-Contra.

So what, analytically, separates 1. actual covert warfare, parapolitics, and *narco*-politics from the “conspiracy theory” category, from 2. the likes of lizard-folk in red dresses—or 3. from the neoconservative conspirators’ own theory of a United States victimized by Vietnamese, Nicaraguans, and a meddling press all as part of the Soviets’ global scheme? The actual record of the Contra War is not a simple inverse of the Cold Warriors’ insistence that every U.S. church, newspaper, and university were dancing to the Kremlin’s tune.

Adding Latin America’s history of coups and *narco*-politics to the actual record of Iran-Contra provides some distance between 1. the covert war and 2. U.S.-centric debates over Presidential conspiracies and scandals. The notion of an extremist military and secret-police establishment skimming drug funds to pay murderers and ousting presidents at whim now raises few eyebrows. State murder, trafficking, and other criminality required active maintenance of secrecy—underscoring the importance of studying the *methods* of secrecy, whether after or before any specific “breach” of secrecy, threatening public attention and state stigma.<sup>208</sup>

This dissertation examines the methods and consequences of actively maintaining state secrecy. The Reagan Administration was not simply able to irradiate world journalism with its agenda: it had to respond and react to developments such as the Sumpul Massacre or the FF.AA.-protected arson of an Embassy building. Over 1985-88 White House was practically blackmailed by the Honduran military and civilian government apparatus required to deny continued “lethal

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<sup>208</sup> To make a crude distinction, a “conspiracy theory” would argue that a continuous, small central command deliberately called in events across the globe through a cunningly-engineered criminal network; a history avoiding conspiracism would insist that a covert, unelected national-security state, by its nature, produced the same outcomes every time, decade after decade, through *ad-hoc* and arrogant disregard for any local history and conditions.

aid” after the second Boland Amendment. While the most extravagant claims were not necessarily *believed*, the audience—public, Congress, and press itself—would still hesitate at believing stories that went against the tacit narratives of a global Communism threatening the “free world” and the United States itself.

Leticia Salomón documented a “loss of fear” of the FF.AA. after Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s 1984 ouster: this loss was, in large part, due to all the self-contradictory claims of imminent takeovers by the Communist Party of Honduras acting through the Catholic Church (Chapter 9, “Regalado: Theological Usurpation”), and of a sinister world campaign against a small Central American state. The state’s military and civilian leaders attacked stories of massacres, illegal armies, death squads, or drug-running in order to serve short-term goals: but these acts accumulated discredit over the long term. The White House was dependent on Honduran state actors for denial (Chapter 5, “López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial” and “Azcona: Two Holy Weeks”), generals were victimized by the same death squads they had operated (Chapter 7, “Perpetrator-Victims”), even the Army’s existence was questioned. The state had to 1. monopolize the news to keep the Contra War going, but those actions 2. left it having to admit most of the stories it had denied months or days earlier.

However, the Honduran state was still able to assert claims even if they would be inevitably exposed as false later—even if the state spokesmen were aware of that while they asserted those claims: rumor and conspiracy theory were tools of statecraft.<sup>209</sup> These were not just rhetoric: officers and presidents’ speeches were joined to forced disappearance, mass arrests, shuttering newspapers and radio stations—the bestial half of Machiavelli’s metaphorical centaur. Force showed a failure to build public agreement—but the state could still make use of it. Rocio

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<sup>209</sup> Irma Becerra, *Formación en valores de resistencia civil: Aportes de ética espontánea ciudadana* (Tegucigalpa: Baktun, 2007): 35-36.

Tábora describes how dissidents and opponents were redefined into unacceptable elements since the days of Col. Alvarez Martínez, “Reds” and “terrorists” denied any role in the “national conversation.”<sup>210</sup> Honduras retained a strong military and weak formal institutions, the FF.AA. attacking judiciary, legislative, and executive attempts at reform and accountability until the 2009 overthrow of the *rodista* President Manuel Zelaya.<sup>211</sup> Now Latin America’s previously-disunited right wing had an entire country of its own, against the previous decade’s “Pink Tide.” The “continuing coup” put the most intolerant, Red-baiting factions of Liberal and National Party *narco*-politics, tied to a completely paramilitary police.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Rocío Tábora, *Masculinidad y violencia en la cultura política hondureña* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1995).

<sup>211</sup> Benedicte Bull, “Towards a Political Economy of Weak Institutions and Strong Elites in Central America,” *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 97 (October 2014): 117-28.

<sup>212</sup> Dana Frank, *The Long Honduran Night: Resistance, Terror, and the United States in the Aftermath of the Coup* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018). James J. Phillips, *Honduras in Dangerous Times: Resistance and Resilience* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2015).

## Chapter 9

### Atheist Priests and Colonel-Theologians

#### Introduction

The Honduran state began the 1980s already entangled in conflict with the Catholic Church: in 1979 the executive junta revoked the citizenship of the Jesuit “Padre Guadalupe” James Carney and expelled him, receiving an (uncompleted) excommunication from the Santa Rosa de Copán diocese. The May 13, 1980, border massacre on the Río Sumpul was first certified and condemned by the secular and regular clergy of that same diocese. The junta suffered its first international embarrassment—indeed, the first sustained international attention towards Honduras—when even conservative clergy warranted Honduran and Salvadoran *campesino* witnesses and survivors of the massacre. Catholic and Protestant religious institutions could denounce military overthrow of democracy, economic oppression, and hypocrisy, but its sharpest impact would come from certifying thousands of testimonial accounts of human-rights abuses, by a unique power to warrant the spread of stories.

After Somoza’s fall in 1979, the Honduran military state opted to take a central role in fighting the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran Revolutions (Chapter 4, “The Triangle of Iron”). This meant not repeatedly courting conflict with an institution that had a solid presence in the country for four and a half centuries. Religion was the only field where the FF.AA. and the export sector managed to make any significant changes in hegemony by 1990 or 2023—Antonio Gramsci’s “war of position,” of shifting an institution with deep cultural roots, down to the level of families of the urban and rural popular classes furthest from the actions of Honduras’s small, weak civil state.

Studies of the Catholic Church in Cold-War Latin America have primarily focused on 1. its role changing from supporting the status quo to supporting social change and even, in the cas-

es of a few clergy, revolution, and 2. its reaction to forced disappearance and other atrocities; there are also smaller literatures on right-wing Catholic bishops in Argentina and the rise of Evangelicalism in the 1980s and 90s.<sup>1</sup> Church-state relations had qualitative differences from the rest of “civil society”—especially in Southern-Cone states where press and parties had been abolished altogether after 1973; it had unique characteristics making it different from the rest of “civil society,” as the only institution with the authority to call on all sectors. If admirals and generals could dismiss democratically-elected governments by asserting that the military was older than the country itself—having fought Spain for independence in the 1810s and 20s—then the Catholic Church predated the armed forces by centuries.<sup>2</sup>

Already wielding the preponderance of force in the 19th century, by 1970 the continent’s militaries had been granted even more powers by the domestic state and by U.S. alliance and training. The 20th-century militaries repeatedly overthrew civilian governments, their coups motivated by new ideologies (Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security”) that often clashed explicitly with the goals and independence of the Church. In 1960s and 70s South and Central America religious organizations were often the only institutions remaining with any semblance

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America—and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987). Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993). Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Anthony Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Jeffery L. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998). Daniel H. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2012). Michael Löwy, *The War of Gods: Religion and Politics in Latin America*, Critical Studies in Latin American and Iberian Cultures (London and New York: Verso, 1996). Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989). Kenneth P. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues: Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> (See Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security,” n70.) Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 3-5. Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* 1997: 14, 159. Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s “Dirty War”* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997): 77.

of independence as parties and unions were swept away by increasing repression.<sup>3</sup> Legitimacy-centered analyses interpret the Church as the last nationwide institution able to provide cover for the entire opposition—parties, unions, press, radio, or directly forming Base Ecclesial Communities and women’s clubs. It was the only one that could sustain defiance against the fear and passivity of the new sort of military regimes in the 70s Southern Cone, and the hardest to discredit. Only one institution could mediate between social sectors under the new sort of military regime.<sup>4</sup>

Catholicism has had regular, routine ties to the vast majority of Latin American society since the 16th century, even those rarely visited by agents of the state, campesino unions, even the clergy *per se*. Social Catholicism made sharp critiques of industrial capitalism, but did not endorse large-scale change and transformation.<sup>5</sup> Antonio Gramsci was one of the first Marxian

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<sup>3</sup> So while religious groups *in general* could fit the definition of another contender in the theories of the “public sphere” or “civil society” developed in the 18th-century “Anglo” or French nations. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, trans. Pedro Sette-Câmara (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012): 173. Daniel C. Hallin, “Field Theory, Differentiation Theory, and Comparative Media Research,” in Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005): 230-34. Otto Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratization: Southern Europe, Latin America and the World Economic Crisis,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 227. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 6-7. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 87.

<sup>4</sup> However, other analysts have noted that the bishops, clergy, and monastics of each country remained reliant on external structures to act as an institution against state authoritarianism: Christian Democratic parties, unions, publications, human-rights groups, and the generally global nature of a Church headquartered in Rome. Amy E. Edmonds with Jerold L. Waltman, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* (Waco: Baylor University, 2010): 17, 204-07. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 6. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 134, 267.

<sup>5</sup> Though while more self-consciously-Conservative bishops vocally opposed Liberal export regimes in the 19th century, they did not systematically critique capitalism and its socioeconomic effects on Natives and campesinos. Even Marxist-Leninist thinkers had not simply assumed that religious practice was derived entirely from the needs of production or to justify force against the working class. Some historians of Latin American religion, such as Michael Löwy, describe anti-capitalism as embedded in Catholic doctrine since the early 19th century, underpinning the Conservative movements of the period before 1870. By contrast, others have found that popular liberation did *not* impel clergy or prelates to noticeably criticize the state until the 1968 Medellín Conference, which explicitly concentrated on worldly subjects of healthcare, education, and wages—on the exploitation and exclusion of the poor and the worker. Medellín started a process of episcopal commitment to change and transformation that cannot be reduced to the material or ideological needs of any state sector or export class. Liberation Theology was a new and uniquely Latin American phenomenon that went far beyond the Social Catholicism that had arisen in the 19th century in response to industrial capitalism. Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988): 42-54. Adrian A. Bantjes, “Mexican Revolutionary Anticlericalism: Concepts and Typologies,” *The Americas* 65:4 (April 2009): 467-80. E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980). Wayne M. Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship in Central America: Guatemala, 1865-1873* (Niwt, Colo.: University Press of Col-

theorists to take religious belief and institutions seriously, rather than the Orthodox definition as alienating the working class, blocking action in their own interest, and justifying exploitation and reaction—a reactionary “mystification,” the first *ideology*.<sup>6</sup> Gramsci remarking that (like moneyed peasants, the civil service, unions, Masonic lodges) the Catholic Church usually acted as a separate group intervening between the newer classes of proletarians and capitalists.<sup>7</sup> Liberal and Marxist analysts alike had spent over a century posing “religion” as an institution either legiti-

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orado, 1994). Lowell Gudmundson and Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1821-1871: Liberalism Before Liberal Reform* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., and London: University of Alabama Press, 1995). Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 5, 13, 20-40, 224-25, 263. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 41, 165-66. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 1-26, 39-40, 65-69, 73, 75, 77. Blake D. Pattridge, *Institution Building and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: The University of San Carlos, Guatemala*, American University Studies: Latin American Literature 28 (New York and Washington, D.C.: Peter Lang, 2004). Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000. Rolando Sierra Fonseca, *Iglesia y liberalismo en Honduras en el siglo XIX*, Colección Padre Manuel Subirana 6 (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Publicaciones del Obispado Choluteca, 1993). Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 130-33. Carol A. Smith, ed., *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America, a Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> Gramsci specifically critiques historicist Marxian thinkers for assuming anticlerical 19th-century Liberalism would be the next step before socialism: there was no reason a 1st-century institution should exist only as disguise for the interests a bourgeoisie new to the 19th. James J. Chriss, “Goffman as Microfunctionalist,” in A. Javier Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 184. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 52. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 99. Jonathan Joseph, “On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations: A Scientific Realist Account of Hegemony,” in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 78. Brian Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 13-34, 41. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 13, 75, 77. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 122. E. Doyle McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 28. Robert K. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 45, 52-54. Michaela Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge: The Life and Work of Peter L. Berger*, trans. Miriam Geoghegan (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction Publishers, 2013): 24, 63, 119. Ramón Vargas Maseda, *Deciphering Goffman: The Structure of His Sociological Theory Revisited* (London: Routledge, 2016): 37-39.

<sup>7</sup> French and British theories of “civil society” derived from 18th- and 19th-century France and Britain, which had established Catholic and Anglican Churches, but firmly subordinated to a civil government strong enough to endure even revolutionary challenges. Gramsci’s Italian-centered analyses are closer to the situation of Spanish America since independence, with 1. the state dominated by armed force and 2. the Church remaining independent even when politically and socially conservative. Against the Anglo-French model, the weak state in Italy or Latin America meant a *weaker* civil society and a stronger—and more independent—institution of enforcement. Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought* 2012: 173. Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 51, 54. Daniel C. Hallin, “Field Theory, Differentiation Theory, and Comparative Media Research,” in Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds., *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005): 230-34. Holman, “Internationalisation and Democratisation,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 227. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 154-56.

mating or challenging the power of rulers and profiteers. But during the Cold War religion was also interpreted as a potential field of contention, a source of legitimation and warrant for troubling reports of massacres and secret wars.<sup>8</sup>

The Church developed an increased presence among the urban and rural working classes since the 1960s; European priests arrived to compensate for the scarcity of Latin American-born seminarians. Clergy now began living and working alongside the poor, witnessing (if not enduring) the same misfortunes, becoming more critical of Church hierarchy as supporting the status quo of state and society. Catholic clergy had been given far more warrant than any *campesino* or *barrio* inhabitant. Grounded in earlier social and labor Catholicism, the Second Vatican Council explicitly declared that human rights, healthcare, education, housing were human and Christian rights. The 1968 Medellín Conference of Bishops for all Latin America reframed social issues in terms of sin and obligation for mortals to fight and change it.<sup>9</sup> In turn, the new Catholic thought came under suspicion from old elitism and export-oriented Liberalism, and especially the National Security Doctrine that was itself influenced by early-20th-century strains of political Catholicism.

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<sup>8</sup> Ideology must deal with describing reality and handling exceptions, so therefore (however twisted), it still is passed off as a way of *generating* as well as obscuring knowledge. Ideology is separate from outright lies and denial—it is defined as being false, but still *believed* to be true. Robert Bocoock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 59. Charles W. Mills, “Ideology,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017): 102, 104. James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 162.

<sup>9</sup> Iniquity, exploitation, and low wages were manmade, rather than ordained by God or nature—and thus changeable by social action. In Catholic social teaching, *the poor* were a moral, Biblical category, not simply a Marxian *proletariat* or the Liberals’ *laborforce*: this made Church involvement in working-class and human-rights advocacy qualitatively different from the other organizations negotiating with and resisting military regimes. Henrik Lundberg, “Between Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim’s Quest for a Political Synthesis,” in David Kettler and Volker Meja, eds., *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* (London: Anthem Press, 2017): 14. Michaela Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 33-35.



Liberation Theology was one of the most significant developments in both Catholic theology and progressive thought, a uniquely Latin American phenomenon. The Base Ecclesial Communities of the 1950s and 60s, led by Delegates or Celebrants of the Word trained as catechists, brought the Church into the lives of the poor, and increased the ability of the rural poor to communicate with one another.<sup>10</sup> These Bible-study groups were not manifestly political, but provided social and intellectual resources to people who had never had them before, advocating for practical projects: power, water, rural credit, sewerage, land reform, alcoholism—even the *coitus interruptus* and rhythm methods of birth control.<sup>11</sup> Liberation Theology allowed a shift from the care of parishioners to declaiming judgments over the rulers of society (in religious terms, from a pastoral to a prophetic role).<sup>12</sup>

The five countries of Central America are small and close-set, but have diverged significantly since the 19th century in military and religious history. The religious histories of 20th-century El Salvador and Guatemala have an extensive historiography, whereas the Honduran Church has received far less analysis. But Honduras also has a religious history unique in Latin

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<sup>10</sup> The Base Ecclesial Communities appear to have originated in Brazil's *favelas* 1963-64; however, Honduran Catholics insist that they originated the Delegates in Choluteca in 1966, as a point of pride. Into the 2020s, the *Comunidades Eclesial de Base* have provided a space for self-organization separate from the state and also any Church hierarchy, but always engaged with political, economic, and Christian thought—in contrast to the 1980s Evangelicals. “La celebración de la Palabra de Dios y la proyección social de la Iglesia Católica hondureña (Programa radial *Contra Punto* de Radio América, 21 noviembre 1986),” *Informaciones* 5, 2nd epoch (October-December 1986). Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 37. James J. Phillips, *Honduras in Dangerous Times: Resistance and Resilience* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2015): 202. Secretariado de la Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, *Directorio de la celebración de la Palabra de Dios: Honduras* (Tegucigalpa, 1991): 5.

<sup>11</sup> “Paternidad responsable,” *Luz en el Camino* 26 (1983): 10-14. “Planificación familiar y control de la natalidad,” *Luz en el Camino* 25 (1984): 6-11. “Textos bíblicos,” *Luz en el Camino* 25 (1984): 11-15. “Realidad del joven,” *Luz en el Camino* 32 (1985): 5-9. “Año Internacional de la Paz: La paz es derecho de todos los pueblos,” *Luz en el Camino* 37 (1986): 9-11. “Reflexión,” *Luz en el Camino* 38 (1986): 6-9. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 49, 53-63.

<sup>12</sup> Amy Edmonds specifies a typology of three broad avenues of Catholic interaction with the state: 1. moral criticism on grounds of theology (denunciations, calls for action), 2. symbolism drawing on Christian practice (hunger strikes, Masses), and 3. a unique material and organizational support for outside human-rights organizations, parties, unions. Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 85, 87, 100, 250.

America: since 1990 it has as many Evangelicals as Catholics, similar to its neighbors but without the murderous persecution aimed against the Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup>

Anthony Gill characterizes Honduras as having Central America's most conservative, least divided, and least activist Catholic Church—which is described as a reason for the large-scale conversion to Evangelical “sects.”<sup>14</sup> It lacked any self-described adherents of Liberation Theology. It retreated from institutional promotion of the 1972-78 Agrarian Reform and other social change after the 1975 murders of Fathers Casimir Cypher and Iván Betancur, plus twelve other men and women, at Los Horcones in Olancho.<sup>15</sup> The main activists, Fathers James Carney and Fausto Milla, were respectively exiled in 1979 and 1981. Through the 1980s, the two specific causes over which the FF.AA. most targeted Catholic clergy were 1. warranting campesino reports of the Sumpul Massacre and other violence on the Salvadoran border (Chapter 4, “The Sumpul Massacre: The Honduran Press”) and 2. ministering in the agrarian colonies on the Río Aguán and the foothills to the south and west—the infamous site of the slaughter of hundreds of campesinos in the lower Aguán Valley for the profit of Miguel Facussé—former vice-president of APROH—after the 2009 coup.<sup>16</sup>

Starting with the 1980 Sumpul Massacre, Honduran clergy had had to put their reputation as churchmen on the line, mobilizing their decades of service to Honduras against the overt narrative that only Communists and naïve outsiders were opposed to what was happening on the

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<sup>13</sup> Margaret E. Crahan, “Religion, Revolution and Counterrevolution: The Role of the Religious Right in Central America,” in Douglas Chalmers *et al.*, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Praeger, 1992): 163-82. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 118, 126. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 14, 174. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 2. Mainwaring and Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* 1989. Ken Serbin, *Secret Dialogues: Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000): 38, 86, 231.

<sup>14</sup> Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010: 10. Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar* 1998: 40, 44.

<sup>15</sup> (See Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context,” n29.) Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 97-98. Martin Francis, “The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization,” *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Beckman, “A Labyrinth of Deceit: Secretary Clinton and the Honduran Coup,” Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Apr. 12, 2017, <https://www.coha.org/a-labyrinth-of-deception-secretary-clinton-and-the-honduran-coup/>.

Salvadoran border. They put their reputations against the explicit position that campesinos were too ignorant to accurately remember what had happened within plain view—that its shared knowledge was mere rumor or superstition. In order to collaborate with Salvadoran and Nicaraguan forces in a decade-long counterrevolutionary war, the FF.AA. was forced into unprecedented new confrontations with the Catholic Church. It was forced to be more *clever* than it had been before, to adopt new tactics—generals and colonels imported whole new religions.<sup>17</sup>

The bishops may have hesitated at openly opposing Gen. Alvarez Martínez, but many Honduran clergy were involved in popular organizations' fight to democratize the state and discredit the military's arbitrary power. Presidents Azcona and Rafael Callejas faced a far more vocal press after 1984, not just denouncing efforts to paint the clergy as subversive, but openly deriding the FF.AA.'s claims of bishops plotting coups and Jesuits training guerrillas in jungle warfare. Even if few *believed* these tall tales (including those making the claims<sup>18</sup>), the generals and colonels still had a position that made the press propagate rather than ignore the wildest rants.<sup>19</sup> While the FF.AA. could murder catechists and unleash special-forces troops against priests, persecution of the Catholic Church actually contributed to Leticia Salomón's "loss of fear" by making the Armed Forces accrue discredit. Under Gen. Humberto Regalado they persisted on a counterproductive course, accusing the more-reputable institution of the Catholic Church and continuing the unwinnable Contra War: ideology is usually cited as the cause for state actors who (de-

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<sup>17</sup> Ann Branaman, "Interaction and Hierarchy in Everyday Life: Goffman and Beyond," in Treviño, ed., *Goffman's Legacy* 2003: 111-12.

<sup>18</sup> The question is often raised whether state leaders believe in their own rhetoric, or whether all their public discourse is a cynical lie while secretly knowing facts completely at odds with it: but this question may not serve a veristic, truth-oriented goal because it requires an assumption about officials' private, secret belief. This dissertation focuses on analyzing the effects of public narrative, agenda-setting, and the campaign to undermine any potential warrantor for Central American news (see Chapter 3 for the existing literature on these processes). James C. Cox and Alvin I. Goldman, "Accuracy in Journalism: An Economic Approach," in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 193.

<sup>19</sup> Dick Pels, "Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?" in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

spite all the power and intelligence available to them) pursue goals that are impossible, even if they are aware of that fact. “Ideology” describes the techniques used to justify action, rationalize behavior, explain away impossibilities, declare certain events as not needing further investigation even when publicly discussed.<sup>20</sup>

The most common analyses in histories of the Church and state in Latin America have been either ideological—anticommunism, anticlericalism—or economic—the exploitative modes of “development” and “progress.” But in 1980s Honduras there was a new key factor, a need for discredit: Jesuits and parish priests in the remotest border hamlet now could witness and warrant knowledge of actions by Salvadoran, Contra, and U.S. forces that could kick off major international controversies—and threaten the lucrative counterrevolution. The FF.AA. certainly attacked the Honduran Church to cast doubt on embarrassing incidents, keep U.S. military aid flowing, or to enforce the private takeover of cooperative land. But theological action meant thousands of Hondurans converted to an explicitly pro-export-capitalist, conspiratorial, anti-working-class fundamentalist Evangelicalism.

This chapter focuses on the use of Catholic institutions and theology against the Honduran state, ending with the state successfully “parallelizing” this source of resistance and warrant, changing who was able to “speak” for God by substituting both conservative and progressive Catholic clergy with fundamentalist U.S. Evangelicals (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives”). Between 1960 and 1990, the relationship of religious denominations—Catholics, mainstream Protestants, and fundamentalist Evangelicals—with Latin America’s military regimes can be roughly divided into five general categories: most common are 1. cohabitation or cooperation, where the military regime emphasized its own Catholicism and adopted pious imagery, but in

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<sup>20</sup> Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 34.

turn remained open to criticism, interdict, even excommunication; and 2. persecution, where lay Churchpersons, nuns and priests, and even bishops were targeted in the name of anticommunism. Current historiography emphasizes such resistance to repression, but relations with military regimes were not necessarily confrontational, with bishops even lauding 1950s and 60s coups as saving the nation from turmoil.<sup>21</sup> Cooperation and resistance are not necessarily opposites, but differing practices that could be used to pressure the Church or the state toward a certain goal.

The Brazilian military regime of 1964-85 offers the most complicated Church-state relationship, and its military organs developed the continent's more sophisticated efforts at discrediting clergy. Kenneth P. Serbin concludes that while there *was* a real divide between progressive and conservative clergy, there was no neat alignment between 1. theological stance and 2. whether a bishop would cooperate or make human-rights activism.<sup>22</sup> The hardline 1969-74 Gen. Emílio Médici saw the Church as the main adversary—as more radical than even the guerrillas—and seven clergy were murdered by plainclothes officers. The secret police of the Department of Information Operations (DOI-CODI) sent spies who made notes on clerics' garb, tape-recorded the contents of homilies, or inspected Church fliers; priests were charged in court according to the contents of their sermons<sup>23</sup> (see also usurpation, below).

Paraguay and Chile's Churches exemplified sustained and institutional opposition to an regime. Chile had enough mainline Protestants to prevent any sustained attempt by Gen. Pino-

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<sup>21</sup> Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 26, 223.

<sup>22</sup> Archbishop Hélder Câmara (perhaps the continent's most famous Catholic critic of capitalism) had been the first to seek contact with Brazil's 1964 military regime, whereas Archbishop Eugênio Sales could criticize certain Brazilian generals for exaggerating and Red-baiting the Church precisely *because* he was an anticommunist whom the generals respected. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000: 5, 25, 42, 72.

<sup>23</sup> Up north, the Reagan Administration also recorded sermons and prayer meetings and surveilled, wiretapped, and broke into the offices of over 140 U.S. church and human-rights organizations. Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010: 163. Kyle Longley, "An Obsession: The Central American Policy of the Reagan Administration," in Bradley Lynn Coleman and Kyle Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981-1989* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 218. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000: 39, 42.

chet at displacing Catholicism. In Central America, Guatemala and El Salvador provide the strongest examples of persecution: the two countries had undergone the most substantial Liberal “revolutions” since the 1870s, the state long dominated by armed forces geared towards disarticulating and repressing a relatively large, heavily-Native campesino population to force it to labor as a coffee-export proletariat.<sup>24</sup> *Ladino* Guatemalan and Salvadoran officers generally considered campesinos as inert and uncomprehending, virtually incapable of action on their own: only foreign doctrines and outside agitators could conceivably stir them up.<sup>25</sup> Nine clergy organizing and advocating for the rural poor were murdered in El Salvador 1977-80, as masterminds of revolution. “Be a patriot! Kill a priest!” and “Cassocks do not stop bullets” were common slogans among Salvadoran paramilitaries. Óscar Romero’s 1977 appointment to the Archdiocese of San Salvador was welcomed by conservatives, but the persecution quickly making him into the armed forces’ most vocal opponent, and he was killed at the altar in 1980 on the orders of Mario Sandoval Alarcón and Roberto D’Aubuisson.<sup>26</sup> Much of the deceit on El Salvador and Honduras

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<sup>24</sup> The 19th-century Conservatives and Church were opposed ideologically and as potential obstacles to the process of proletarianization, though few opposed export capitalism *per se* (above, n5). Delegates of the Word were killed for education, health, agricultural extension, consciousness-raising, political organization. For example, in El Quiché Department 143 catechists were killed in one year alone; over 500 were murdered in Sololá and Chimaltenango 1979-83. The U.S. Embassy praised Ríos Montt for the decline in Churchpersons’ murders—but now the entire community was targeted for wholesale slaughter and scorched-earth resettlement: activists, Catholic Action members, teachers, extension agents, clinicians. The new general reduced his forces’ urban violence—and turned the countryside into an armed camp. In Nicaragua the Contras murdered Delegates for “encouraging communism”—that is, participation in medical-education programs. (See below, “Regalado: Evangelical Substitution,” n168. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 114, 126-29, 137-38, 157, 164. Paul Ramshaw and Tom Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial: The New York War Crimes Tribunal on Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1987): 96.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez would be the only Honduran general to see the countryside as any sort of threat (below, “Alvarez Martínez, ‘Moonie Substitution’”), Gen. Policarpo Paz García’s officers having had a more traditional attitude. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 9, 126-28. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 33, 233, 256. Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Michael Richards, “Cosmopolitan World View and Counterinsurgency in Guatemala,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 58:3 (July 1985): 101.

<sup>26</sup> Amb. Robert E. White was fully informed of the involvement of Maj. D’Aubuisson and the names of the triggermen, ex-guerrilla defectors who acted as moles against the FMLN. The CIA regularly gave the Salvadoran Armed Forces intelligence about “suspects,” who were later disappeared or found in San Salvador’s body dumps. Six more Jesuits, plus their housekeeper and her daughter, were massacred by the Atlacatl Battalion at the University of Central America in 1989. “The New Anticlericalism,” *This Week: Central America and Panama* 3:49 (Dec. 15, 1980).

that the Reagan Administration engaged in was motivated by a need to avoid anything that might repeat the explosive story of the December 2, 1980, rape-murder of four U.S. Maryknoll Sisters (Chapter 3, “El Mozote”).<sup>27</sup>

3. Collaborationism was the Church-state relationship characteristic to Argentina’s 1976-83 juntas. Many Argentinean priests and bishops uniquely and notoriously worked directly with clandestine imprisonment and torture. Until 1983 the Madres of the Plaza del Mayo were shut out by even Pope John Paul II, and the Honduran Catholic Church likewise kept its distance from COFADEH until the 1984 deposal of Gen. Alvarez Martínez (below, “Alvarez Martínez: Forced Disappearances”): clergy could not always be counted on to provide human-rights groups with “warrant” and other resources.<sup>28</sup>

Church collaborationism is important to 1980s Honduras because it was one of the origins of the National Security Doctrine that was adapted by the “Argentine Method” in Honduras. The Doctrine was in large part derived from far-right *nacionalista* political-Catholic thinkers who redefined the military as a collective champion of “Western civilization” and “Christen-

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“Películas ‘subversivas’ exhibidas en casa cural,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 11, 1981. Ana María Ezcurra, *The Neoconservative Offensive: U.S. Churches and the Ideological Struggle for Latin America*, trans. and ed. Elice Higginbotham and Linda Unger (New York: Circus, 1983): 125. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008): 47-48. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 173-75, 187-88, 221-22. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 79. William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996): 244-48.

<sup>27</sup> Maryknoll itself had earned a stringently *anticommunist* reputation in East Asia—until, as per the usual, its Churchpersons developed a less absolutist and Superpower-centered worldview due to their personal rural experiences, especially in Latin America. David Bassano, *Two Roads to Safety: The Central America Human Rights Movement in the United States*, Ph.D. diss. (University at Albany, State University of New York, 2012): 4, 27. Ed Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1991): 52-53, 168. Theresa Keeley, “Reagan’s Real Catholics vs. Tip O’Neill’s Maryknoll Nuns: Gender, Intra-Catholic Conflict, and the Contras,” *Diplomatic History* 40:3 (June 2016): 530-58.

<sup>28</sup> In Guatemala, Archbishop Mario Casariego explicitly backed Gen. Fernando Romeo Lucas García regime despite the murder of twelve priests 1978-82—a worse persecutor than even the fundamentalist Gen. Ríos Montt. Casariego insisted that they had earned their demise, drawing informal condemnation by the conference of Guatemalan bishops. Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010: 137, 184. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 88, 123. Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994): 39. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 71-91, 226-28. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 180, 182-83. Martin, *Les Mères «folles» de la Place de Mai* 1989: 38.

dom” against “Judeo-Bolshevism.” Daniel H. Levine writes that the National Security Doctrine “accorded religious power to the military, including the power to determine who could and could not form part of ‘Catholic Argentina.’ ” The notion of “Christendom” was used to justify the murders of sixteen priests, at least two bishops, and 30-50,000 captives. Anyone was fair game in an ideological war without borders or quarter—and it was up to the *state* to discern, determine, and enforce correct religiosity, including in the Catholic Church itself.<sup>29</sup> The battle against “ideas contrary to our western Christian civilization” called for a re-foundation of the nation, often under an explicitly-religious messianic figure—Augusto Pinochet, Emilio Eduardo Massera, Efraín Ríos Montt, Gustavo Alvarez Martínez. Dialogue or compromise were only tools of the Enemy, which let the virus spread, and subversion to society (that is, not supporting the regime) was synonymous with disobedience to God. Anyone not backing the regime were thus false Catholics and false citizens: heretics to God and subversion to society were synonymous.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> El Salvador and Guatemala had more of a legacy of anticlericalism rooted in the legacy of the coffee-export economy; Argentina’s Doctrine was explicitly theological, as opposed to export capitalism or justification of social hierarchy. Jean-Pierre Bousquet, *Las locas de la Plaza de Mayo* (Santa Fe, Arg.: Varela-El Cid Editor, (1984) 2000): 112-13. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 82-83. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 181. George A. López, “National Security Ideology as an Impetus to State Violence and Terror,” in *Government Violence and Repression: An Agenda for Research*, edited by Michael Stohl and George A. López (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986). Alfredo Martín, *Les Mères «folles» de la Place de Mai: Maternité, contre-institution, et raison d’état* (Paris: Renaudot, 1989): 39. Juan E. Méndez, *Truth and Partial Justice in Argentina* (New York: Americas Watch, 1987): 54.

<sup>30</sup> Salomón, “La Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en Honduras: Análisis de la caída del General Gustavo Alvarez Martínez,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 11 (May 1984). Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997): 10, 13. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 144, 156. María Soledad Catoggio, “Religious Beliefs and Actors in the Legitimation of Military Dictatorships in the Southern Cone, 1964-1989,” *Latin American Perspectives* 38:6, “Questions of Power” (November 2011): 29-31. Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, Comisión de Pastoral Social, *Formación para la democracia: Para formar ciudadanos conscientes y cristianos comprometidos* (Tegucigalpa: Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, 1985): 7. James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988): 494. Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989): 97. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 7, 52, 66, 75. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 105, 107. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012. Martín, *Les Mères «folles» de la Place de Mai* 1989: 37. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 51, 213. Víctor Meza, *Honduras: La evolución de la crisis*, Colección Realidad Nacional 5 (Tegucigalpa, Editorial Universitaria, 1982). Luis Roniger, “Olvido, memoria colectiva e identidades: Uruguay en el contex-



Gens. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez of Honduras and Efraín Ríos Montt of Guatemala opted for outright replacement—4. substitution, promoting a new religious organization that could supply legitimation and social control that the military state could not achieve on its own. Fundamentalist Evangelicals were the only ones able to supply juntas with theological legitimation in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>31</sup> While more Liberal theories of the state conceive of it as a neutral field or theatrical stage, within which outside interests and domestic institutions pursue their respective goals, Gramscian analysis holds the state to be the *most* interested party, since it has interfaces with all groups in society. Histories of Church-state relations often conceive of it in terms such as “regime legitimation” or “rural penetration,” but Gramsci insisted on “taking religion seriously”—as a unique field of its own, rather than only an ulterior way to (literally) mystify economic or ideological interests. Religion could therefore offer a major site of contention.<sup>32</sup> This also allows explanation for the one time that the FF.AA. had any victory in terms of hegemony or “war of position” against priests, doctors, or journalists. Officers had no plausibility when they called activist priests agents of both Moscow and the Devil, drawing them into a spiral of public ridicule and Salomón’s “loss of fear.” But fundamentalist missionaries *could* convert campesinos to

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to del Cono Sur,” in Bruno Groppo and Patricia Flier, eds., *La imposibilidad del olvido: Recorridos por la memoria en Argentina, Chile y Uruguay* (La Plata, Argentina: Al Margen, 2001): 152. Leticia Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1992): 3, 62, 69. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000: 48.

<sup>31</sup> In the 19th century these alternative creeds included Auguste Comte’s Positivism and then his elaborated Religion of Humanity, and Freemasonry in its anticlerical mode. In Honduras, even the Conservative José Santos Guardiola specifically incorporated the Anglican Bay Islands into the country in 1859 in the hope that some Protestant territory would bring more industriousness into Honduran culture. The Brazilian military even turned to sponsorship of Umbanda to displace Catholicism; Evangelicalization was not restricted to Central America, succeeding in Brazil and joined by the Traditionalist Catholic far-right “Tradition, Family, Property” movement that relentlessly attacked the hierarchy. Catoggio, “Religious Beliefs and Actors in the Legitimation of Military Dictatorships in the Southern Cone” 2011: 31-33. Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010: 176. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000: 43. Sierra Fonseca, *Iglesia y liberalismo en Honduras en el siglo XIX* 1993: 53, 75.

<sup>32</sup> This also captures Gramsci’s shortcomings with respect to 1. the economic base of society and 2. state force. Bo- cock, *Hegemony* 1986: 59. Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought* 2012: 186. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 32-33, 51, 97. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 122, 126, 136. John Schwarzmantel, “Introduction: Gramsci in His Time and in Ours,” in Mark McNally and John Schwarzmantel, eds., *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2009): 13.

a theology strictly instrumentalized toward right-wing politics, de-converting the middle and lower classes away from the one institution that could challenge the state.<sup>33</sup>

Close to the replacement of Catholicism (but perhaps trickier) comes 5. usurpation: here the military attempts to directly intervene in Catholic doctrine and practice, or at least find some foothold where officers could insist in the press that priests were “bad Catholics” that the hierarchy needed to bring under control. This mode goes beyond 19th-century anticlericalism, claiming sanctity for the state itself: lieutenant colonels staked a (risky) claim to having the upper hand over the clergy when it comes to speaking for God. This mode of Church-state relationship—cooptation, appropriation, usurpation—has precedents in the other regimes of 1970s Latin America: other militaries tried to arrogate Catholic theology and interpretation of God’s will to themselves. Argentina’s military had officers well-versed in theology—specialists in finding and interrogating Catholics who were deemed too radical. Uruguay’s military intelligence prepared reports on sermons and investigated materials that the Church circulated.<sup>34</sup> Brazil’s Gen. Antônio Carlos da Silva Muricy told bishops that “I have the impression that my Catholicism is better than yours.”<sup>35</sup>

While the Honduran FF.AA. was able to make a unique success in actually convincing Honduran *ciudadanos* and *campesinos* to adopt a pro-intervention, pro-export-capitalism, anti-

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<sup>33</sup> Evangelicalism in the United States had only swung towards right-wing dominance in the late 1970s (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives,” n18). The “secularization thesis” predicted that U.S. organized religion would decline with industrialism, as in postwar Western Europe. But the mainline was replaced by fundamentalism, not unbelief. A similar process occurred in Latin America’s middle classes—Evangelicalism and right-wing “Charismatic Catholicism” providing entrepreneurial families with a more adaptable choice of theology and community.

<sup>34</sup> Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010: 163. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 183.

<sup>35</sup> And Gen. Muricy was relatively pro-Catholic by comparison. See also François Duvalier’s rewriting of the Lord’s Prayer—“Our Doc, who art in the National Palace for life, Hallowed be Thy name by present and future generations, Thy will be done in Port-au-Prince as in the provinces. Give us this day our new Haiti, and never forgive the trespasses of the fatherland-less who spit every day on our Fatherland, let them succumb to temptation ...” Catoggio, “Religious Beliefs and Actors in the Legitimation of Military Dictatorships in the Southern Cone” 2011: 29. Jean M. Fourcand, ed., *Catéchisme de la révolution duvaliériste* (Port-au-Prince, Imprimerie de l’État, 1964): 37. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 112-3. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000: 48, 51, 59, 100.

cooperative theology. At the same time, directly making claims against the Catholic Church was putting the FF.AA. into a cycle where it repeatedly discredited itself by trying to bolster its legitimacy, unable to control the ultimate outcomes of the process.<sup>36</sup> When Edgar Chamorro produced cards and magazines with crucifixes and Pope John Paul II's, he had to draw the line at "The Pope is a *contra*, too," as being just too crass.<sup>37</sup>

### Paz García: Persecution

The 1978-82 junta (nominally) headed by Gen. Policarpo Paz García solicited *Te Deum* services, and the Virgin of Suyapa had been named as the "Captain-General" of the FF.AA. after the 1969 war with El Salvador,<sup>38</sup> but relations soured over the murders and exiles of Churchpersons. The generals used Catholic symbolism and ritual—but that left them open to being condemned by the same institution they were trying to garner some legitimation from. Over a dozen Delegates of the Word working with Salvadoran refugees were murdered on the border 1980-81 as the Army worked to take over operations of the refugee camps there and oppress and control the refugees.<sup>39</sup> In full cooperation with Salvadoran forces, Battalion 3-16 murdered one of Archbishop Óscar Romero's secretaries, Nora Trinidad Gómez de Barrillas in 1981: she escaped to

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<sup>36</sup> Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 5, 111. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology*, 2011: 76.

<sup>37</sup> The White House was reproached by the Vatican itself for saying Pope John Paul II had phoned Reagan "urging us to continue our efforts in Central America ... I'm not going to go into detail, but all our activities," including renewed lethal aid. Reagan, "Remarks at a Conference on Religious Liberty," Apr. 16, 1985, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-conference-religious-liberty>. Joel Brinkley, "U.S. Denies Distortion," *The New York Times*, Apr. 18, 1985. Edgar Chamorro, *Packaging the Contras: A Case of CIA Disinformation*, Institute for Media Analysis Monograph Series 2 (New York: Institute for Media Analysis, 1987): 24-25, 47, 50.

<sup>38</sup> "Diócesis de Occidente excomulga a la Junta Militar de Gobierno," *El Tiempo*, Nov. 29, 1979. Elías Ruíz, *El Asillero: Masacre y justicia* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1992): 156-57.

<sup>39</sup> Renato Camarda, *Forced to Move* (San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1985): 39. CODEH, *Human Rights in Honduras: 1984* (World Council of Churches and the Washington Office on Latin America, 1985): 19, 38-39. Philip E. Wheaton, *The Iron Triangle: The Honduran Connection* (Washington: EPICA, 1981): 18.

Honduras, but she and her family were thrown from a Honduran Air Force plane in 1981 (Chapter 6, “The Argentine Method”).

States must keep crises from appearing and becoming acute,<sup>40</sup> but the regimes of Gens. Paz García, Alvarez Martínez, and Humberto Regalado had Cold-War goals and needs beyond their own standing and survival. The 1978-82 junta had aimed to keep the Church from becoming “a significant factor in national political life, and government leaders do not wish to see the Church assume a more active role,” in the U.S. Embassy’s words.<sup>41</sup> This drove the military state toward confrontation, causing highly-public crises that damaged the junta’s legitimacy; after the expulsion of Father James Carney and the Sumpul Massacre, clergy began pushing for social reform again, instead of just acting as a mediator between the state and other social sectors.<sup>42</sup>

The U.S.-born Jesuit “Padre Guadalupe” James Carney of El Progreso, Yoro, had been a pioneer in the campesino cooperative movement in the 1960s and 70s, organizing them and defending their right to the land granted to them by the country’s Agrarian Reform.<sup>43</sup> He became a Honduran citizen in 1973, but in November 1979 the junta stripped him of the citizenship and exiled him to Miami as a “pernicious foreigner,”<sup>44</sup> on grounds of political activity and importing

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<sup>40</sup> John Lofland, “Early Goffman: Style, Structure, Substance, Soul,” in Jason Ditton, ed., *The View from Goffman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980): 38.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, “The Honduran Church: An Overview,” March 1981; box 1; Honduras Human Rights Collection; the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

<sup>42</sup> See for example the 1972 and 1985 Presidential crises. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections, Honduras: Directory and Analysis* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1988): 6. Max Velásquez Díaz, *El golpe de estado de 1972: Antecedentes y consecuencias*, CEDOH, *Boletín Especial* 80 (1998).

<sup>43</sup> Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 6. Valentín Méndez, “Otra cuenta del rosario,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 75, 2nd epoch (September 1992), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1992. “Religiosas de Honduras protestan: Se ha violado el derecho de nacionalidad y residencia,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 20, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> He had himself naturalized in response to the Gen. Oswaldo López Arellano regime’s attempt to deport him 1968. Longino Becerra, “Reflexión sobre el sacrificio del Padre Guadalupe a partir de una exposición artística,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 61, 2nd epoch (September 1989).

foreign “dissociative doctrines.”<sup>45</sup> Within the month the Diocesan Council of Santa Rosa de Copán excommunicated Gen. Paz García’s three-man governing junta and anyone involved in the expulsion: the move was even ratified by the Secretary of the national Episcopal Conference, but never reached the Vatican for ultimate approval.<sup>46</sup> The diocese also wrote that no government—let alone a corrupt, inept, self-perpetuating *de facto* military regime—had the authority to pick and choose who were “good” clergy. The Army had intervened in “the correct exposition of the doctrine of the Church” by penalizing evangelization and homilies, trying to arrogate Catholicism for itself. “Since when in Honduras are functionaries of the government specialists in ecclesiastic affairs and true interpreters of doctrine?”<sup>47</sup> The diocese’s letter noted that the junta had not simply persecuted and punished a priest, but had taken a first step in direct intervention into theology and religious practice.

### The Sumpul Massacre

The 1980 Sumpul Massacre and the 1981 Lempa Massacre marked the first time that Honduras and its rulers faced sustained attention from the international press. Honduran historians agreed at the time that the denunciation was the junta’s strongest blow in terms of international credibility on human rights and democracy.<sup>48</sup> The attacks by the armed forces and the U.S. Embassy on the Salvadoran refugees as witnesses—on their credibility and the reliability of their perception and recall—are detailed in Chapter 4. But the Honduran military was also pushed into

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<sup>45</sup> The pro-junta *El Heraldo* applauded the move, its article on the exile a Communist with “the fantasy of making our country return to the mists of the Middle Ages” and comparing him to Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini. “Excomulgando al gobierno,” *El Heraldo*, Dec. 1, 1979. Note also the explicit 19th-century *Liberalism* of the language.

<sup>46</sup> “Diócesis de Occidente excomulga a la Junta Militar de Gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 29, 1979. “Editorial: James Francis Carney versus corrupción,” *Presencia Universitaria* 7:59 (November 1979). Partido Socialista de Honduras, *Análisis coyuntural [sic] de la situación política nacional*, Documentos Políticos 3 (Tegucigalpa: Partido Socialista de Honduras, 1980?).

<sup>47</sup> “Choque frontal Iglesia-gobierno: Excomulgada la Junta Militar,” *El Heraldo*, Nov. 29, 1979. “Diócesis de Occidente excomulga a la Junta Militar de Gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 29, 1979.

<sup>48</sup> “Evaluación de 1980,” *Historia Crítica* 2, 1st epoch (January-March 1981): 50-58.

its first institutional confrontation with the Catholic Church by the need to delay news of covert cooperation with the Salvadoran forces—formally still the FF.AA.’s main foe for over a decade.

Massacres and refugees required testimonial injustice against the witnesses, for officers and journalists to attack their identities. They were condemned for being illiterate, as Salvadoran, as peasants unable to identify and remember what they saw, to tell reports from rumors, or discern if they were being coached and exploited by Communist terrorists (Chapter 4, “The Sumpul Massacre: The U.S. Embassy”).<sup>49</sup> Here the intent was to prevent the witnesses from being believed, restricting them from participation in social knowledge-making.<sup>50</sup> In turn, campesino witnesses, refugees, and victims faced an unequal epistemic “landscape.” They had to turn to literate and professional figures in the area for “warrant” and for press access, while the officers and officials still had significant advantages in blocking, denying, reframing, and levying counteraccusations against them. In a country with only 41% literacy, mostly urban, the news was “made” not just by the press, but by lawyers, doctors, and priests who had to serve as intermediaries.<sup>51</sup>

Religious organizations were particularly troublesome for the types of denial that Cohen outlines (Introduction, “An Anatomy of Denial”), because of their independent institutions, “mainstream” legitimacy, and international nature. Jeane Kirkpatrick and Al Haig were reduced to accusing the massacred Churchwomen in El Salvador of being gunrunners and jumping road-

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<sup>49</sup> Kristie Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 33:1 (2012): 26-29.

<sup>50</sup> Amy Allen, “Power/Knowledge/Resistance: Foucault and Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 192. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 3-4.

<sup>51</sup> But the issue of witnesses’ dependency on middle-class warrantors comes back again—how far could the press adequately enable the Honduran working class without Gramsci’s “organic intellectuals” from that class? In this situation the dependency remained (even if in theory it might not even be possible to eliminate dependency, any more than perspective can be eliminated from eyesight). Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 11, 13. Michael Joseph Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1992): 90.

blocks.<sup>52</sup> The Honduran Church, through individual clergy and the institutions backing them, was the first to threaten the military on epistemic grounds, giving authenticating warrant to Salvadoran and Honduran campesinos' accounts.

Fathers Fausto Milla, Robert Gallagher (who would be at the March 17, 1981, Lempa massacre in person), and Roberto Yalaga had given the regime its first international scandal at the Río Sumpul. The frontier clergy's warranting of the story was warranted in turn by Bishop José Carranza Chévez (1962-80) and the 36 priests and nuns of Santa Rosa de Copán diocese, who unanimously condemned the FF.AA.'s complicity; the letter was then backed up by the Episcopal Conferences of Honduras and El Salvador.<sup>53</sup> Quashing the story now would require the impossible task of discrediting dozens of priests and nuns and, in effect, all the prelates in the country. The Army could tell better than the Church who the enemies of God and religion were. The diocesan letter signified a *moral* attack against the counterrevolutionary war of Central America's militaries: it was a grotesque *evil* to claim that massacring the poorest peasants of the borderlands, leaving the bodies for vultures, dogs, and fish traps, was part of a battle for humanity's soul against godless terrorists.

The Copán Diocese was immediately condemned by the Army and allied media figures as "temerarious," "presumptuous," "useful idiots," "moved by interests distant from humanitarianism and Christianity," and running the global Communist conspiracy's "well-orchestrated campaign to destabilize the government."<sup>54</sup> Over Radio Honduras a FF.AA. spokesman lectured

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<sup>52</sup> The new Administration went through the usual Cohenian stages of denial, Secretary of State Gen. Al Haig (ret.) suggesting that "Perhaps the vehicle that the nuns were riding in may have tried to run a roadblock ... and there'd been an exchange of fire" and UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick that "the nuns were not just nuns. They were political activists. We ought to be a little more clear about this than we actually are." Raymond Bonner, "The Diplomat and the Killer," *The Atlantic*, Feb. 11, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> UN Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador* (New York: United Nations, 1993): 123.

<sup>54</sup> EFE, "Amenazan con expulsar a jesuitas que denunciaron masacre en frontera," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 1, 1980. Raúl Barnica López, "Columnas de 'Impacto': Curas y religiosas ¿calumnian?" *El Heraldo*, June 26, 1980.

that the Catholic Church should not be “mediating with the enemies of Honduras, who are also those of religion, which they call ‘the opium of the people’ ” (*i.e.*, orthodox Marxists).<sup>55</sup>

The FF.AA. took a xenophobic as well as an anticommunist angle. Throughout the 1960s, reformists and rightists alike had whipped up violent “Salvadorphobia” against those who came to Honduras as rural laborers. Mass expulsions were perpetrated in 1968, policemen urging on mobs that lynched and castrated even infants, culminating in the short yet sharp “Soccer War” of July 1969—over 3,000 in both countries killed in the span of 100 hours.<sup>56</sup> After the Sumpul Massacre, the Honduran junta hoped to openly attack Salvadoran refugees, while covertly working with the FF.AA.’s decade-long foe, the Salvadoran military. The FF.AA.’s official response to Copán Diocese’s support of Sumpul witnesses declared that “the great majority of the priests and female religious signing the pronouncement are of foreign origin. This fact could explain the defense of our sovereignty and territorial integrity does not matter to them,” nor the Hondurans who were killed in 1969.<sup>57</sup>

In a Radio Honduras program denying the massacre, the junta’s spokesman insisted that for the clerical “signatories of foreign origin [a] response is unnecessary.” He continued by demanding to know what they wanted—“That we abandon our frontiers? That we receive an uncontrolled exodus of immigrants? That the national territory be converted into [a] theater of operations of activities of insurgency and counterinsurgency of foreign peoples and forces?” *Good Hondurans*, he continued, haven’t forgotten “what happened in the frontier eleven years ago because of Salvadoran immigrants ... the profanation of temples and the destruction of their imag-

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“Editorial: La Diócesis de Santa Rosa de Copán y la tragedia del río Sumpul,” *Presencia Universitaria* 8:65 (June 1980).

<sup>55</sup> “Los curas extranjeros que acusan ...” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 27, 1980, from *Hora Nacional*, Radio Honduras, June 27, 1980.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas P. Anderson, *The War of the Dispossessed: Honduras and El Salvador, 1969* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981): 75, 78-81, 91-100.

<sup>57</sup> “Declaran el gobierno y las FF.AA.: Falsa y temeraria es acusación de los curas,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 25, 1980.



es” by the invading forces.<sup>58</sup> Besides the Salvador-baiting, the speech tried to rhetorically “de-bunk” the clergy as a source of knowledge—so there was no *need* to engage further with any allegation or supposed evidence they might bring up.<sup>59</sup>

The Honduran Catholic Church was the most sparse one in Central America, forcing it to rely on foreign clergy: in 1981 only 52 percent of its 220 priests were Honduran by birth, and down to 23 percent out of 260 by 1988; three out of six bishops were foreign-born.<sup>60</sup> By mid-decade the Church was relying on the 10,000 lay Delegates of the Word for Masses and catechisms in rural areas.<sup>61</sup> The foreign-born and -trained priests were particularly suspected by military officers and large landowners for any unrest.<sup>62</sup> The FF.AA. accused all Churchpersons in Copán Diocese of being Salvadorans and that they had to be expelled—though in fact the diocese had the Honduran Church’s *highest* proportion of Honduran-born. The political division between traditionalist and social-activist clergy was strongest in that diocese.<sup>63</sup> The Honduran Church’s rejection of the xenophobic attacks against itself also reaffirmed a broader, principal

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<sup>58</sup> “Los curas extranjeros que acusan ...” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, June 27, 1980, from *Hora Nacional*, Radio Honduras, June 27, 1980.

<sup>59</sup> R.G.A. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Roy Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge* (Keele: University of Keele, 1979): 13. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963): 4.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, “The Honduran Church: An Overview,” March 1981; box 1; Honduras Human Rights Collection; the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 3. Donald E. Schulz, *How Honduras Escaped Revolutionary Violence* (Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992): 8.

<sup>61</sup> “Iglesia,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 68 (December 1986).

<sup>62</sup> This is one of Jeffrey Klaiber’s major themes in all his national-level Catholic Church histories. “Yoro: A Cristo también lo acusaron de comunista y agitador,” *El Tiempo*, June 6, 1977. “Diócesis de Occidente excomulga a la Junta Militar de Gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 29, 1979. “Excomulgan al gobierno,” *El Herald*, Dec. 1, 1979. CODEH, with the World Council of Churches, *Report on Human Rights in Honduras in 1983* (Tegucigalpa: CODEH, 1984): 1. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 8. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 23. Paige, *Coffee and Power* 1998. Philip E. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras: Regional Counterinsurgency Base* (Washington: Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action Task Force, 1982): 12.

<sup>63</sup> The U.S. Embassy reported that some Church officials had said anonymously that those two Copán Department’s Jesuits, Passionist priests, and French-born clergy were all Red or Marxist-controlled. U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, “The Honduran Church: An Overview,” March 1981; box 1; Honduras Human Rights Collection; the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Wheaton, *Iron Triangle* 1981: 17.

that Salvadorans “belonged” in Honduran society and the public sphere. No matter where they had been born, clergy were fighting the “symbolic violence” of Salvadorphobia that excluded people in the country to discredit them or to deploy force against them. Typically it was the poorest frontier Hondurans who provided Salvadoran refugees with the only independent aid.<sup>64</sup>

The attack on the clergy over the massacre was hardly restricted to rhetoric: Father Milla was kidnapped by heavily-armed plainclothesmen in 1981 but freed after an international campaign, and fled to Mexico for his life, his associates tortured for his whereabouts.<sup>65</sup> He appeared on Honduran death lists even after Copán’s Bishop Luis Santos (1984-2011) managed to bring him back from Mexico in 1985.<sup>66</sup> Seven other priests were expelled in 1981 for being socially active were mostly U.S. and Canadian<sup>67</sup>—used by the FF.AA. to claim that campesino leagues and activist priests were due only to outside agitators.<sup>68</sup> DNI inspectors threatened to plant arms in priests’ houses to accuse them of trafficking for Honduran and Salvadoran guerrillas.<sup>69</sup>

### Alvarez Martínez: Catholic Outreach

Honduras made a “managed transition” to a “dual regime” January 1982: Roberto Suazo Córdova (1982-85)—the first civilian President to not be overthrown since 1933—and Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez (1981-84), who directed a military of unprecedented revenue, power, ideological orientation, and violence against Hondurans and other Central Americans. The new

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<sup>64</sup> Against the FF.AA.’s public announcements that any Salvadoran was the enemy of a *good* Honduran. Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 33-35, 56. Goffman, *Stigma* 1963: 4. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 52.

<sup>65</sup> Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 34, 38-39.

<sup>66</sup> Bishop Luis Alfonso Santos Villeda of Copán was a relation of Archbishop Héctor Enrique Santos Hernández of Tegucigalpa. “El padre Fausto Milla, un eterno perseguido,” from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 22, 1989, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 100 (August 1989). “Nuevas amenazas de muerte contra padre Fausto Milla,” *CODEH* 67 (August 1990).

<sup>67</sup> Lucy Komisar, “White Slavery in Honduras,” *Honduras Update* 3:9 (June 1985).

<sup>68</sup> Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 8.

<sup>69</sup> “15 religiosos extranjeros temen expulsión del país,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Jan. 17, 1981. U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, “The Honduran Church: An Overview,” March 1981; box 1; Honduras Human Rights Collection; the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

government attempted a limited outreach to the Catholic bishops—and appears to have obtained some cooperation by ending the persecution of Delegates of the Word on the Salvadoran border.<sup>70</sup> But a sharp theological controversy erupted when Gen. Alvarez Martínez and the commercial and political elite he cultivated secretly turned to Sun Myung Moon's worldwide Unification Church for support. Once deposed in 1984 he converted outright to Evangelicalism in the United States, and returned to Honduras as a preacher in 1988.<sup>71</sup>

In 1980 the Episcopal Conference had insisted it was not ignoring the threat of Marxism in the country: the bishops denounced a nonexistent Nicaragua-style "Popular Church," helping give substance to military campaigns against dissidents and against the Honduran Church itself. But the Conference's institutional pronouncements still denounced abuse and social injustice, requiring the common people be free to organize against the regime.<sup>72</sup> Half bishops had reputations as right-of-center or quiescent in the face of U.S. and FF.AA. military actions.<sup>73</sup> In 1987 Bishop Tomás Andrés Mauro Muldoon of Juticalpa even attended joint U.S.-FF.AA. military

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<sup>70</sup> Gen. Ríos Montt was also canny enough to try and avoid the 1980-81 slaughter of Catholic priests under Gen. Lucas García. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 49, 128, 164.

<sup>71</sup> Leticia Salomón, "La Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 33 (February 1988).

<sup>72</sup> Ernesto Cardenal's Solentiname commune was explicitly Christian-socialist. Priests were a key element in the Revolutionary experiment, but Catholicism was also vital to the opposition to the FSLN government and even to the peace negotiations. The Nicaraguan Church was sharply split unlike almost any other, the U.S.-paid Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo decrying the Popular Church as a parallel and state-run Church. Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, *El actual momento político de Honduras: Carta pastoral colectiva del Episcopado Hondureño*. Tegucigalpa: Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, 1980. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 7. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 197-201, 203, 207. Debra Sabia, *Contradiction and Conflict: The Popular Church in Nicaragua* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

<sup>73</sup> Geraldo Scarpone (Comayagua 1979-2004), Tomás Andrés Mauro Muldoon (Juticalpa 1983-2012), and Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga (Tegucigalpa auxiliary 1978-93; archbishop 1993-present). Bayardo Mayrena, "Opina Monseñor Mauro Muldoon: Pocos y equivocados sacerdotes utilizados por los izquierdistas," *El Heraldo*, Apr. 28, 1984. Lucy Komisar, "White Slavery in Honduras," *Honduras Update* 3:9 (June 1985). "Maniobras militares," Centro de Investigación e Información Regional, *Informaciones* 7, 2nd epoch (March-April 1987): 1-27. "Iglesia y ocupación norteamericana en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 73 (May 1987). "¿Perdón y olvido para los responsables de las desapariciones?" *Los Hechos Hablan por sí Mismos* 5 (June 1995).

maneuvers backstopping the Nicaraguan border.<sup>74</sup> Late 1981 Archbishop Santos had still been warning of Marxists infiltrating non-Church organizations and creating protest, but Gen. Alvarez Martínez's actions quickly widened the rift.<sup>75</sup> Contemporaries explicitly compared Archbishop Héctor Enrique Santos's journey towards political awakening with that of Archbishop Romero: the country's government and two major parties saw their support drop when Santos swung from a more conservative stance towards demanding structural transformation.<sup>76</sup> No bishop objected to denunciations of clerical persecution or critiques of state policy. Even the conservatives refused to cooperate with the National Security Doctrine, or with any other attempt by the FF.AA. to claim theological competence.

Suazo Córdova had put Catholicism at the center of his 1981 Presidential campaign, introducing a flamboyant "Christian militancy" to the Liberal Party—one which was clearly an electoral tactic, as much as his simultaneous invocation of Santería (Chapter 10, "*Curanderismo* and *Medicalismo*"). Columnist Juan Ramón Martínez acidly reiterated his campaign promise of "Christian philosophical and ethical principles."<sup>77</sup> Gen. Alvarez Martínez's 1981-82 speeches repeatedly justified any military action as being a defense of democratic "Western Christian civilization."<sup>78</sup> He called the Salvadoran Civil War "a war in which the frontier is our liberty, our democracy, our Christian faith and our social harmony."<sup>79</sup> On October 2, 1982, he announced "there is a plan of aggression against our country to destroy all the structures that are traditional

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<sup>74</sup> "Iglesia y ocupación norteamericana en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 73 (May 1987). "La campaña antisubversiva: Caso La Estancia," CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 16-26. Ramón Custodio López, "Editorial: *Dura lex, sed lex*," *CODEH* 6:44 (April 1988).

<sup>75</sup> "Una homilía contradictoria," *Patria* 6:227 (Nov. 21, 1981).

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous, "Evaluación de 1980," *Historia Crítica* 2, 1st epoch (January-March 1981): 50-58.

<sup>77</sup> Juan Ramón Martínez, "Lo religioso en la última campaña electoral," *Panorama* (December 1981): 48, also *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 30, 1981.

<sup>78</sup> Frente Patriótico Hondureño, "FPH y el II Encuentro de la Comunidad Universitaria," *Patria* 5:207 (May 16, 1981). Leticia Salomón, "La Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 33 (February 1988).

<sup>79</sup> "Alvarez Declares War on FMLN," *Honduras Update* 1:1 (August? 1982), from *The Latin American Weekly Report*, July 23, 1982. "Afirma el coronel Efraín González Muñoz: Hondureños debemos desarrollar una militancia activa contra marxistas," *El Heraldo*, Oct. 2, 1982.

and vital for the existence of a democratic and Christian republic.”<sup>80</sup> It was a holy war and he was its messianic leader. He conspicuously attended the *Te Deum* masses held for the government in 1981 and 1982, and was sure to make himself seen at celebrations of the Virgin of Suyapa. But the state would be denied this celebration in 1983 over the issue of the “Moonies,” as it had been in 1979 over Father Guadalupe.<sup>81</sup>

Church–military tensions relaxed in 1982, the Honduran Catholic Church taking on a conservative line regardless of the Alvarez Martínez’s rhetoric and disappearances. Contemporary coverage by the *Centro de Documentación de Honduras* noted that Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s speeches always manipulated religious values, by always calling the left wing “atheist and totalitarian.” CEDOH also critiqued the bishops themselves—for constantly criticizing Honduras’s small left wing, for tacitly supporting the state narrative of a unified, peace-loving, democratic Christendom defending itself from totalitarian aggression, and for allowing Alvarez Martínez to turn Red-baiting against the Church<sup>82</sup>—because they never broke with his narratives, the general could strengthen the state against the Church without its objection.

Army officers and even the Episcopal Conference of Latin America leveled accusations against Honduran clergy in summer 1982—that its “guerrilla priests”<sup>83</sup> were running a “Marxist Church.”<sup>84</sup> Right-wing editorialists railed about infiltrating guerrilla priests—even condemning supposed “atheist clergy”<sup>85</sup> (despite seeming the inherent paradox). After Alvarez’s 1984 ouster,

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<sup>80</sup> “Militarismo en Honduras: El reinado de Gustavo Alvarez: 1982-1984,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 2 (August 1985).

<sup>81</sup> “Diócesis de Occidente excomulga a la Junta Militar de Gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 29, 1979.

<sup>82</sup> “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 23 (March 1983). CODEH and the World Council of Churches, *Informe sobre los derechos humanos en Honduras en 1984* (Tegucigalpa: CODEH, 1985).

<sup>83</sup> “APROH: Origen, desarrollo y perspectivas,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 9 (March 1984).

<sup>84</sup> “Funcionario de Escuelas Radiofónicas Suyapa: En Honduras no hay guerrilla y tampoco curas guerrilleros,” *La Tribuna*, June 24, 1982.

<sup>85</sup> “Conferencia Episcopal desmiente el CELAM: No hay guerrilleros ni marxismo en la Iglesia,” *La Tribuna*, July 7, 1982.

<sup>85</sup> Robert M. Kimmitt, memo for Charles Hill and John H. Stanford, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, “Request for Clearance of *White House Digest* Draft: Persecution of Christian Groups in Nicaragua,” Dec. 14, 1983, available at

renewed land conflicts would produce an increase in persecution of Jesuit and parish clergy, but the Catholic Institute for International Relations noted in 1986 that “the soldiers know well [how] to use the weapons that some bishops apportion to them.”<sup>86</sup> The bishops’ earlier denunciations of Marxist clergy and the Popular Church had already conceded the military’s main point, increasing the vulnerability of activist priests to the repression. Still, Archbishop Santos and other prelates regularly denounced the behavior of the government and military by 1983—especially over cooperation with Salvadoran and Contra forces.<sup>87</sup>

### Alvarez Martínez: Forced Disappearances

Col. Alvarez Martínez first introduced “Argentine”-style forced disappearances to Honduras as head of FUSEP 1981, intensifying when he was named general and Commander-in-Chief. But survivors of Battalion 3-16’s victims also explicitly used techniques from Argentina, in this case following the footsteps of the Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo. Both groups of Mothers faced significant lack of cooperation from their respective Catholic Churches (though no Honduran clergy supported the disappearances as some Argentinean clergy did). They had to learn how to build an independent organization and reputation separately from the Church and its warranting power.

COFADEH (*Comité de Familiares de Detenidos/Desaparecidos en Honduras*) was formed in 1982 as an unprecedented organization for an unprecedented situation, mobilizing the mothers and wives of those murdered by Gens. Alvarez Martínez and Regalado, then expanding into peacebuilding and continuing its human-rights work to today. It started by adopting the

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<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp86m00886r001400140039-3>. “Callejas acusó de subversivos a religiosos,” *CODEH* 6:47 (August-October 1988).

<sup>86</sup> “La coyuntura hondureña,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 4, 2nd epoch (August-September 1986): 1-25.

<sup>87</sup> Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 7.

white shawl of Argentina's Madres, as an emblem of piety and femininity that provided a source of legitimacy for their monthly silent protests—often flanking civic-military festivals such as Independence Day every September 15. Liduvina Hernández notes they initially had to rely on mainline Protestant ministers until the 1984 ouster of Gen. Alvarez Martínez. Unlike in Chile or El Salvador, there was no easy identification between Catholic clergy and the popular movement. But by the end of the decade, clergy were *asking* for the honor of conducting Masses for COFADEH.<sup>88</sup>

Gen. Alvarez Martínez's motives in ending the anticlerical violence of 1980-81 was—like his replacement of overt repression with covert abduction (Chapter 6)—mostly performed out of concern with international image.<sup>89</sup> But if the Catholic Church would not return the regime to the headlines again before 1983, the Madres of the disappeared would do so. Church-state relations became complicated again: the Episcopal Conference's 1982 Pastoral Letter condemned the disappearances and the discovery of clandestine cemeteries. It particularly attacked the state's Civil Defense Committees for their secret membership and activities, for militarizing the country. The network of *orejas* and informants turned citizens into *de facto* soldiers under orders, raising fear and doubt through anonymous denunciation, and infiltrating labor, commerce, religion, farming, economy, media, and education.<sup>90</sup>

Peace activism also brought women from outside Honduras to the country. Religious connections quickly provided the main mode of international solidarity against the undeclared

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<sup>88</sup> Bertha Oliva, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, August 2012. COFADEH, *Desaparecidos*, special edition (Nov. 30, 1992). Liduvina Hernández, ed. Oscar Aníbal Puerto, *Mujeres contra la muerte* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1993): 69, 71, 73, 75. Washington Office on Latin America, "Honduras: A Democracy in Demise," *Update Latin America*, special, February 1984.

<sup>89</sup> CODEH and the World Council of Churches, *Informe sobre los derechos humanos en Honduras en 1984 1985*: 38.

<sup>90</sup> Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, *Carta pastoral colectiva sobre algunos aspectos de la realidad nacional de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, 1982).

wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua. However, there is no record that the project of Witness for Peace (Chapter 3, “Debunked by Being Right”) was repeated on the Honduran side of the border—though unlike in Nicaragua they would not even have been allowed into the villages outside of the “New Nicaragua” zone.

On December 6, 1983, an airplane of fifty U.S. and Canadian churchwomen landed at Tegucigalpa’s Toncontín Airport to pray for peace, but was prevented from even disembarking—military helicopters flying back and forth over the gate as the plane remained on the tarmac. FF.AA. spokesman Amílcar Santamaria said they “were coming to serve, consciously or unconsciously, the expansionist objectives of international communism.”<sup>91</sup> The Episcopal Conference called the visit “inadequate and counterproductive” for the circumstances, receiving neither “its consent, nor its approval,” and expressing disapproval of their proposal to block the highway near Comayagua.<sup>92</sup>

Santamaria likened the churchwomen to Salvadoran death-squad leader Roberto D’Aubuisson and Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomás Borge, who had also been denied Honduran visas.

One does not need to be very imaginative or to have a doctorate in propaganda to understand that the essential objective of the blocking of the highway was to make it necessary for the police to remove them forcibly. The evident objective was to have this forcible removal filmed and photographed, and subsequently shown abroad, creating the image that nuns and priests are persecuted here. ... [They are] obviously coming to create disturbances and who, consciously or unconsciously, were coming to help the expansionist objectives of international totalitarianism.

They had no place in Honduras’s democracy. “Moreover, it is significant that they were coming to pray for peace in a country that lives in peace, instead of going to pray for peace in El Salvador and Nicaragua.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> The Bureau of International Information of Honduras, press release, Dec. 5, 1983. Associated Press, “Honduras Bars U.S. Women from Entering for a Protest,” Dec. 6, 1983.

<sup>92</sup> “Iglesia y ocupación norteamericana en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 73 (May 1987).

<sup>93</sup> U.S. State Department cable, n.d.; CO065, box 85; WHORM Subject File; Ronald Reagan Library.



The women would take up the Honduran state on this taunt, traveling onwards to Managua where the Sandinistas welcomed them. The implicit argument was that they were barred by Honduras because it was democratic, but yet also that they admitted by Nicaragua because it would serve the “campaign of disinformation”: the incident only ended up embarrassing Tegucigalpa at the national and international levels. Even the conservative *La Tribuna* columnist Carlos Medina said the visiting women were being guided by their conscience against Contra forces on Honduran soil, against the warmongers and *vendepatrias* in the government.<sup>94</sup> The incident revived the issue of foreign-born clergy on the Salvadoran border expelled by the FF.AA. for “politicking,” since non-citizens are forbidden by the 1982 Constitution from political protest or activity.<sup>95</sup>

#### Alvarez Martínez: “Moonie” Substitution

The superhuman social sanction provided by religion is highly tempting for the state—whether to obtain rhetoric and actions that provided some public support, or to attempt to replace it outright with a state-curated replica.<sup>96</sup> Religious “engineering” offered a way out of the paradox of the National Security state’s twin requirements—1. for passive, atomized masses, but also 2. to build hegemony with a shuttered press, abolished parties, and a restricted Church.<sup>97</sup> Gen.

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<sup>94</sup> Dorothy Lipovenko, “Churchwomen to Pray for Peace in Honduras,” *The Toronto Globe and Mail*, Dec. 3, 1983. The Bureau of International Information of Honduras, press release, Dec. 5, 1983. Associated Press, “Honduras Bars U.S. Women from Entering for a Protest,” Dec. 6, 1983. Ilsa Díaz Zelaya, “Francamente ... : Las monjas, la política, la oración y ...” *El Tiempo*, Dec. 8, 1983. “Pueblo respalda medidas contra las ‘religiosas,’” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 10, 1983. Carlos A. Medina, “Las monjitas rezadoras,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 10, 1983.

<sup>95</sup> The Bureau of International Information of Honduras, press release, Dec. 5, 1983. Martin Francis, “The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization,” *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985.

<sup>96</sup> Some argue that states or philosophies that try to dodge metaphysics only end up making interventions in metaphysics, without being aware they are doing so—19th-century Liberalism turning Positivism into a religion imitating Christianity, the Santa Fe Committee’s call for “religious engineering,” or Bureaucratic-Authoritarian lieutenant colonels examining homilies and sermons (below, “Regalado: Theological Usurpation”). Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 1988: 35. Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 33-35.

<sup>97</sup> Coutinho, *Gramsci’s Political Thought* 2012: 186.

Gustavo Alvarez Martínez imposed restriction and terror quantitatively far less severe than those of the Southern Cone, but qualitatively shocking and unprecedented in the country's own history (Chapter 6, "The Honduran Context"). He faced opposition from Congress, Church, press, and survivors' organizations that proved decisive in his ouster 1984.

Alvarez Martínez had ambitions to remake the entire country, but also required a civil arm to build consensus, to try to deepen hegemony in political society. He founded the secret, bipartisan APROH (*Asociación para el Progreso de Honduras*) in San Pedro Sula to serve as the vehicle for his Gramscian war of position. Its members were export-oriented bourgeoisie from both the Nationalist and Liberal Parties, ranging from the far right to the merely opportunistic, bankers and newspapers owners.<sup>98</sup> As the power behind President Roberto Suazo Córdova's throne Alvarez Martínez wanted to reach beyond the Army's old alliance with rural reactionary forces such as FENAGH's ranchers (Chapter 8, "Marches for the Fatherland") or Ricardo Zúñiga's *Mano Blanca* (Chapter 6). During APROH's brief existence its members ventured plans to remake every aspect of Honduras, from political parties to media,<sup>99</sup> even allegedly proposing to ask Washington for "associated state" status like Puerto Rico.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Central America's elites after the 1860s were the *processors* of exports—coffee, sugar, bananas, beef—a Liberal bourgeoisie resident in the capitals and port towns, rather than the old rural landowners. In Gramsci's analysis of contemporary Italy, the factory-owners had failed to get a hegemony in greater society for their Liberal ideologies, and simply relied on an alliance with large landowners and on the state forces. APROH represented San Pedro Sula's export class, but ultimately was merely an extension of Gen. Alvarez Martínez's greater project and did not survive his ouster. (See Chapter 8, "Marches for the Fatherland," n40.) Alberto Alvarez García, *Honduras: Contradicciones internas ante la estrategia norteamericana en Centroamérica* (Havana: Centro de Estudios sobre América, 1989): 30-32. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations," in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 54. Darío A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1821-1871* 1995. Margarita Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH and Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, 1987): 39. Paige, *Coffee and Power* 1998. Carlos M. Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes: Market, State, and the Revolutions in Central America*, trans. Ted Kuster (New York, *Monthly Review* Press, 1995).

<sup>99</sup> James A. Morris, "Government and Politics," in James D. Rudolph, ed., *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1984): 187-91.

<sup>100</sup> "Coloquio 'identidad nacional,'" *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 44, 2nd epoch (April 1986). "Tegucigalpa: Manifestación reveló pujanza de la clase trabajadora," *El Tiempo*, May 2, 1984.

APROH's most comprehensive proposed project was to transform each of Honduras's rural villages into a combined garrison, plantation, and Evangelical congregation under a local lieutenant-colonel who also served as minister.<sup>101</sup> These were similar to the converted Gen. Ríos Montt's plans for Evangelical-run resettlement hamlets in Guatemala—plans which drove the sharpest phase of Native genocide under Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt, killing over 100,000 in only seventeen months.<sup>102</sup> The Honduran Catholic Church criticized these radical plans to reconstruct society—so Alvarez Martínez concluded the Church was infiltrated by Marxists and in 1982 turned elsewhere for religious backing—to Sun Myung Moon's Seoul-based Unification Church, which controlled *The Washington Times* and was close to several U.S. think tanks—a far-right network that granted immediate access to the new White House.<sup>103</sup>

By January 1, 1983, the traditional *Te Deum* for government officials had been cancelled over the “Moonie” controversy, and Suazo Córdova and Alvarez Martínez were noticeably absent from the annual February 3 celebration of the Virgin of Suyapa. The final misstep was the arrival of South Korean intelligence agent Lt. Col. Bo Hi Pak carrying a US\$50,000 check for APROH on February 14, causing a terrific scandal and forcing Alvarez Martínez to return the money.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Partido Socialista Hondureña, *Análisis de la situación nacional: 1978-79*, Documentos Políticos 1 (1979?): 20. Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 134-39.

<sup>102</sup> Ríos Montt's murders accounted for half of those murdered 1966-94. Charles D. Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty: Agrarian Transformation and Political Conflict in Central America* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988): 142. Jesús F. García-Ruiz, “L'État, le religieux et le contrôle de la population indigène au Guatemala,” *Revue Française de Science Politique* 38:5 (October 1988): 765-68. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 57-73. Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984): 105-08, 142-44. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 220-22. Stanley, *The Protection Racket State* 1996: 30, 179-81, 194-95. Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984): 96.

<sup>103</sup> Salomón, “El anticomunismo y el cristianismo del General Alvarez Martínez,” *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 1:2 (September 1987): 4-11.

<sup>104</sup> Lt. Col. Pak would be beaten until he needed vascular surgery by a young Zimbabwean in 1987, who was briefly recognized as being possessed by the spirit of Moon's recently-deceased son. “Iglesia Unificacionista,” CEDOH,

In March 1983 Suazo Córdova boasted of having good relations with the Catholic Church, in contrast to the controversy that erupted during John Paul II's visit to Managua. Four days later the pope was in Tegucigalpa and damning the government's friendliness towards the Unificationists. In April the national Episcopal Conference forbade any Churchperson from associating with APROH and other Unificationist-associated groups, calling Unificationism a cult ready "to justify whatever crime committed against the external enemy, [which it] identified with 'the Beast,' the Catholic Church, or with Communism." The media eagerly regaled Honduran readers with the theological points of the "Moonies"—that Jesus Christ was a failure, "incapable of perfect love" because not actually born of a virgin, and that Rev. Moon was God's favorite "True Son" because the Nazarene had failed to produce children like those of Moon (who were free of Original Sin).<sup>105</sup> The Catholic Church condemned the officers and politicians who were sponsoring fundamentalists or Rev. Moon's "Korean religion" as hypocrites, because they were constantly decrying foreign "defamation campaigns" and accusing lay and secular critics of importing "foreign doctrines." The Catholic Church criticized the new religions as being imported to specifically facilitate internal repression and foreign domination<sup>106</sup>—but not because of their Korean or U.S. origin *per se*.

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*Boletín Informativo* 21 (February 1983). CODEH and the World Council of Churches, *Informe sobre los derechos humanos en Honduras en 1984* 1985.

<sup>105</sup> Colin Danby, "Moon Dupes Honduran Rightists," *Honduras Update* 1:8 (March 1983). René Cantarero, "Erigirse en un nuevo dios pretende Yong [sic] Myung Moon," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 12, 1983. "Una CAUSA maltrecha," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 24 (April 1983). "The Protestant Penetration of Honduras," *Honduras Update* 1:10 (June 1983). "APROH: Origen, desarrollo y perspectivas," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 9 (March 1984). "Los periodistas y la paz," *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 43, 2nd epoch (January 1986). Salomón, "El anticomunismo y el cristianismo del General Alvarez Martínez," *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 1:2 (September 1987): 4-11. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras: State for Sale* 1985: 101, 105.

<sup>106</sup> "La celebración de la Palabra de Dios y la proyección social de la Iglesia Católica hondureña (Programa radial *Contra Punto* de Radio América, 21 noviembre 1986)," *Informaciones* 5, 2nd epoch (October-December 1986).

## Alvarez Martínez: The Refugee Camps

The focus of the 1979-81 phase of cooperation between Central America's remaining military regimes was on stopping the Salvadoran revolution, rather than on fighting Nicaragua (Chapters 4 and 5). Thousands of Salvadoran peasants fled to Honduras, and their accounts of atrocities and massacres within El Salvador and on the border had to be prevented from circulating in the international and U.S. media. The persecution of the Salvadoran Church since 1977 had drawn serious attention from the international media that reached the U.S. Congress, imposing restraints on the White House's ability to send troops or fund government forces.

In 1982, the total number of Salvadoran refugees fleeing Army and paramilitary persecution reached 25,000 in Honduras: camps developed at Colomoncagua in Intibucá Department and La Virtud, Lempira.<sup>107</sup> Honduran and Salvadoran troops—the latter often reported allowed to disguise themselves in Honduran uniforms against the laws of war—freely swept the camps, which were under absolute FF.AA. control and legal jurisdiction.<sup>108</sup> FF.AA. intelligence and countersubversion units collaborated with their Salvadoran counterparts to abduct refugees suspected of involvement with the armed opposition or caught up secondhand, disappeared or summarily executed (Chapter 6, "Alvarez Martínez: Beyond Condor"). Soldiers took away dozens of refugees at a time, even pregnant women, their thumbs tied together, which Honduran *virtudeños* were forced to witness.<sup>109</sup> Delegates from the U.S. National Council of Churches were able to directly hear Salvadorans' searing accounts and bring them back to the U.S. press—at La Virtud, one refugee from Chalatenango Department had been crying for twenty-four hours without stop-

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<sup>107</sup> *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 49.

<sup>108</sup> Lapper and Painter, *Honduras* 1985: 130. Juan E. Méndez, *Human Rights in Honduras: Signs of "The Argentine Method,"* Americas Watch, 1982: 22.

<sup>109</sup> "Los refugiados en Honduras: 1980-1986," CEDOH, *Cronologías* 6 (October 1986). Amnesty International, *Honduras: Civilian Authority—Military Power: Human Rights Violations in the 1980s*: 14. Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 3-4. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 22-23, 26.

ping. Soldiers had accused her pregnant daughter of having slept with a guerrilla: she was eviscerated with a bayonet, the fetus stuck on the point and fed to some pigs on the road. The soldiers finally poured gasoline on her daughter's body and forced her to set it on fire.<sup>110</sup> The camps formed a geography of dangerous news for the war that the U.S. Congress was giving millions of dollars to continue.

The refugee camps were frequented by Churchpersons, international charities, and foreign journalists, who reported witness testimony but also made the refugee camps themselves into a story. The UN High Commission for Refugees had to abandon the La Virtud camp in summer 1981, allowing Salvadoran soldiers to kidnap and murder the refugees right in Honduras itself. On September 18, 1981, five U.S. Congressmen and several delegates from the National Council of Churches were trapped at La Virtud and Mapulaca by the invading Salvadoran forces, even reporting that they witnessed U.S. officers commanding Salvadorans and Hondurans.<sup>111</sup> On November 16, 1981, Bianca Jagger led a chase after armed Salvadorans who had abducted twenty refugees, securing their release despite the captors threatening the lives of her and the other UN-protected foreigners, endangering their own lives in exchange for the others'.<sup>112</sup> The regime's control over the news was tenuous—outsiders and outright celebrities could not be allowed to provide testimony and warrant stories that would reach the international news, and especially not be allowed to physically interpose themselves into the war.

Over 1981-82 10,000 Salvadoran refugees were moved inland from the border to the waterless locale of Mesa Grande, above San Marcos, Ocotepeque. During the forcible relocation of

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<sup>110</sup> Ramshaw and Steers, eds., *Intervention on Trial* 1987: 24.

<sup>111</sup> "Cinco congresistas de EU quedan atrapados: CEDEN confirma ocupación de zona fronteriza por ejército salvadoreño," *La Tribuna*, Nov. 18, 1981. Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 63.

<sup>112</sup> Herself born in Managua, Bianca Pérez-Mora had married the Rolling Stones' lead singer 1971-78. "Los refugiados en Honduras: 1980-1986," CEDOH, *Cronologías* 6 (October 1986). Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 3-4. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 22-23, 26.

3,000 from La Virtud in the winter of 1981-82, 34 refugees were killed, along with four CARITAS workers. Another 45 Hondurans and Salvadorans were dragged away by Battalion 3-16 and Salvadoran forces and never seen again. Critics said that the core purpose of the relocation was to discourage Salvadorans' escape back across the border and the creation of a *de facto* "free-fire zone" cleared of thousands of Honduran and Salvadoran civilians.<sup>113</sup> The stated rationale for the move was that the camps were recruiting-grounds for the FMLN. However, the FF.AA.'s own refugee coordinator, Col. Abraham García Turcios (ret.), announced on October 7, 1982, that there were no guerrillas in the camps, nor were they ever suspected, undercutting the entire stated motive for the move. This was reiterated in November 1983 by Capt. Carlos Alemán.<sup>114</sup>

With 25-30,000 Salvadoran refugees on the southern frontier and 15,000 Contra fighters in the east by 1982, the situation of the nation's physical frontiers were seen as critical.<sup>115</sup> There were certainly strategic considerations, but the removal and relocation of the bulk of Salvadorans inland and the militarization of Honduran *aldeas* was also done to control the campesinos' news of the embarrassing counterrevolutionary cooperation with the Salvadoran forces. As on the Nicaraguan frontier, only Honduran soldiers and U.S. military advisers would be left to witness whatever the Salvadoran Army did; more Salvadoran refugees were kept from entering Honduras altogether, especially as the Salvadoran military's emphasis shifted from paramilitary to conventional by the mid-1980s. The Contra-occupied and FF.AA.-patrolled Nicaraguan frontier was almost a no-go zone to clergy and members of Congress alike, with only one temporary priest for all Olancho Department.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> "García Turcios: Campamentos de refugiados son santuarios de los guerrilleros," *El Tiempo*, Feb. 3, 1984. Camarda, *Forced to Move* 1985: 4, 12, 60, 85. Lapper and James, *Honduras: State for Sale* 1985: 130.

<sup>114</sup> This may in fact have been a deception by the FF.AA. "Los refugiados en Honduras: 1980-1986," CEDOH, *Cronologías* 6 (October 1986). Steve Cagan and Beth Cagan, *This Promised Land, El Salvador: The Refugee Community of Colomoncagua and Their Return to Morazán* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

<sup>115</sup> Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 14.

<sup>116</sup> See Chapter 5, "Alvarez Martínez: The Pivot to Nicaragua," n15. Introduction, *Honduras Update* 1:4 (1982).

Under President Roberto Suazo Córdova, Salvadoran refugees were still protected only by Catholic Churchpersons' moral authority as their camps were turned into FF.AA. garrisons open to Salvadoran government forces. The camps were formally placed under the *Comité Evangélico de Desarrollo y Emergencia Nacional* (CEDEN), which was itself taken over in February 1982 by more right-wing Evangelicals, and then replaced by a second Evangelical group, World Vision.<sup>117</sup> World Vision was even accused of pointing out refugees who would be taken by the Salvadoran National Guard and later found dead. Catholic charities like CARITAS, and even the UN High Commission for Refugees, were kept out.<sup>118</sup>

On February 3, 1984, fourteen Mesa Grande refugees were found killed at San Isidro Canguacota, Lempira, across the departmental border, and the FF.AA. said they were FMLN guerrillas who had been accidentally killed by their fellows—15 kilometers inside Honduras.<sup>119</sup> Through 1984 the FF.AA. insisted that the roads between the camps were full of FMLN guerrillas—but any Salvadorans in olive drab were in fact the government forces, which the FF.AA.

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<sup>117</sup> “Cinco congresistas de EU quedan atrapados: CEDEN confirma ocupación de zona fronteriza por ejército salvadoreño,” *La Tribuna*, Nov. 18, 1981. “Según directora del CEDEN: Violan territorio hondureño,” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 18, 1981. Roberto Williams, “A boquita que quieres,” *La Prensa*, Feb. 5, 1982. “A la vez que rechazan injurias: Reestructuración nacional en programa de refugiados hará nueva directiva de CEDEN,” *La Prensa*, Feb. 8, 1982. “Religiosos ceibeños: Marginamiento en CEDEN es contra el izquierdismo,” *La Prensa*, Feb. 8, 1982. “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 32 (February 1988). “Salvadoran Refugees Under Fire,” *Honduras Update* 6:9-10 (June-July 1988). Crahan, “Religion, Revolution and Counterrevolution,” in Chalmers *et al.*, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* 1992: 173. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 114. Gilbert Márkus, “Theologies of Repression,” *New Blackfriars* 67:787 (January 1986): 37-45. Juan Ramón Martínez, “El drama de los refugiados,” *Panorama* 9:100 (August-September 1991): 5-9.

<sup>118</sup> “Organizaciones políticas y populares denuncian: La CIA hostiga a los refugiados salvadoreños mediante Visión Mundial en la zona fronteriza,” *Presencia Universitaria* 9:70 (October 1981). “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 18 (November 1982). “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 23 (March 1983). “La reubicación de los refugiados en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 10 (April 1984). “¿A quién interesa la reubicación de los refugiados?” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 34, 2nd epoch (July 1984). Martin Francis, “The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization,” *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985. “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 32 (February 1988). Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 128. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, *Private Organizations with U.S. Connections* 1988: 30, 66. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 114. Gilbert Márkus, “Theologies of Repression,” *New Blackfriars* 67:787 (January 1986): 37-45. Wheaton, ed., *Inside Honduras* 1982: 14-15.

<sup>119</sup> “Los refugiados en Honduras: 1980-1986,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 6 (October 1986).



was allowing in to continue threatening the refugees.<sup>120</sup> The August 29, 1985, massacre of unarmed refugees at Colomoncagua was reframed as an armed action against guerrillas by the U.S. State Department's human-rights report, and the Department blamed the FMLN as "a source of intimidation and pressure" in the camps, "including efforts to recruit, divert relief supplies, and impede voluntary repatriation."<sup>121</sup> The UN High Commission for Refugees insisted that there was zero evidence for any guerilla presence, so the Army had a false "deserter" "reveal" that every lane of the camps was infested by FMLN members.<sup>122</sup>

### Regalado: Counter-Jesuit Counterinsurgency

The 1986-90 Commander-in-Chief Gen. Humberto Regalado Hernández was more hard-line, pressing the Contra War forward and favoring anticlerical conflict. Battalion 3-16's activities restarted, though at a slower pace (Chapter 7, "Regalado: The Human-Rights Death Squads"), and joined domestic counterinsurgency against organized campesinos and their Jesuit advocates. Gen. Alvarez Martínez's 1984 ouster had allowed for a surge in Honduras's popular movements—campesinos, women, opponents of the counterrevolutionary wars, survivors of the disappeared.<sup>123</sup> After the 1980-81 persecutions and 1983-84 standoff, the Church was defining

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<sup>120</sup> "La reubicación de los refugiados en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 10 (April 1984).

<sup>121</sup> "Editorial: Derechos humanos en Honduras y el Departamento de Estado," *CODEH* 4:23 (February-March 1986). *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 28

<sup>122</sup> By contrast contemporary reports around 1983 say Colomoncagua was a site of FMLN recruitment and medical treatment against the Salvadoran state forces; families made risky missions of up to a dozen or two across the border, smuggling food and occasionally arms into Morazán Department. But reportedly at least a thousand recruits were massacred by the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación's Comandante Mayo Sibrián on the San Vicente volcano. "Afirma su representante ... : ACNUR no tiene evidencias de presencia de guerrilleros en campos de refugiados," *El Tiempo*, Sept. 9, 1985. "Denuncia desertor: Refugios son la retaguardia de la guerrilla," *La Tribuna*, Sept. 10, 1985. "Según relato de guerrillero desertor ... : Cuarteles del Farabundo Martí los campamentos de refugiados," *El Tiempo*, Sept. 10, 1985. Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Human Rights and Global Implications* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016): 210, 318, 329-30. Cagan and Cagan, *This Promised Land, El Salvador* 1991.

<sup>123</sup> "Afirma el Padre Santolaya: En su tiempo Jesucristo fue subversivo," *El Heraldo*, Oct. 19, 1987. "Estado frente a la Iglesia," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 79 (November 1987). "Cosas viejas y nuevas," CIIR, *Informaciones* 11, 2nd epoch (January-February 1988): 1-16. Interview with Ramón Ouelí, "Crisis política y proyecto histórico nacional," CEDOH, *Puntos de Vista* 2 (April 1990): 46-50.

itself more in terms of social issues, with clergy appearing more often to lend warrant and some protective cover to the statements and activism of journalists, union leaders, and human-rights leaders.<sup>124</sup>

FUSEP continued arresting Delegates of the Word for “totalitarian activities against the State” after Gen. Alvarez Martínez’s downfall.<sup>125</sup> Anti-Catholicism was now tightly wedded to destroying agrarian cooperatives and expropriating campesinos even in 1985, before Gen. Regalado’s installation.<sup>126</sup> Clergy and Delegates of the Word had been important in land-reform efforts since the 1960s, largely due to their personal contact with campesinos as parishioners, creation and training of lay organizations, and involvement in the Agrarian Reform movement itself. The persecution of Delegates was less lethal than that of 1980-81 and driven by domestic political and economic issues, rather than the Contra War—but the priests were still drawing attention to rural areas—the “internal frontier” of the Aguán Valley, colonized in the 1960s.<sup>127</sup>

Over 1985-86 the FF.AA. intensified police “watch committees” and Civil Defense Committees set up for spying and social control: both the Catholic Church and the Aguán Valley were especially targeted. Meetings of Delegates, catechists, and women teaching the Bible to

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<sup>124</sup> Though unlike in Chile or El Salvador, the episcopal hierarchy was quite secondary to the human-rights work in Honduras. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 9, 56.

<sup>125</sup> José Ignacio, “The Church in Honduras,” *Honduras Update*, 3:2-3 (November-December 1984).

<sup>126</sup> “El padre Juan Donald, un testigo incómodo,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 24, 1985.

<sup>127</sup> The settlement of forested or new open land for subsistence and export agriculture, or the distribution of abandoned former banana-company lands after Hurricane Fifi in 1974, do not count as “agrarian reform.” Instead this was the typical “domestic colonization,” a simple move of the landless to distant land, on the “pressure valve” model. Once they had converted the forest of northwestern and -eastern Honduras to new subsistence farms by swidden slash-and-burn, campesinos were pressured or simply paid to relocate further into the forest by the ranchers producing beef for the export market. A similar process of smallholders from dense areas moving into the forest, followed by ranchers backed by the Army, took place in 1970s Guatemala between Huehuetenango and Izabal Departments: most of the Guatemalan Genocide was perpetrated in this zone. (See Chapter 4, “The Triangle of Iron,” n18.) “25 años de reforma agraria,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 30 (September 1987). Eric Shultz, “Rising Tensions Between Church and State,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty* 1988: 113. Lapper and James, *Honduras: State for Sale* 1985: 68-70. Daniel Slutzky and Esther Alonso, *Empresas transnacionales y agricultura: El caso del enclave bananero en Honduras*, 3rd ed. (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1982): 29. Robert G. Williams, *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986): 143-47, 151.

children were attended by *orejas*. Campesinos were threatened until they stopped attending parish meetings, subjected to door-to-door “investigations” by police inspectors with drawn guns, questioning of parishioners about the content of homilies and church meetings, and general beatings to make them abandon their farms.<sup>128</sup>

At the end of 1985 “Padre Tito” Edardo Méndez of Taulabé organized campesino cooperatives: he was detained by COBRA special forces at Monte Verde near Choloma, Cortés Department, struck, bound, and blindfolded and taken to Mesa Verde near Siguatepeque. Bishop Geraldo Scarpone of Comayagua condemned the FF.AA. for the attack and especially for organizing a “servile attitude” among Hondurans through the Civil Defense Committees.<sup>129</sup> The FF.AA. was able to outrage clergy not only because of 19th-century Liberal traditions of disposing campesinos for export plantations: it had been given U.S. funding and strengthening as part of a larger covert counterrevolutionary war.<sup>130</sup>

U.S. Jesuit John Donald of Olanchito, Yoro, was detained on accusations of Communism and possible “crimes against the security of the state” for three days in August 1985: he was transported by unwitting U.S. soldiers, threatened with torture, subjected to simulated executions, asked about his guerilla *nom de guerre*, and accused of making bombs for the FMLN.<sup>131</sup> Father Donald’s arrest was the first of a wave of military persecution of clergy in the Aguán Val-

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<sup>128</sup> “La Iglesia en Honduras: Continúa persecución contra los cristianos de Colón,” from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 14, 1985, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 54 (October 1985). “La coyuntura hondureña,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 4, 2nd epoch (August-September 1986): 1-25. “La campaña antisubversiva: Caso La Estancia,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 16-26.

<sup>129</sup> “Testimonios,” *CODEH* 4:22 (December 1985-January 1986). Edward R.F. Sheehan, “The Country of Nada,” *The New York Review of Books*, Mar. 27, 1986, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1986/03/27/the-country-of-nada>.

<sup>130</sup> Siba N. Grovogui and Lori Leonard, “Uncivil Society: Interrogations at the Margins of Neo-Gramscian Theory,” in Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory* 2008: 173.

<sup>131</sup> “Iglesia perseguida,” *Boletín Mensual del Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras* 4:16 (January-April 1985). “Sacerdote denuncia que fue torturado,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 22, 1985. “Según su testimonio: ‘Encapucharon’ al Padre Donald,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Aug. 22, 1985. Martin Francis, “The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization,” *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985. Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “COHA’s 1985 Human Rights Report,” press release, Dec. 31, 1985.

ley coordinated with joint U.S.-Honduran exercises, Operation Chicatic, which covered the FF.AA.'s mountain counterinsurgency.<sup>132</sup> In 1990 Standard Fruit would also blame Father Donald for campesinos' refusal to sell their land in the Aguán: the Church formally responded that the campesinos were capable of perceiving their own interest and acting accordingly.<sup>133</sup>

Officers threatened the Jesuit-run parishes of Trujillo and Tocoa, and Radio Tocoa broadcast that the priests were agents of totalitarianism.<sup>134</sup> Landowner Lt. Col. Angel Ricardo Luque Portillo publicly threatened to kill Trujillo's main priest, Javier Crespo of the Jesuits, in August 1986, spurring Father Faustino Boado to explicitly deny that the FF.AA. had any theological capacity.<sup>135</sup> In early 1987 Fathers Patricio Wade and Roberto Voss were called Communists by landowners of Victoria, Yoro, for backing campesinos' farming on Agrarian Reform lands the state had given them full right to. The priests had especially objected to the local military curfew and free police access to the huts at all hours of the night, on pretext of searching for arms.<sup>136</sup>

In 1986 the military defended the repression in Yoro and Colón Departments: "as Christians, the Honduran military knows [how] to distinguish that which is the evangelizing mission of the Church and the activities of ideological indoctrination that some militants of the misnamed

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<sup>132</sup> "Coincide Iglesia y el CODEH en defender derechos humanos," *CODEH* 4:28 (September 1986).

<sup>133</sup> "Editorial: La credibilidad pública y el cuento del lobo," *CODEH* 66 (July 1990), from *El Tiempo*, Aug. 6, 1990. "Iglesia: Solidaridad con los campesinos," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 113 (September 1990). "Pastoral social de la Iglesia: Aclaración pública: De Socorros Jurídicos de la Diócesis de Trujillo," *CODEH* 69 (October 1990). "Pastoral de la Iglesia: Perjudicial para pobres es Ley Agrícola," *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 75, 2nd epoch (September 1992), from *La Tribuna*, Aug. 27, 1992. Valentín Méndez, "Otra cuenta del rosario," *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 75, 2nd epoch (September 1992), from *El Tiempo*, July 17, 1992.

<sup>134</sup> "Denuncia," *CODEH* 4:21 (October-November 1985). "CODEH acusa a USIS de manipular informes sobre derechos humanos," *El Tiempo*, Mar. 23, 1987.

<sup>135</sup> Faustino Boado, "Jesuitas rechazan acusaciones de FFAA," *El Tiempo*, Aug. 25, 1986. Jaime Brufau, "Posición de la Iglesia Católica," *CODEH* 4:28 (September 1986). "La coyuntura hondureña," CIIR, *Informaciones* 4, 2nd epoch (August-September 1986): 1-25. *Honduras Update* special 1 (May 1987): 31.

<sup>136</sup> "Acoso en Yoro," CIIR, *Informaciones* 8, 2nd epoch (May-July 1987): 22-23.

Popular Church practice”<sup>137</sup>—in other words, that it could do the hierarchy’s job of policing against Nicaragua-style populist and Marxist clergy better than the bishops. Officers said any clerical critics were “militants of the Popular Church” in the style of that of Nicaragua. Here the officers were declaring them schismatics from the Catholic Church. Archbishop Santos noted that what the FF.AA. was instead revealing that it was constitutionally *unable* to tell between Marxist indoctrination versus evangelism.<sup>138</sup>

Besides the attack on the Agrarian Reform in north Honduras, Church-state conflict increased again on the Salvadoran frontier. The Army command for Copán Department had restarted its death threats against “communist priests” in 1984.<sup>139</sup> In November 1987 the officers of the U.S.-trained counterinsurgent special-forces 10th Battalion at Marcala, La Paz Department, openly threatened to kill Celso Sánchez, the parish priest of Camasca, Intibucá, as an FMLN collaborator for his preaching. The Episcopal Conference explicitly condemned this as the military making pretensions on theology.<sup>140</sup> Father Sánchez and his deacon Pablo Díaz were arbitrarily detained by special forces in Tegucigalpa: one lieutenant told Father Sánchez, “Your situation is difficult, Father, are you not worried? Someone could kill you in whatever moment.” He told Díaz that “sons of whores like you and Father Celso must die because they are Communists; either you live or we live: this is a fight of systems.” The language was that of the National Security

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<sup>137</sup> “... Amenazan las Fuerzas Armadas: Detractores de militares serán llevados a tribunales comunes,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 23, 1986. Faustino Boado, “Jesuitas rechazan acusaciones de FF.AA.,” *El Tiempo*, Aug. 25, 1986. “Represión sin fundamentos: FF.AA. atacan al CODEH,” *CODEH* 4:27 (August 1986).

<sup>138</sup> Luis Alfonso Santos, “Violación a los derechos humanos advierte Monseñor Santos,” *CODEH* 4:28 (September 1986).

<sup>139</sup> Washington Office on Latin America, “Honduras: A Democracy in Demise,” *Update Latin America*, special, February 1984.

<sup>140</sup> Luis Alfonso Santos Villeda, “La Iglesia en Honduras: Comisión de Reconciliación recibe la primera denuncia,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 79 (November 1987). “La Iglesia intibucana se pronuncia contra la represión implantada por los cuerpos de seguridad,” *CODEH* 5:41 (October-December 1987). “Delegates of the Word: ‘We Do Not Feel Intimidated,’” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). Eric Shultz, “Rising Tensions Between Church and State,” *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988). Catoggio, “Religious Beliefs and Actors in the Legitimation of Military Dictatorships in the Southern Cone” 2011: 29.

Doctrine, dividing the world into two all-pervading systems, one Christian and democratic, the other atheistic and totalitarian, at war within every sector and institution of every country—the Catholic Church included.<sup>141</sup>

Foreign faithful could also embarrass the state at the international level. In February 1987 seven U.S. pacifists followed Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of School of the Americas Watch, to Tegucigalpa to condemn Central American policy in the name “of the God of the Bible.” One of them dressed as Uncle Sam walked a quadrupedal *Juan Pueblo*—the Central American common man, wearing a Honduran flag—on a string; the protesters put their own blood on the Embassy walls. Only one of them spoke Spanish and told the press that “We saw in Comayagua how the U.S. soldiers, as in [South] Vietnam, are destroying the culture of Honduras, [and] we have said that the soldiers are using fourteen-year-old girls as prostitutes.” They were expelled to Miami posthaste.<sup>142</sup> This incident did not make too many waves in the newspapers, but confirmed that Honduras was still an issue for international journalists, activists, and clergy.

FF.AA. threats pushed even the right-wing *El Heraldo* towards criticism of the military by 1987, much in the same way that the theological affair over the Moonies had done.<sup>143</sup> *El Tiempo*'s cartoonist “Doumont” (Douglas Montes) drew the Roman legionaries preparing Jesus's

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<sup>141</sup> Luis Alfonso Santos Villeda, “La Iglesia en Honduras: Comisión de Reconciliación recibe la primera denuncia,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 79 (November 1987).

<sup>142</sup> “Americans Stage Protest Outside Embassy in Honduras,” United Press International, Feb. 26, 1987. “Norteamericanos protestan frente a embajada de USA: Honduras es un preso de los Estados Unidos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 26, 1987. “Deportan a norteamericanos que protestaron frente a la Embajada de Estados Unidos,” *CODEH* 5:33 (February 1987). Ramón Custodio López, “Editorial: La alianza del odio,” *CODEH* 5:33 (February 1987). “¡¡Fuera contras!!” *18 de Marzo* 3:14 (April 1987). Reinelda Aguilar, “La prostitución infantil,” *Puntos de Vista* 7 (May 1993): 22-32.

<sup>143</sup> “La subversión y la Iglesia,” *El Heraldo*, Oct. 19, 1987.

cross saying that it was “For a subversive,” and Church publications often depicted the campesinos as crucified by state enforcers.<sup>144</sup>

### Regalado: Theological Usurpation

The tactic of usurpation differs from other modes of Church-state relationship: it does not have clergy endorse the state and its actions (cooperation, collaboration), nor simply try to replace one denomination, communion, or doctrine with another (substitution), nor simply attack the clergy (persecution). In Gramscian terms, the state was taking theology seriously, not just instrumentally<sup>145</sup>—to contest the Catholic Church on theological grounds, to hijack an existing hegemonic doctrine and work to turn it against the institutions and apparatuses that were its own vehicle.<sup>146</sup> Usurpation had colonels and generals appealing to Catholicism *per se* by questioning the theology, orthodoxy, and good standing of the Church’s own Jesuits, nuns, parish priests, and eventually bishops—with the pose of protecting Catholicism from even its own clergy. Persecution and usurpation, however, posed a high risk of stigma for the state, which often defaulted to force and assertion rather than methodical conquest of hegemony over a Catholic populace.

The Honduran military had decades of experience “parallelizing” organizations and movements, setting up a controlled copy of a human-rights group, union, or banana cooperative, granting them the simulacrum legal recognition and funding and persecuting the actual origi-

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<sup>144</sup> Douglas Montes, “Los tiempos no han cambiado ...” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 20, 1987. Elías Ruíz, *El Astillero: Masacre y justicia* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1992).

<sup>145</sup> *I.e.*, as simply justifying social hierarchy, buttressing nationalism against neighboring countries, or condemning opponents as godless. Organized religion preceded 16th-century mercantilism, and will exist long after any ideology or institution of the 20th century. It can pressure politics and economics—or be engineered to serve state and capital. Nor is it interpreted as a set number of clerics, defined by a doctrinal laundry list they give at least lip service to; “taking religion seriously” means its whole influence across society, even how it appears in the remotest areas little-visited by ordained clergy or the notions spread by missionaries.

<sup>146</sup> Religion also offers an extra-human source of justification, one that is not contingent (such as the “greater good,” a “necessary evil”) or pure expediency (“*raison d’état*,” “state of exception”). Whatever temptations transcendence may offer to the state, religion’s high levels of specificity and autonomy limited how far it could be instrumentalized by the state. Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 33-35.

nal.<sup>147</sup> This tactic gave the FF.AA. a tool, but also let them attack civil society on its own terms—and even to claim the original was the Trojan-horse pretender.

At first, Gen. Regalado attempted in 1986 to get the state back in the Church's good graces and make rapprochement with Archbishop Héctor Santos (at least for the newspaper photos). But Honduras entered a permanent crisis in 1987: the FF.AA. returned to its habit of making accusations, provoking a heavy and direct defense by the bishops and press. It was during his term that the FF.AA. took a new step: spokesmen had already said that the Copán Diocese infiltrated by Marxism and persecuted clergy 1980-81, and sought religious legitimation from the Unification Church 1982-84 (Chapter 9, "Alvarez Martínez, 'Moonie' Substitution"). Now they tried to take Catholicism out of the hands of its priests and bishops altogether, to come up with a "state theology."<sup>148</sup>

In May 1987 Bishop Jaime Brufau of San Pedro Sula (1966-93) expressed annoyance at FUSEP accusations of politicization and Liberation Theology in the Catholic Church, "as if this question of doctrine was a concern not of Church educators but of the military high command": the FF.AA. was the ones trying to subvert and divide the Church.<sup>149</sup> That autumn, regional police

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<sup>147</sup> Gregorio Canales, "Los probables efectos de radicalización de la derecha en el proceso de modernización y democratización nacional," *Panorama* 11:111 (January-February 1983): 11-12. "Honduras Under Military Trusteeship," *Latin Perspective* 1:7 (May 13, 1983). "La coyuntura hondureña: Julio-diciembre 1983," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 7 (January 1984). "APROH: Origen, desarrollo y perspectivas," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 9 (March 1984). "Denuncia el COFADEH ... : Manos del presidente Suazo en creación del otro CODEH," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 10, 1985. "Entrevista a Zenaida Velázquez ..." *Honduras: Información de un Pueblo en Lucha* 35, 2nd epoch (May-August 1985). CODEH, *Human Rights in Honduras: 1984* (WCC and WOLA, 1985): 5. CODEH, *The Situation of Human Rights in Honduras: 1988*: 23. CODEH and the World Council of Churches, *Informe sobre los derechos humanos en Honduras en 1984* 1985. Mario Posas, "El movimiento sindical hondureño durante la década del ochenta," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 44 (October 1989). Víctor Meza, *Honduras: La evolución de la crisis* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1982): 28. Mario Posas, *El movimiento campesino hondureño: Una perspectiva general* (Tegucigalpa: Guaymurás, 1981): 46. Rachel Sieder, *Elecciones y democratización en Honduras desde 1980* (Tegucigalpa, Editorial Universitaria, 1998): 47. Eugenio Sosa, "El movimiento contra el golpe de Estado en Honduras," 65-90, in Carlos Figueroa Ibarra and Blanca Laura Cordero Díaz, eds., *¿Posneoliberalismo en América Latina? Los límites de la hegemonía neoliberal en la región* (Puebla, Mex.: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades "Alfonso Vélaz Pliego," 2011): 71.

<sup>148</sup> I wish to thank G. Kurt Piehler of Florida State University for this insight.

<sup>149</sup> *Honduras Update* Special 1 (May 1987): 31, translation of *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987). "Maniobras militares," CIIR, *Informaciones* 7, 2nd epoch (March-April 1987): 1-27.



chief Lt. César López Tinoco announced that FUSEP has made “lists of priests who clearly involve themselves in political, economic and social activities,” adding that there were certain Jesuits who undermined democracy by backing the campesinos in disputes over the land already handed over to them for decades by the government itself. Most of the “evidence” in this case turned out to be quotes from St. Ambrose of Milan—teachings Lt. López Tinoco had said would “undermine the *campesino* idiosyncrasy” of Honduras. FUSEP commandant Lt. Col. Juan Aguilar Claros denied his own subordinate, saying police agents saw some Church literature at La Estancia church, Morazán, Yoro Department, and assumed the Jesuits were involved with guerrillas<sup>150</sup>—another embarrassing instance of illiteracy among those policing religious faith. In July 1987 Jesuit seminarian Allen Palacio was accused of Marxism by Army intelligence, G-2, because he was carrying the book *Jesuitas, Iglesia y marxismo*—which his Superior Faustino Boado noted was a “rabidly anti-Marxist” and -Jesuitical work. Father Boado commented that apparently the G-2 agents just saw “the magical and damned word ‘Marxism’ ” and the National Security Doctrine that any religious figure concerned with the poor was a Communist.<sup>151</sup>

In September 1988 police inspectors arrested the U.S. Maryknoller Alberto Reymann for printing calendars they deemed subversive. These had had the names of disappeared and quotes on social justice and human dignity from the conservative 1979 Puebla Conference of Bishops.<sup>152</sup> The National Party’s upcoming Presidential candidate—and former APROH secretary—Rafael Callejas said “it is inconceivable to accept that there can exist priests who are promoting policies contrary to the basic sentiment which is in God” and that one “cannot accept that a

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<sup>150</sup> “La campaña antisubversiva: Caso La Estancia,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 16-26. “Comunicado de la Compañía de Jesús en Honduras,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 26-27. “La lógica militar es realmente ilógica,” *CODEH* 5:41 (October-December 1987).

<sup>151</sup> “La Iglesia en el acontecer nacional,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 8, 2nd epoch (May-July 1987): 23-29. Faustino Boado, “Editorial: Un ‘subversivo’ ejemplar,” *CODEH* 5:38 (July 1987).

<sup>152</sup> “Derechos Humanos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 89 (September 1988). “Contra la libertad religiosa y de culto: Sacerdote estadounidense fue expulsado del país,” *CODEH* 6:47 (August-October 1988).

member of the Catholic Church exists who promotes actions to constitute an atheist society, as Marxism promotes.” The technocrat concluded that “the priests are dedicated to Marxist actions and to disorienting the youth.”<sup>153</sup>

Gen. Regalado himself led many accusations against the Catholic Church—not to critique it on theological grounds, but to accuse it outright of leading a plot to topple the state. Accusations against the Church were being made not just by zone commanders, but received the full force of the Commander-in-Chief. Military spokesmen made constant declarations that Honduras was full of terrorist, subversives, and imminent plots, always saying they were headed by the leading opposition figures in the popular movement, Church, and Congress of Honduras. In December 1987, Gen. Regalado and President Azcona accused several left-of-center party chiefs, Communist Party exiles, and human-rights leaders of planning a wave of antidemocratic terrorism for the upcoming April. Named as one of the heads of the supposed plot was Jesuit lecturer José María Ferrero: FF.AA. spokesman Col. Manuel Enrique Suárez Benavides denied that Ferrero was even a priest.<sup>154</sup>

Even as the Contra War in Honduras and Nicaragua wound down after the Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense’s 1988 defeat by the Ejército Popular Sandinista, counterinsurgent clichés were continued by Commanders-in-Chief. Archbishop Santos was still called an “agent paid by *sandinismo*” for opposing the Contras’ presence.<sup>155</sup> Bishop Muldoon denied the existence of the Olancho guerrilla rebellion that Commander-in-Chief Gen. René Cantarero used in 1990 to claim that the country was in danger of collapse—and required a generously-funded mil-

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<sup>153</sup> Reymann’s Santa Bárbara parish officially said that Callejas “would like to have an ignorant people” and represented a totalitarian fundamentalist incursion by the Korean Unificationists. “Callejas acusó de subversivos a religiosos,” *CODEH* 6:47 (August-October 1988).

<sup>154</sup> “¿Un plan fascista para Honduras?” Partido Comunista de Honduras, *Voz Popular* 6:120 (February 1988). “¿Un plan terrorista en Honduras?” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 82 (February 1988). Ramón Custodio López, “Editorial: Las conspiraciones absurdas,” *CODEH* 6:43 (February-March 1988). “Celebradores de la Palabra de Dios rechazan acusaciones de las Fuerzas Armadas de Honduras,” *CODEH* 6:43 (February-March 1988).

<sup>155</sup> “Editorial: La contra: Un año más,” *Soberanía* 4 (March 1989).

itarization was needed.<sup>156</sup> In 1991 the High Command and *La Tribuna* accused the Diocese of Copán and the bishops of plotting a coup, with the progressive Christian Democratic Party to seize the capital's buildings and depose President Callejas.<sup>157</sup> During the uproar over the 1992 murder of five campesinos by uniformed men in El Astillero, Atlántida, the FF.AA. even reviewed the Honduran Church's *Cancionero Nacional*, determining at least two hymns to be theologically subversive of good order and unsuccessfully pressuring the bishops to delete them.<sup>158</sup>

In August 1989 FF.AA. spokesman Col. Suárez Benavides said that all Delegates of the Word and some priests in Honduras were dedicated to “the transmission of not necessarily Catholic and Christian concepts” and “ideas or mechanisms of politics” contrary to Honduras's Western and Christian system.” Therefore the military and landowners justified themselves in importing a new faith to replace the one that was subversive in the judgment of all *good* Hondurans. He particularly condemned Father Milla (Chapters 4 and 10), who had been allowed to return from Mexico in 1985—that he “does not give service as Christ commands,” and served the left wing instead. The priest had kept denouncing Salvadoran military incursions onto Honduran soil, and the FF.AA. once more had to reveal its own refusal to guard territorial integrity or protect its own citizens against the foe of 1969—while it continued to use Salvadorphobia as a standard of judgment (Chapter 4, “The Sumpul Massacre: The Honduran Press”).<sup>159</sup>

As with persecution, attempts at usurpation typically failed, trapping the state in a cycle of discredit and attracting attention and increasing opposition. However, religion was the only field where the FF.AA. was able to achieve any success in the 1980s. The military and the export

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<sup>156</sup> “En Olancho no hay subversión,” *CODEH* 67 (August 1990).

<sup>157</sup> Juan Ramón Martínez, “El drama de los refugiados,” *Panorama* 9:100 (August-September 1991): 5-9.

<sup>158</sup> Elías Ruíz, *El Astillero: Masacre y justicia* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1992): 19.

<sup>159</sup> “Padre Milla ayudaría a grupos de izquierda: Suárez Benavides,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 15, 1989. “El padre Fausto Milla, un eterno perseguido,” from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 22, 1989, CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 100 (August 1989). “La persecución de la Iglesia en el occidente de Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 112 (August 1990).

sectors it had allied with could not convincingly depict the Catholic Church as Red,<sup>160</sup> or discipline it into a tractable supporter of the state. But the military-political establishment *was* successfully able to promote a parallel theology, to accomplish the conversions of several land-reform communities to fundamentalist doctrine that condemned Catholicism, cooperative labor, involvement with one's own neighbors, and the Agrarian Reform itself.

### Regalado: Evangelical Substitution

*Replacement* and *persecution* are the modes of Church-state relation closest to the theories of discredit outlined by Cohen (Introduction, "An Anatomy of Denial"), as opposed to the more complicated ways of undermining the warrant that the Catholic Church could provide. Gen. Alvarez Martínez had supported the Unification Church's right-wing "cult" for patronage and legitimation for the state and APROH that the Catholic Church was no longer willing to provide. The motives under Gen. Regalado were more material than ideological—the FF.AA.'s involvement in the fight against El Salvador and Nicaragua had been condemned or exposed by priests or by clerical radio.<sup>161</sup> Regalado also oversaw an booming agribusiness boom (which several officers profited from), and the outright theft of Agrarian Reform land in Yoro and Colón Departments. In other words, the theological aspects of religious reaction were integral to the spread of a political ideology that was able to damage village solidarity, rather than merely "disguise" or "window dressing" for economic interest.

Conversion to Evangelicalism allowed a simultaneous attack against 1. the Catholic Church's grassroots structure and 2. campesino cooperatives, especially in Honduras's Lower

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<sup>160</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 28, 30.

<sup>161</sup> It was the Jesuits' Radio América that had revealed the five "narco-colonels" in 1988. " 'The Military Can Throw Them Out at Any Time': Juan Arancibia Calls for U.S. Support of Arias Accord," *Washington Report on the Hemisphere* 8:18 (June 8, 1988).

Aguán Valley.<sup>162</sup> While the Catholic clergy were increasing their public presence against state projects and warranting stories that threatened international stigma, officers and oligarchs found the new wave of believers tractable, a thoroughgoing alternative to all mainstream Catholic or Protestant religiosity. It severed the campesinato's tie to Agrarian Reform land—and of their own will, rather than through external force, through death squads, uniformed soldiers, paid gangsters.

Communal forms of landholding were a target of FF.AA.-promoted Evangelicalization. Since 1962, and largely between 1972 and 1978, the Instituto Nacional Agrario distributed 2,070 sq. km. (799 sq. mi., representing 8% of Honduran farmland) to 47,000 families, a sustained reform unmatched by any other country on the continent until the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution. The Agrarian Reform was rolled back slowly under Gen. Paz García, faster under Presidents Suazo Córdova and Azcona, and the land divided and made legally saleable under Callejas. The rollback was particularly aimed at the Lower Aguán valley: used for agrarian colonization since the 1960s, the cooperatives and small farms of the Aguán were being taken over by oil-palm plantations since 1986, with the Civil Defense Committees coordinating enforcers and “human-hunters” to terrorize the campesinos holding land title.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Valentín Méndez, “Otra cuenta del rosario,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 75, 2nd epoch (September 1992), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1992.

<sup>163</sup> This matches Carlos Salinas de Gortari's dissolution of *ejido* common land in Mexico with the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement. Fidel Martínez, “Aguán, palma africana y soberanía,” *Patria* 4:171 (May 24, 1980). “La persecución religiosa y la seguridad nacional,” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 24, 1985. “Denuncia Iglesia Católica del Bajo Aguán: Pobreza, miedo y represión sigue habiendo en ‘Isletas,’” *El Tiempo*, Nov. 13, 1985. Parish of Bajo Aguán, “Situación del Bajo Aguán: Caso Isletas,” *CODEH* 4:21 (October-November 1985). “Denuncia,” *CODEH* 4:21 (October-November 1985). “Vuelve la represión al valle del Aguán,” *El Tiempo*, Mar. 17, 1986. “El Bajo Aguán: Conflicto y elecciones,” *CIIR, Informaciones* 3, 2nd epoch (June-July 1986): 21-26. “Nelly Ramírez: Comunistas son los que dicen que en el Aguán hay conflicto,” *El Tiempo*, Sept. 15, 1986. “La coyuntura hondureña,” *CIIR, Informaciones* 4, 2nd epoch (August-September 1986): 1-25. *Situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras: Informe 1986* (1987): 4, comunicué 20-86 in appendix. CEDOH, *Balance Semestral de la Situación de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras* (July-December 1985). Alain de Janvry, *The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981): 120, 214-22. Phillips, *Honduras in Dangerous Times* 2015: 42-46. Posas, *El movimiento campesino hondureño* 1981: 36-37.

Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez was openly condemned as messianic by academics in Honduras, likened to Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt and Adm. Emilio Eduardo Massera. These officers saw themselves as the political and religious savior of the Western Hemisphere from a Satanic enemy—and had only been able to seize state power because of the Cold-War context in Latin America, rather than any narrative in culture or rallying any constituency in their countries. They all saw opponents of the state as controlled by the Antichrist: to Alvarez Martínez, Honduras was a battleground, a province of the Kingdom of Satan.<sup>164</sup>

While the older generation of Central America's officers may have regarded the *campesinato* as inert without outside incitement by foreign Communists and Jesuits, Gen. Alvarez Martínez paid specific attention to the relationship between the military and the countryside.<sup>165</sup> APROH intended to convert the countryside into a series of extensive export farms, with military officers as the landlords: initially, this project was not theological, as Gen. Ríos Montt's 1982-83 attempt to remake Guatemala was. But soon the colonel-*hacendados* were also envisioned as ministers for their garrison-plantations.

The criticism of Evangelicalism in 1980s Honduras as a foreign-based theological tool to re-marginalize the peasantry after decades of Church and state outreach and involvement are accurate. Army-backed pastors led attacks on cooperatives in the Agrarian Reform Zone (such as Sonaguera in Tocoa and Savá in Trujillo): they even raided their neighbors' community meetings

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<sup>164</sup> Like Gen. Ríos Montt also saw no contradiction between 1. this supernatural, apocalyptic worldview and 2. his material mission to modernize and professionalize the FF.AA., to systematically cement its control over rural areas. "La penetración protestante en Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 23 (March 1983). Centro de Documentación de Honduras, ed. José María Tojeira, *Honduras: Historias no contadas* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1985): 185-87. Salomón, "El anticomunismo y el cristianismo del General Alvarez Martínez," *Boletín Bimestral de Análisis de Coyuntura* 1:2 (September 1987): 4-11. Eric Shultz, "Rising Tensions Between Church and State," *Honduras Update* 6:4 (January 1988).

<sup>165</sup> Experienced Salvadoran and Guatemalan counterinsurgency officers such as Brig. Gen. Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova or Lt. Col. Domingo Monterrosa could afford few such delusions. (See above, "Introduction," n25.) Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 115.

discussing local issues and Bible-study groups. Right-wing Evangelicals explicitly identified both Communism and the Pope with the Beast of the Apocalypse. The Evangelicals of 1970s and 80s Latin America held that Catholic doctrine and practice were Babylonian, Egyptian, and Germanic pagan rituals, that mainline Church institutions had deliberately concealed the true teachings and practice of Christ and the Apostles for thirteen centuries, that now the Church of Rome had been seized by the Reds, and that both true Christianity and antitheist Communism were making a last stand in Central America.<sup>166</sup>

The Aguán Valley was especially targeted by the Evangelical missions. The new religious movements were entirely funded and directed from the United States, and brought in by the 15th Battalion of the Honduran Army. These missionaries equated land and labor cooperatives with Communism and isolated converted campesino families away from shared labor and local community meetings. Even one's own relatives were said to be rejected by Jesus if they did not convert to Evangelicalism, and converts stopped meeting with neighbors and ex-friends out-

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<sup>166</sup> Most literature on Evangelicalism in Latin America details its recent U.S. origins, its service to reactionary ideologies and extractivist economics, to cultural imperialism, the spread of disease, and explicit genocide. Virginia Garrard-Burnett's monumental *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010 (pp. 141-42) emphasizes that Guatemalan Evangelicals themselves were hardly immune from being shot or burned alive by the fundamentalist President—four of the six men he had killed to deliberately insult Pope John Paul II on his pastoral visit in 1983 were Protestants. Klaiber's *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* (1998) and Levine's *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* (2012) point out the dictators' tensions with same Pentecostals they were trying to use against the independent power of the Catholic Church to legitimate and warrant human-rights witnesses and socio-economic resistance. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996 (pp. 115-21) cautions against interpreting Latin America as somehow being naturally "Catholic." He also disagrees that a denomination's politics derive directly from its theology. The U.S. Southern Baptists' swing to the right at the end of the 1970s underscore how "fundamentalism" is 1. relatively recent and 2. put theology at the service of politics, and not vice versa (see Chapter 2, "The Neoconservatives," n18). Kenneth Aman, "Fighting for God: The Military and Religion in Chile," *CrossCurrents* 36:4 (Winter 1986/7): 459-66. Catoggio, "Religious Beliefs and Actors in the Legitimation of Military Dictatorships in the Southern Cone" 2011. Gerald Colby, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (Newburyport, Mass.: Open Road Integrated Media, 1996). Crahan, "Religion, Revolution and Counterrevolution," in Chalmers *et al.*, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* 1992. Paul Freston, "Evangelicals and Politics in Latin America," *Transformation* 19:4 (October 2002): 274. Rebecca Mason, "Two Kinds of Unknowing," *Hypatia* 26:2 (Spring 2011): 294. Pfadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 63, 66, 75, 88. Susan D. Rose and Steve Brouwer, "The Export of Fundamentalist Americanism: U.S. Evangelical Education in Guatemala," *Latin American Perspectives* 17:4 (Autumn 1990): 42-56. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000. David Smilde, "Review: Evangelicals and Politics in Latin America: Moving Beyond Monolithic Portraits," *History of Religions* 42:3 (February 2003): 243-48.

side the group. They called Delegates of the Word representatives of priestcraft, the priests themselves Communists or guerrillas, and the Pope the Beast of Revelation. CEDOH characterized them as teaching that the world is already condemned by God and its inhabitants preterite. Only by being individually “born again” could one guarantee material prosperity. In terms of doctrine, Evangelicalism framed poverty and worldly problems as caused by lack of self-application and ensnarement by the Devil, the true “lord of the world,” and not injustice from the higher social classes. Any social problem was interpreted as a sign only of how near the end of the world was.<sup>167</sup>

In 1983 CEDOH described the new Evangelicalism as an anti-political “repression theology,” seeking only spiritual and individual solutions to mass misery. Academics, human-rights groups, and Catholic clergy condemned the fundamentalists as “multinationals of faith” because they were politically reactionary and openly backed by the FF.AA. and the oligarchy—but not because they were Protestant or because they were headquartered in the United States.<sup>168</sup> The new Evangelical denominations demonized dissenters, had ties to intelligence agencies, and promoted bloodthirsty conspiracy theories calling for material as well as spiritual warfare against all the human minions of Satan.<sup>169</sup> CEDOH condemned the new Evangelicals as part of a general

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<sup>167</sup> This new variety of Christianity refused all institutions—not just the bishops, priests, and monastics of Catholicism *per se*, but seminaries, consecration, and learned Christianity itself—*i.e.*, “organized religion.” “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 18 (November 1982). “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 23 (March 1983). “Por acusaciones de comunistas y subversivos: Parroquia de El Negrito dispuesta a defender su doctrina ante Corte Civil,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987), from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 31, 1987. “No sigan hostigando a los sacerdotes: Monseñor Santos,” *El Tiempo*, Dec. 16, 1987. Jesús F. García-Ruiz, “L’État, le religieux et le contrôle de la population indigène au Guatemala,” *Revue Française de Science Politique* 38:5 (October 1988).

<sup>168</sup> Frank Viviano, “Political Theology: The War Over Refugees,” *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Aug. 29, 1981. “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 23 (March 1983). Roger Isaula, “Honduras: Ocupación e identidad nacional,” *Cuadernos de Realidad Nacional* 4 (May 1988): 5-21.

<sup>169</sup> “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 32 (February 1988). Ramón Oquellí, “Editorial: Voces de protesta y miedo ambiental,” *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 60, 2nd epoch (July 1989). “El crecimiento de la derecha religiosa en Centroamérica,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 35 (August 1988). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 99. Janet N. Gold, *Culture and Customs of Honduras* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2009): 41.



plan of ideological penetration into the countryside—explicitly strengthening the military, weakening the only rural institution capable of rivaling the state on its own, and reversing the Agrarian Reform of the 1960s and 70s.<sup>170</sup> They tied it to APROH’s project of establishing an integrated unit of profit, repression, and preaching in the style of Gen. Ríos Montt. Local officer-*hacendados* were extremely anticlerical and favored the fundamentalists.<sup>171</sup>

The “usual story” for Evangelicalism’s history explains the large-scale and surprising Evangelical conversion in Latin America by 1. the amenability of the “prosperity gospel” to existing conservative, Cold-War, right-wing, and anticlerical traditions, 2. that it provided material benefits to convert families, especially through network-building, and 3. that it filled a functionalist void that the Catholic Church did not: that it simply provided more ministers and was able to establish a community that specifically addressed alcoholism and domestic abuse, that provided the poorest with mutual aid and entrepreneurial opportunities.<sup>172</sup>

While it was explicitly used to demobilize the working class and demonize the victims of death squads, Evangelicalism also provided a real challenge to Catholicism in Central America, beyond its “endorsement” by the military. Fundamentalist Evangelicalism is conventionally seen as thoroughly ideological, an export explicitly targeted and reshaped to justify and excuse any excess by the U.S. state or local forces and landowners. The conversion of cooperative-farm

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<sup>170</sup> “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 18 (November 1982). “América Latina: Objetivo de los evangélicos,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 43 (August 1989). José María Ferrero, “La Iglesia Católica ante el gobierno del ‘cambio’: (Reflexiones sobre Iglesia y Estado),” CEDOH, *Puntos de Vista* 3 (March 1991): 13-23.

<sup>171</sup> “CODEH acusa a USIS de manipular informes sobre derechos humanos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 23, 1987.

<sup>172</sup> Only “Charismatic Catholicism” provided an analogous movement, and analysts often characterize it as simply imitating Pentecostal-style revivalism or as outright schismatic from the Catholic prelates or Jesuits—as a conservative answer to the “Popular Church” of the 1970s and 80s. Adrienne Pine’s *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) makes careful note of the conservatism of Honduran culture before the 1980s Evangelicals, and also their regularization by the 90s—and the lack of further converts after 1995. She notes that Evangelicalism were able to make a positive appeal, by attacking alienation (but also accommodating labor discipline, profit, and austerity).

members—in one of Latin America’s most intensive and extensive land-reform efforts, well-visited by progressive Jesuits—to a reactionary religiosity was the only time Cold-War forces were able to *persuade* the popular classes of Central America or Brazil, rather than simply fixing bayonets.<sup>173</sup> Support by local lieutenant colonels and threats by FUSEP were not enough to convert campesinos: analysts found that the Evangelical ministers’ clientele tended to be individual campesino households who felt left out of the Agrarian Reform.<sup>174</sup>

Honduran Evangelicalism was certainly used to mystify economic interactions and “sacralize” the state, to attack Catholic clergy dedicated to defending the human and economic rights of the *campesinato*.<sup>175</sup> But historians of Evangelicalism also provide some useful cautions: working-class converts wanting to escape poverty were not puppets of the CIA or of any New-Right think tank. The convergence of Honduran and U.S. theological engineering might appear at first glance to be simply a cynical campaign hatched in the United States that succeeded—by the “carrot” of entrepreneurial capital and the “stick” of sponsorship by genocidal military regimes—in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. 21st-century observers of Honduran Evangelicalism such as Adrienne Pine note that Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism had to become “mainstream” in order to spread significantly while spreading ideologies of capitalism’s compatibility with Christianity—to shed their image as an external tool of U.S. and FF.AA. interests, to stop the old practice of deliberate self-isolation and not speaking to outsiders. Evangelicalism

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<sup>173</sup> Analyses of Evangelicalism in El Salvador mostly concentrated on its commercial vantage, and/or the operations of the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista party. Guatemalans and Hondurans converted to deal with suffering and its causes, rather than to retreat from them. Pentecostalism especially stressed direct experience of divine power—cure of illness, family happiness, accumulation of material goods. The Evangelicals’ attack against Catholicism emphasized that it was man-made and alienating: without these theological factors, the Honduran and Guatemalan militaries *could* not have used it to induce campesinos to oppose the Agrarian Reform or the Catholic Church’s ability to defend community farming from land theft.

<sup>174</sup> Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy* 1987: 93.

<sup>175</sup> Daniel H. Levine, review of Carlos Alberto Torres and Richard A. Young, *The Church, Society, and Hegemony: A Critical Sociology of Religion in Latin America*, *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75:1 (February 1995): 83.

provided new tools to deal with suffering and its causes, rather than just a retreat from them; Pentecostalism stressed direct experience of divine power—that individual change could bring about cure of illness, family happiness, accumulation of material goods. Nor is there any neat split or alignment between Evangelicals and repression on the one hand, and Catholicism and organizing for land reform and human rights on the other.<sup>176</sup>

Catholicism was highly “hegemonic” in Latin America until 1980—its theology, symbolism, or ritual were widely used among officers, officials, and urban and rural citizens. Alternative interpretations of social reality often defined themselves in Catholic terms—export Liberalism as anticlerical,<sup>177</sup> several “guerrilla priests,” even state murders of Argentinean monks and bishops whitewashed with talk of a “Christendom” they supposedly betrayed.<sup>178</sup> Discrediting—not just persecuting—the Honduran Catholic Church would require hegemony, not just force. The militarized state repeatedly got itself into cycles of derision and self-discredit—but in this one field it managed to not only find success, but to get the very recipients of Agrarian Reform to explicitly repudiate everything that the campesinato had won. Without resorting to naked ac-

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<sup>176</sup> Manuela Cantón Delgado warns against even terminology like “foreign-controlled” or “penetration”—all no less applicable to Catholicism since the 16th century. “The Church” is a phrase that over-neatly assumes not just some Catholic hegemony, but unchallenged monopoly. Folk Catholicism can just as easily be described as alienating and Providentialist, holding that everything that happened was God’s plan and any suffering would be compensated in the next life if one was patient enough. Manuela Cantón Delgado, *Bautizados en fuego: Protestantes, discursos de conversión y política en Guatemala (1989-1993)* (La Antigua, Guatemala: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica/South Woodstock, Vt.: Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1998). Pfoadenhauer, *The New Sociology of Knowledge* 2013: 66-88. Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., “Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 13, 18. Pablo Richard, “Religiosidad popular en Centroamérica,” in Diego Irrázaval and Pablo Richard, *Religión y política en América Central: Hacia una nueva interpretación de la religiosidad popular* (San José, Costa Rica: Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1981).

<sup>177</sup> The General-Presidents of the 1930s—Jorge Ubico of Guatemala, Maximiliano Hernández Martínez of El Salvador, and the Somoza dynasty of Nicaragua—solved any contradictions within export Liberalism by new levels of force.

<sup>178</sup> Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* 2013: 15. Lundberg, “Between Ideology and Utopia,” in Kettler and Meja, eds., *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* 2017: 14.

tion to disarticulate society, the state had won a war of *position* to divide subordinated classes against themselves.<sup>179</sup>

Such religious “engineering” is not simply a matter of state or private interest using pressure, cash, and opportunism as leverage to pressure people into converting. By its nature, any religious doctrine has characteristics, histories, extensive discourses that are independent from any state or class that might try to instrumentalize it for worldly purpose. Evangelicalism had the advantage of giving entirely new meanings, interpretations, frames to the same Scripture as Catholicism—able to change the meaning of the shared texts and symbols that Delegates of the Word and catechists had spread to hamlets that had not seen a priest give Mass in years.<sup>180</sup> Conversion outlasted the Cold War that brought it to Central America: Honduras has had the same share of Evangelicals since 1990 as Guatemala—around 45 percent. Catholicism outright declined numerically in Central America and Brazil in the 1990s and 2000s: as of 2023, Honduras is the least-Catholic country in Latin America.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Hegemony* again remains the terms of conflict or “common ground”: Klaiber holds that popular, clerical, and hierarchical Catholicism was “the only national institution which the great majority” could accept despite their divisions—from generals seeking an Evangelical substitute to radicals with a history of anticlericalism extending into the colonial era. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 57. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 7. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 126.

<sup>180</sup> Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 257. Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino* 2012: 139, 141. A. Javier Treviño, “Introduction: Erving Goffman and the Interaction Order,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 40, 44.

<sup>181</sup> In 1980 Protestantism was concentrated in Guatemala and the non-*ladino* Caribbean—Evangelicalism across Guatemala (20-30% in every department but Guatemala City, and over 30% in Petén and Zacapa), Reformed Moravianism in Mosquitia (30%+ in Gracias a Dios Department, Hond., and Zelaya Department, Nic.), 20-30% in Limón Province, C.R., and 30%+ in Bocas del Toro and Darién, Panama. Jean-Pierre Bastián, “Protestantismo popular y política en Guatemala y Nicaragua,” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 48:3 (July-September 1986): 197. Crahan, “Religion, Revolution and Counterrevolution,” in Chalmers *et al.*, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* 1992: 163-82. Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010: 118, 126. Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 4, 174. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 2. Mainwaring and Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* 1989. Serbin, *Secret Dialogues* 2000: 38, 86, 231.

## Conclusion

While not dedicated exclusively to preventing and preempting Church warranting of witnesses and news stories, each of the identified “modes”—persecution, collaboration, cooperation, usurpation, substitution—had a distinct role to play in the decade-long effort to block news of the Honduran involvement in the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan counterrevolutions. Honduran generals and colonels turned to a more direct intervention in religious theology and practice after 1986. Direct accusations against the bishops only undermined the Army instead of the Church: unable to even buy time, the FF.AA.’s own reputation was in a terminal spiral—with even its existence questioned after 1986.

Church-state tension in Latin America was older than the Cold War, with long roots in 1. the ideologies of anticlerical Liberalism and then neoconservatism, and 2. economic interest—the export sector incompatible with campesino land title. Honduras’s rickety new civilian state set up in 1982—its Congress, its judiciary, its bureaucrats—was hardly enough to grapple with a religious institution that was three centuries older than the republic itself. Gramscian analysis holds that armed forces always have more strength and independent than the upper classes who use them to ensure a proletarianized “labor supply.”<sup>182</sup>

Father Fausto Milla put his reputation as a priest behind Hondurans and Salvadorans’ reports of massacres on the border 1980 and 1981, and was able to invoke the warranting power of the local diocese and then the nationwide Episcopal Conference—in no small part because the

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<sup>182</sup> Returning to William Stanley’s central concept of the “protection racket state,” building on the earlier analytic idea of the Central American “praetorian state.” Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective with Examples from Recent U.S. Policy Toward the Third World,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 129. Kirk S. Bowman, *Militarization, Democracy, and Development: The Perils of Praetorianism in Latin America* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 52. Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* 1989: 41, also 13-34. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 122, 154-56. David Pion-Berlin, “Introduction,” in Pion-Berlin, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 4-6.

Catholic Church was independent of the state. The new civil-military regime under Gen. Alvarez Martínez abducted and murdered over a hundred, but also sought better relations with the Catholic Church and ended the previous murders of Delegates of the Word working with Salvadorans.

Concealing the intensive FF.AA. involvement in war crimes in El Salvador and Nicaragua would not even have been possible without launching a constant campaign against the Catholic clergy, who were witnesses and secondhand warrantors for other witnesses. Whether analyzed according to Pierre Bourdieu's social capital or Michel Foucault's "power-knowledge," parish priests, diocese councils, Jesuit radio, Base Ecclesial Communities, Bible-study and women's groups were able to pose a direct challenge that the FF.AA. could not undermine as "Communist" or "Salvadoran": they could not be marginalized outside the acceptable bounds of society.<sup>183</sup>

Eventually Alvarez Martínez drew public condemnation for seeking an alternative source of religious legitimation from the Unification Church—but after his exile it was this approach would mark the FF.AA.'s only success in fighting for hegemony. Treating theology on its own terms, rather than as an "epiphenomenon" or disguise for ulterior material and ideological interests, helps explain 1. why the religious field provided the only success for the FF.AA.—in managing to condemn Catholicism as the union of the Devil and Karl Marx (even claiming that the bishops were plotting coups)—but also 2. why the state made the decision to condemn even bishops as insufficiently-Catholic. Decades of Red-baiting had not managed to discredit any Catholic priest in Central America by 1980 in the proverbial eyes of the general public. Religious

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<sup>183</sup> Christopher A. Bail, "The Public Life of Secrets: Deception, Disclosure, and Discursive Framing in the Policy Process." *Sociological Theory* 33:2 (June 2015). Pels, "Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?" in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 279.

practice is separate from ideology or self-interest<sup>184</sup>—so the only success that officers would have against the professional classes who could give warrant to eyewitness accounts was against the Catholic clergy, and only by finding a new denomination to substitute and usurp the old.

Compared to the attacks on journalists or doctors, Evangelicalization ended up being the FF.AA.'s only success at a “war of position.” The very beneficiaries of Agrarian Reform were induced to repudiate their own land tenure, the Jesuits who had drawn press attention to every attack on the Reform, and their own neighbors and relatives. Like counterrevolutionary warfare, religion was deliberately deployed against land reform and social-Catholic theology in a larger shared context with the United States: there, Evangelical Protestantism had made a significant shift to right-wing politics and economics in the 1970s, and been a significant component of the new Republican coalition that brought Ronald Reagan himself into office November. But the “sects” were not just proxies for the 1980 revival of the Cold War, nor for the export and mining interests.<sup>185</sup>

Another component of the Reagan Coalition was the neoconservatives: these self-described “Kennedy Democrats” and former Trotskyites were *unreligious* in their foreign policy, but like the Religious Right had explicit plans against Latin American Catholicism. The “Santa Fe Committee” comprised the (extremely small) set of academics who were both familiar with Latin America *and* who also were neoconservatives. Its 1980 Report warned not of a godless Leninism on the march from Havana through Grenada and into San Salvador, but of left-wing

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<sup>184</sup> Edmonds, *Authoritarianism and the Catholic Church in Latin America* 2010. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Dependency-oriented analyses of foreign relations hold that “peripheral” or weaker nations are often subjected to “core” nations’ *domestic* politics, such as the replacement of presidents and prime ministers. “Foreign policy” proper, however, is defined by being 1. planned and 2. directed toward a nation with certain goals in mind—characteristics conspicuously *absent* from the U.S. Cold War (Chapter 1, “0: Premises” and “1: The Ignorant Armies”). (See Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives,” n18). Stephen Gill, “Epistemology, Ontology, and the ‘Italian School,’ ” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 31

infiltration into the Latin American Church itself—and thence influence in the United States through organizations like CISPES or Witness for Peace (Chapter 3).

The report faulted Catholic theology itself as inherently collectivistic, as too foreign in influence; the Committee prescribed promotion of right-wing, U.S.-based Evangelical denominations. The neoconservatives explicitly viewed religion as a mere instrument of rule. The Report warns,

Manipulation of the information media through church-affiliated groups and other so-called human rights lobbies has played an increasingly important role in overthrowing authoritarian, but pro-U.S., governments and replacing them with anti-U.S., Communist, or pro-Communist dictatorships of a totalitarian character. ... U.S. foreign policy must begin to counter (not react against) liberation theology as it is utilized in Latin America by the “liberation theology” clergy. The role of the church in Latin America is vital to the concept of political freedom. Unfortunately, Marxist-Leninist forces have utilized the church as a political weapon against private property and productive capitalism by infiltrating the religious community with ideas that are less Christian than Communist.<sup>186</sup>

For the neoconservatives, the Kremlin was exploiting the Church itself (up to the Roman Curia) to manipulate the whole international community and dupe U.S. mainline churches. Only the new fundamentalism of the 1970s, rooted in Nonconformist theology and largely limited to the U.S. borders, would save economic freedom and allow the new Administration to simply engineer a theology submissive to U.S. economic and strategic interests.

The Second Santa Fe Report (1988) declared that Gramscians were threatening to secure “a position of strong influence over religion, schools, the mass media and the universities,” and that Liberation Theology was a parallel Church “aimed at weakening the independence of society in the face of state control” as the East-West fight was supposedly about to enter the 21st century.<sup>187</sup> Neoconservative theorists were particularly aware as the Reagan Administration came to

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<sup>186</sup> Committee of Santa Fe, ed. Lewis Tambs, *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties* (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington, 1980): 20.

<sup>187</sup> Gene E. Bigler, USIA, Office of Research, “Liberation Theology and Anti-Americanism: The Challenge to U.S. Interests in Latin America,” June 4, 1987; box 45, document M-6-4-87; entry P 64 (Research Memoranda, 1963-1999); Record Group 306 (U.S. Information Agency); U.S. National Archives at College Park, Md. Salomón, *Política y militares en Honduras*, 1992: 71. Jesús F. García-Ruiz, “Le religieux comme lieu de pénétration politique et idéologique au Guatemala,” *Revue Française d’Études Américaines* 24/25 (May 1985): 265-77.



its end that they could never secure hegemony over Latin America by either civilian export-Liberal parties, nor by direct state violence.<sup>188</sup>

The U.S. Institute on Religion and Democracy was a “think tank” with a theological twist, relentlessly condemning the World Council of Churches, the U.S. National Council of Churches, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and mainline denominations in general for their aid and solidarity work in countries that the Institute deemed “enemies,” especially in Central America. The IRD also insisted that the real danger was a convergence between Christianity and Marxism—praising totalitarians as liberators, disguising the supposed crimes of the United States’s mortal adversaries.<sup>189</sup> The more “bottom-line” American Enterprise Institute promoted use of Evangelicalism as a way to politically demobilize Christians in the United States, to legitimate the state and anesthetize any unease and dissatisfaction. Latin American Christianity would likewise be manipulated, twisted at all costs to immunize the people against insurrection (which, under the National Security Doctrine, could come only from outside agitators).<sup>190</sup>

Even if the Catholic Church in Honduras remained largely conservative and non-activist, its members and the witnesses that they helped to give warrant were central to exposing, confirming, denouncing, and publicizing massacres and poverty, disappearance and dispossession. It is not coincidental that Father Fausto Milla has been a central character across three chapters in this dissertation (Chapters 4, 9, and 10). By 1987 the FF.AA.’s actions had made the bishops and

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<sup>188</sup> Hyug Baeg Im, “Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci,” *Asian Perspective* 15:1 (Spring-Summer 1991): 138.

<sup>189</sup> The narrative developed 1975-80 by the New Right was that the United States had never *done* wrong in foreign policy except wait too long to enter war, left with ungrateful and jealous French and British, Japanese and West German electronics and automotive rivals, Palestinian and Shi’ite terrorism, and Marxist-Leninists rampaging across three continents (Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives”). Crahan, “Religion, Revolution and Counterrevolution,” in Chalmers *et al.*, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* 1992: 164-66, 173-76. Ezcurra, *The Neoconservative Offensive* 1983: 9.

<sup>190</sup> “La penetración protestante en Honduras,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 32 (February 1988).

Evangelical Conference themselves more vocal than the Catholic Church had ever been before the shock of the 1975 Los Horcones massacre.<sup>191</sup>

Histories of the 1990s' religious landscape in Latin America concentrate on Evangelicalization. Even in 1979 many of the social mandates of the Medellín Conference were being reversed, and the end of the Cold War 1989 meant that the Latin American and global Catholic Church pulled back its supports for political movements and political initiatives, and shifted from a just society to moral order—"nonpolitical" issues such as sexual education, abortion, divorce.<sup>192</sup> All the military regimes of the continent had made a "managed transition" to formal democracy, entirely on the terms of the outgoing juntas and the global market: the 90s were marked by a conservative Catholic Church and a neoliberal civilian state. The 2009 Honduran coup explicitly split the Episcopal Conference, Cardinal and Archbishop Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga endorsed the abduction of President Manuel Zelaya and his Cabinet—which reportedly incited Bishop Luis Santos into a screaming match at the Episcopal Conference.<sup>193</sup>

The state promoted and chose new Evangelical denominations, but also claimed a theurgy for itself: by condemning priests and bishops as not being "good" Catholics, it claimed direct stake in intercession and invocation. Usurpation is even more aggressive than substitution—claiming to directly manage Church affairs and teachings, to sanctify itself and render its own

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<sup>191</sup> Martin Francis, "The Catacomb: Honduran Church Now Faces a New Gladiator: U.S. Militarization," *Honduras Update* 3:12 (September 1985), from *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 20 and 22, 1985.

<sup>192</sup> Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) was central to Reagan's European moves against the Soviet Union, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger tightly reined in Liberation Theology as Prefect for the Doctrine of the Faith. Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, "The Progressive Church in Latin America: An Interpretation," in Mainwaring and Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989): 26-29.

<sup>193</sup> Helio Gallardo, *Golpe de estado y aparatos clericales: América Latina: Honduras* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Arlekin, 2012). Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* 1998: 40. Phillips, *Honduras in Dangerous Times* 2015: 207-08.

power theological, inverting the traditional definition of “theocracy.”<sup>194</sup> Attacking the Catholic Church damaged the Honduran state each time it doubted or delayed a story warranted by clergy. But like journalists and M.D.s, the FF.AA. had to attack Catholic priests and mainline Protestant ministers despite all the consequences, because they continuously “warranted” campesino witnesses whose stories could seriously damage the counterrevolution against El Salvador and Nicaragua since 1980. The FF.AA. could not shift hegemony on its own, but could fulfil its needs with a whole new theology—the only way to challenge Catholicism, and the only successful field where working-class Hondurans were moved to a Cold-War ideology. Evangelicalism had the advantage of having nothing in common with Catholicism, but still able to address an institutional religion on its own social (especially in the countryside).<sup>195</sup> No officer’s accusations could manage to marginalize the Catholic clergy—representing an institution older than the republic itself.

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<sup>194</sup> This also fits neither the traditional accounts of increased *or* decreased “separation of church and state”: the Honduran state 1. attacked the formerly-established and dominant Catholic Church and 2. arrogated all the Church’s development of theology and intermediation and intervention with the divine for itself.

<sup>195</sup> Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 51. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 54.

## Chapter 10

# Sex, Death, and Magic: Venereal Disease and Medical Disrepute

### Introduction

Honduras was an epicenter for HIV/AIDS in the Americas for over a decade: in the late 1990s, Honduras had 20 percent the population of Central America, but 50-60 percent of all the region's AIDS cases.<sup>1</sup> 1.6-1.8 percent of the adult Honduran population was HIV-positive at its peak, in 2003.<sup>2</sup> There have been various possible explanations by epidemiologists—1. U.S. servicemen stationed at Palmerola Air Base, rotating in and out on six-month tours by the thousands, with no less than 1,000 stationed there at a time; 2. the state-sponsored network of prostitutes bused to nearby Comayagua in every weekend from cities around the country; or 3. Garífuna on the sealanes extending from Honduras's ports to New Orleans, Miami, and New York City.<sup>3</sup> A 1987 U.S. fact-finding mission described an anti-U.S. “anger bordering on hatred” over issues such as a new epidemic of penicillin-resistant gonorrhea and the hundreds of new bars and brothels serving U.S. bases, causing rising prostitution and ending any pro-U.S. sentiment in even traditionally conservative towns.<sup>4</sup> Nearly a decade of presence by U.S. soldiers and Marines

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<sup>1</sup> Odalys García Trujillo, Mayté Paredes, and Manuel Sierra, *VIH/SIDA: Análisis de la evolución de la epidemia en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Fundación Fomento de Salud, 1998): 7, 9-10. As with the 2015-16 Zika virus and COVID-19, Nicaragua's rates were an order of magnitude lower than its neighbors.

<sup>2</sup> Shawn Smallman, *The AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007): 151, 156-57. U.S. Agency for International Development, “HIV/AIDS Health Profile: Honduras” (2010), [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdacu641.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacu641.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> By 1989 100,000 U.S. soldiers, military engineers, and Marines had rotated through Honduran soil. Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988): 117. Jason G. Bedford, “Teaching Change: A Mixed-Method Study of Interventions, Risk Perceptions, and Behavior Change Among the Garífuna of Honduras” (M.A. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, State College, Penn., 2010). Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985): 110. Philip L. Shepherd, “Honduras,” in *Confronting Revolution: Security Through Diplomacy in Central America*, ed. Morris J. Blachman, William M. LeoGrande, and Kenneth E. Sharpe (New York: Pantheon, 1986): 200. James P. Stansbury and Manuel Sierra, “Risks, Stigma and Honduran Garífuna Conceptions of HIV/AIDS,” *Social Science & Medicine* 59:3 (August 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Several English-language writers insist on Hondurans' unpolitical pragmatism and near-quiescence for most of the decade: Alison Acker holds that nationalism arrived only in 1987. Donald and Deborah Schulz claimed Amb. Negro ponte was popular with most Hondurans, who have an affinity for caudillos and were less concerned with a loss of sovereignty than with the need to assure the anticipated ‘rain of dollars’ ” and that most criticism of Washington was merely discontent over not getting enough money for the “rented republic.” Ultimately this mostly shows the

led to a situation different from 1980s Brazil or 90s South Africa, where HIV denial has been investigated more extensively.<sup>5</sup>

FF.AA. commanders such as Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez and Humberto Regalado were dedicated to counterrevolutionary wars against Honduras's neighbors and to maintaining a constant U.S. presence at Palmerola. This required that the Honduran state—down to FUSEP commandants and “civil” provincial mayors—fight news of venereal disease that might reach national and then international press attention. The HIV virus arrived, developed, spread, and “broke out” in a state already geared explicitly towards concealing news of VD, attacking those reporting it and discrediting the institutions warranting the reports.

The main division in the literature in the history of medicine in Latin America has been “social medicine,” as opposed to “elite” medicine. Both of these groups are comprised of recognized M.D.s, nurses, and pharmacists, and both were intimately tied to having the state support their contrary visions of medicine. But there has been little historical writing on the *processes* that elitist doctors and officials use to deny warrant and legitimacy to rival M.D.s and other health workers.<sup>6</sup> Medical students began living alongside the poorest and neediest that they were treating. This not only provided the professional community with shared direct new experience, but created a tension or disconnect between their medical training and actual health and society

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limitations of a poll-centered approach—so-and-so-many Hondurans logged approving of Washington or Managua or Tegucigalpa. Medea Benjamin, “Anti-American Sentiments Explode in Honduras,” *In These Times*, Apr. 20-26, 1988. Jerry Genesisio, “Add Honduras to List of Our Former Friends,” *The New York Times*, Apr. 29, 1988. Acker, *Honduras 1988*: 122, 127, 131-32, 136. Matías Funes, *Los deliberantes: El poder militar en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1995): 318. Clara Nieto, *Masters of War: Latin America and United States Aggression from the Cuban Revolution Through the Clinton Years*, trans. Chris Brandt (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003): 321. Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994): 77, 82, 216-17, 220.

<sup>5</sup> Pieter Fourie and Melissa Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism: South Africa's Failure to Respond* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Steven Paul Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism: Doctors, Healers, and Public Power in Costa Rica, 1800-1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press: 2003).

in city and country.<sup>7</sup> Classical “epistemic injustice” centers on attacks against marginalized witnesses: but the fight against other recognized and institutionalized professionals meant that the usual tactics of attacking the credibility of witnesses would not work, just as officers could not directly attack the Catholic Church without swiftly accumulating discredit themselves (see Chapters 7 and 9).

The Colegio Médico is a self-regulating, quasi-private bar association of 6,000 M.D.s and surgeons set up in 1962: it adhered to the elitist practice of treating only those who could afford it (the working classes relegated to charity). Colegio members who were politically conservative certified generals and governors’ claims that reports of venereal disease were Communist tricks to discredit the presence of U.S. soldiers. Social medicine, however, also consisted of doctors certified by the same institutions and working directly for the state, treating rural patients, and later even incorporating knowledge of Honduran-grown potential medicines, at the Ministry of Public Health. Social medicine combines medical theory with social and political practice. Its central premise was that the conditions of society—labor, nutrition, pregnancy, environment, housing—would have to be changed, not just treatment of separate diseases envisioned with a simple cause.<sup>8</sup>

The new President Roberto Suazo Córdova—both M.D. and *santero*—tried to seek legitimacy by providing healthcare, but was thwarted by its own budget cuts, directly written by Am-

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<sup>7</sup> Diego Armus, *Entre médicos y curanderos: Cultura, historia y enfermedad en la América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Norma, 2002): 337, 340. Anne-Emanuelle Bim and Raúl Necochea López, “Footprints on the Future: Looking Forward to the History of Health and Medicine in Latin America in the Twenty-First Century,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 91:3 (July 2011): 503-27.

<sup>8</sup> Charity or profit motive alone cannot ensure that treatment is affordable and accessible—it requires state intervention. “Public health” is also different, concentrating more on short-term visits to the doctor to cure a condition, or mass vaccination or treatment. Social-medicine M.D.s such as Che Guevara, and Ramón Villeda Morales (1957-63) and Salvador Allende (1970-73) drew on their professional experience to win their presidential elections in Honduras and Chile, until both removed by bloody *coups d’état*. Howard Waitzkin, “Is Our Work Dangerous? Should it Be?” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 39:1 (March 1998): 7-17. Waitzkin, Celia Iriart, Alfredo Estrada, and Silvia Lamadrid, “Social Medicine Then and Now: Lessons From Latin America,” *American Journal of Public Health* 91:10 (October 2001): 1,592-1,601.

bassador John D. Negroponte 1982. Elitism and anti-ruralism in the Colegio meant explicit resistance to even extending healthcare to the countryside—while the Colegio was also reliant on narratives of providing the only effective, “scientific” treatment while unable to provide actual healthcare compared to the rival Public Health Ministry. The Colegio damaged its reputation by launching campaigns against reports of venereal disease or other state doctors’ efforts to use local herbalism as complementary medicine—a last ditch once the pharmacies began running out of even basic medications due to Suazo Córdova’s austerity.<sup>9</sup>

Reaction against the Nicaraguan Revolution rededicated the thinkers of the FF.AA. to a new conception of counterrevolution that was so broad as to include priests and doctors acquiring and disseminating herbal knowledge as subversives training guerrillas for jungle warfare. Religion and medicine were defined as theaters of regional warfare no less than Intibucá or El Paraíso Departments. The Colegio had headed a fight against herbalism and *santerismo* since the 1960s, and used its state tie to the FF.AA. against the state’s own Public Health Ministry. Doctors from the Colegio backed a state that persecuted *santeros* and established networks of prostitution, but the category of “state doctors” does not neatly line up on one side of any of the issues. 1980s Honduras was not a history of a uniform state imposing militarism or a top-down ideology of science.

The Colegio insisted that they had the strictest monopoly over the mechanisms that determined truth from rumor or foreign propaganda, while denying widely-reported facts—while the “medical establishment” of the Ministry of Public Health put their public reputation and institutional warrant behind Hondurans challenging the Cold Warriors and the Colegio’s entire implicit ideology of medical science. “The state” was not an empty arena for independent interests

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 10, “*Curanderismo* and *Medicalismo*,” n67.

to challenge each other, but itself an institution that could be mobilized behind agendas independent of the dominant ideologies or interests of the moment.<sup>10</sup>

The Colegio's anti-rural rhetoric matched the way that witnesses to massacres had been dismissed. Just as counterrevolutionary officers misused the innate properties of perception and memory to deny that they could perceive the truth in person (Chapter 4, "The Sumpul Massacre: The Honduran Press"), elitist medicine abused the placebo effect to insist they were as easily-misled bumpkins unable to perceive in their own bodies what treatments were effective or useless.<sup>11</sup> Steven Palmer argues that "ignorance" and "superstition" are political as well as epistemic designations, defining a class unable to even understand that they are victims of their own folly: a handful of ideologues is able to exploit these narratives when attempting to label accurate science "pseudoscientific" or "politicized," accusing the majority of betraying their profession by allowing in irrationalism.<sup>12</sup>

Denialism aimed against science or medicine generally either 1. treats agreed science as "politicized," insufficient, and requiring more experimental validation,<sup>13</sup> or 2. attacks the relevant scientists as themselves "unscientific"—typically newcomers putting (left-of-center) ideol-

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<sup>10</sup> Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 97.

<sup>11</sup> "Guerra a brujos y curanderos," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Dec. 5, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Their supposed "ignorance" prevents them from properly comprehending the social or material world around them, the same way a mystifying ideology does. Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003: 268-9, 336, 363.

<sup>13</sup> Under the usual rules of science studies or Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, physical or human science should be entirely *immune* from being repurposed into a self-deceiving ideology: it can double-blind-test causality, be verified by any other scientist via replication, and is entirely public. Barry Barnes and Donald MacKenzie, "On the Role of Interests in Scientific Change," in Roy Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge* (Keele: University of Keele, 1979): 49-66. Jennifer Lackey, "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others," in Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 76. Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996): 24. Francis Remedios, *Legitimizing Scientific Knowledge: An Introduction to Steve Fuller's Social Epistemology* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003): 30. William J. Talbott, review of *Knowledge in a Social World* by Alvin I. Goldman, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (January 2002): 201-4.



ogy over historical and scientific fact.<sup>14</sup> The rhetoric of denialism aims not against science itself but instead attacks the majority of scientists (or doctors) in the name of a more hardline depiction of what “science” is.<sup>15</sup> Denial and discredit were aimed not just at the marginalized groups whose knowledge the public-health doctors and pharmacists were warranting, but against recognized, state-backed professionals: calling them agents of Moscow was ineffective, but the attack by their fellow medical scientists attacking them as insufficiently scientific (in order to deny the accepted processes and products of science) was able to strike the targets on their own proverbial “terrain.” The most effective way to attack the results of scientific investigation was to turn its *processes* against itself. In denialism, ideologues and partisans condemned their fellow doctors for following proper method and for producing accurate outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter covers HIV epidemiology, police raids on curanderos, U.S. “civic action programs” to buy local goodwill with vaccinations and dental work, the 1998 expulsion of Cuban doctors, the “bioprospecting” of tropical plant species led by local knowledge. One faction of doctors attacked other doctors’ warranting power, but (unlike the more successful war of ma-

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<sup>14</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, U.K., and Malden Mass.: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 137. David J. Hess, *Science in the New Age: The Paranormal, its Defenders and Debunkers, and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993): 88, 159-63, 207. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, “Challenging Knowledge: How Climate Science Became a Victim of the Cold War,” in Robert N. Proctor and Londa L. Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008). Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010). Robert N. Proctor, *Cancer Wars: How Politics Shapes What we Know and Don’t Know About Cancer* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> JunkScience.com’s list of “quacks” has six members of the Institute of Medicine and four Lilienfeld Prize winners for cautioning about tobacco or DDT. The key denialists of global warming and other ecological work likened the researchers to the prototypical arch-crank Velikovsky. Michael D. Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012): 207-08. David Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product: How Industry’s Assault on Science Threatens Your Health* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 57-58, 81.

<sup>16</sup> Jon Christensen, “Smoking Out Objectivity: Journalistic Gears in the Agnogenesis Machine,” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 267-68, 279. Robert N. Proctor, “Agnotology: A Missing Term to Describe the Cultural Production of Ignorance (and its Study),” in *ibid.*: 11-15.

never against the Catholic Church, Chapter 9) the very same state ties of both factions of M.D.s prevented any conclusive outcome. The ultimate goal was not to stir up controversy or to specifically discredit other doctors' warranting power on venereal disease in Comayagua or the potential medicines that could be found in the rainforest, but to "short-circuit" the normative rules of analysis and debate themselves.

Ultimately the Colegio Médico used their reputation as doctors to back state denial of new diseases, to fight herbalists, or even the Honduran Institute for Social Security and Cuban government sending M.D.s and nurses into rural areas. With the state repeatedly discredited but unable to find a way out from self-defeating ideologies, the doctors backing the state had no choice but to keep failing on the same terms, supporting a narrative even if that narrative was not necessarily intended to be *believed*.

"there's no such thing as society"

—Margaret Thatcher, 1987

### Curanderismo and Medicalismo

Both 1980s Honduras and 2000s South Africa became regional epicenters of HIV/AIDS, but only the latter has garnered a systematic and in-depth attempt to explain why and to give some interpretation to the political-medical context around the "takeoff" of the venereal disease. In one view of HIV's epidemiological history, South Africa's traditional healers and herbalists, the *sangomas*, are the main villains, simply opposed to scientific medicine, ultimately causing over 350,000 preventable deaths.<sup>17</sup> A more revisionist view is that herbalism counts as proto-scientific medicine, that it was complementary to "bio-medicine": pharmaceutical companies indeed have the keenest interest in the tropical plants of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, to the

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<sup>17</sup> Exemplified by the 1999-2008 Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, prescribing *Hypoxis* tubers, beet-root, and alcohol over antiretroviral medicines after President Thabo Mbeki had been ensnared by AIDS-denialist websites. Fourie and Meyer, *The Politics of AIDS Denialism* 2010.

extent of outright “biopiracy.”<sup>18</sup> While “politicized” or “nationalist” medicine did play a key role in the spread of AIDS in South Africa, Honduran traditional healers were attacked by the same Colegio doctors and on the same terms that made the country a regional epicenter: the same “sound science” fighting *curandería* also spread venereal disease.

Under Presidents Gen. Policarpo Paz García (1978-82) and then Roberto Suazo Córdova the Public Security Forces—the police being the FF.AA.’s fourth branch—had launched periodic campaigns against *curanderos* and *santeros*, backed by the press, officials, and a vocal segment of medical doctors in the Colegio Médico. It officially backed the 1981, 1985, 1986, and 1988 police raids on *botánicos* and diviners, and the Colegio boasted of having combated *curanderos* and *brujos* since its 1962 foundation, saying that their M.D.s faced even death threats and political trouble from this “epidemic” of false rivals who unfairly acquired allies within the state.<sup>19</sup> The campaigns extended from medical and spiritual specialists’ shops and corner-store *botánicos* to licensed pharmacists—there were even city-licensed *curanderos*. The targets were 1. *curanderismo* and 2. the medical and divinatory sides of *Santería*, common in the areas connected to the Caribbean and with a significant African-descended population.<sup>20</sup>

The primary stated justification for the closures was that the unlicensed *curanderos* were impersonating trained doctors and that they were diverting the ill from seeing qualified profes-

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<sup>18</sup> Honduran midwives’ herb-derived remedies were overlooked by ethnobotanists at the same time that *Cedrela odorata* was such a pharmaceutical success that it was disappearing due to commercialized overharvesting. Anders Breidlid, *Education, Indigenous Knowledges, and Development in the Global South: Contesting Knowledges for a Sustainable Future*, Routledge Research in Education 82 (New York: Routledge, 2013): 40-42. Gabriela Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories: Mexican Peasants, National Projects, and the Making of the Pill* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009): 6, 9, 108, 123-28, 229-31. Tamara Ticktin and Sarah Paule Dalle, “Medicinal Plant Use in the Practice of Midwifery in Rural Honduras,” *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 96:1-2 (Jan. 4, 2005): 240-41. Jeremy R. Youde, *AIDS, South Africa, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Aldershot, U.K., and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> “Ministro Mejía Arellano: Guerra contra brujos y curanderos está en pie,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 24, 1981. José Modesto Meza, “Brujos y curanderos,” *La Tribuna*, Nov. 25, 1983. “Han inundado el país: Imposible deshacerse de ‘brujos’ se queja ministro de Gobernación,” *El Heraldo*, Nov. 27, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> This medical-military campaign actively sought press attention for its raids: the newspapers were urban and never expressed any sympathy or toleration for these commercial *botánicos*.

sionals. Cortés Governor María Teresa Janser de Aguilar's 1985 order to close all *botánicos*, card-readers, palmists, and spiritualists in San Pedro Sula was instigated by the Colegio Médico's complaints against self-designated "professors" and "licentiates."<sup>21</sup> But the Colegio's role in promoting the FUSEP campaigns against *curanderismo* began contrasting with its equally-public inability to provide medical treatment to Hondurans. Instead it relied on the state to back its rhetoric with force, rather than pushing the state into to expanding its actual healthcare capability. Whether patients could afford to do so, what treatments were seen as worth the cost, or even whether part of the forgiveness of curanderos came from the personal attention they gave to the patients, was absent from Colegio proclamations: this still neatly fits the paradigm of elite vs. folk medicine.

The Colegio Médico targeted curanderos as rivals who diverted the lower and middle classes from effective treatment, and as impostors given an undeserved benefit of the doubt. The Colegio complained that these curanderos were forgiven by the survivors of clients they killed, while the "scientific" doctors were blamed after doing all they could—"if a patient dies in the hands of some doctor here they protest, casting the fault of their death on the doctor that had acted scientifically." Curanderos "usurp the functions of medical science" giving patients with even cancer a ritual and some colored water, preventing treatment but keeping them paying through fear and false hope.<sup>22</sup> Newspaper stories always portrayed curanderos and *santeros* as symbols of criminal delinquency, scandalous ill-education and weak-mindedness in the country, of enduring national backwardness. Santería was portrayed as necessary to frauds worth thousands of dollars,

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<sup>21</sup> "Gobernadora ordena a los brujos y naturistas que cierren sus centros," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 28, 1985.

<sup>22</sup> "Guerra contra los brujos inicia policía municipal," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 12, 1985. "Guerra a brujos y curanderos," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Dec. 5, 1986. "'Brujos' hacen de las suyas en Yoro," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, July 30, 1987. "Comayagua: 'Curanderos' y 'espiritistas' trabajan con permiso de alcalde y gobernadora," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 22, 1988.

involved in suicides or the drugged sexual enslavement of teenagers<sup>23</sup>—overall as just yet more proof that foolishness, hysteria, and “ruralism” still held sway in Honduras, even in the cities. It was framed as an enslaving addiction, like drugs or alcoholism, for those unable to cope with modernity.<sup>24</sup> Newspaper photos zoomed in on false clairvoyants’ cash hauls worth US\$15,000 or \$100,000, or midwives’ air-conditioned premises.<sup>25</sup> However, the stories gave no systematic evidence that their clients were avoiding doctors out of enslavement to superstition rather than poverty.

Ideology comes disguised as “just the plain facts,” as objective or scientific descriptions of reality, but also with some measure of flexibility or proactivity to provide them with some staying power.<sup>26</sup> Sociologists of knowledge conclude that is this posturing or pretense to objective reproduction or description of reality that ultimately prevents it from raising the correct questions or making the needed self-corrections.<sup>27</sup> The Colegio Médico had set up an ideology of medicine, which had the functions of 1. distinguishing scientific “medicine” from “quackery” and 2. explaining the failures of the Colegio’s style of official medicine. “Scientism” is defined

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<sup>23</sup> Roberto Rodríguez Portillo, “Después de dos años de sufrimiento: Niña secuestrada por brujos y resistoleros regresa al país,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 18, 1980. “A tribunales ‘brujo’ que violó estudiante,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 26, 1980. “Además de ‘curar’ a bobos: Detienen a ‘bruja’ que ‘desenterraba tesoros,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 18, 1983. “Se suicida porque su mujer le hacía brujerías,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Oct. 23, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> René Cantarero, “Amos y esclavos por brujería en Honduras,” 1st part, *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 8, 1986.

<sup>25</sup> “A incauta familia: En medio de brebajes y saumerios bruja les esfuma 30 mil lempiras,” *El Tiempo*, June 20, 1990. “Dictan auto de prisión contra la bruja Agripina,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 29, 1990. “Hoy toman medidas contra los ‘brujos’ de emisoras,” *El Tiempo*, July 6, 1990. “Exitosa primera etapa de campaña contra los brujos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> James Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 162. Robert K. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge & Science* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005): 52-54.

<sup>27</sup> Leon Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge: A Comparative Study in the Theory of Ideology* (New York: Lang, 1994): 51-53, 90-92.

science inappropriately being used as ideology, able to can rationalize new phenomena or theories as aberrations or atavisms, as the sole arbiter of veracity.<sup>28</sup>

The director of the Escuela Superior del Profesorado, psychologist Carleton Corrales, insisted in 1979 that “Parapsychology is nothing more than the last redoubt of *brujería*, a modern version of *hechicería*” and concluded flatly that “beyond psychology there is nothing”: “the more advanced each country is, the more this type of problem tends to disappear.” He concluded that occultism withered away with development and it became an unacceptable topic in academia or media: it inevitably faded from popular and professional life. With Progress fewer and fewer phenomena would be seen as inexplicable.<sup>29</sup> Traditional treatments were “supposed” to fade

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<sup>28</sup> By the 1920s concepts of “scientism” and “Positivism” were under strong critique, as inscribing old Liberal prejudices in the name of objectivity and social analysis. The ossification of “scientific socialism” in the 1930s-50s led to the condemnation of “bourgeois pseudoscience” (below, “Conclusion”). Karl Mannheim’s “sociology of knowledge” exempted mathematics and physical sciences from even the need or explanation and definition, that they were still self-evident and objective. Therefore any dispute between scientists or distortion of scientific process could only be from dishonest extrinsic factors: politicization or paid mercenary “science for hire.” However Mannheim’s works were the first step in the formal description of how researchers search for, define, test, and disseminate true knowledge, and how they conceptualize context and circumstance. The next generation was defined by Karl Popper, who made “falsifiability” rather than confirmation science’s defining criterion—against “scientific” scientific socialism, but also against contemporary “Logical Positivism.” But Popper in turn identified true science with Western “open societies’ ” freedom from state coercion: this view opposes the “scientific” to everything “social”—*factionalism, interference, politicization*, an impingement on the scientific process. William P. Alston, “Belief-Forming Practices and the Social,” in Frederick F. Schmitt, ed., *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994): 45-47. Bailey, *Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge* 1994. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967): 12. Robert Boccock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, London, and New York: Horwood and Tavistock, 1986): 64. R.G.A. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 9, 14, 31. Norbert Elias, “Knowledge and Power: An Interview by Peter Ludes,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 220. Steve Fuller, *Social Epistemology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988): 4-6, 60. Harvey Goldman, “From Social Theory to Sociology of Knowledge and Back: Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Intellectual Knowledge Production,” *Sociological Theory* 12:3 (November 1994): 266-78. Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars* 2012: 7-13. Brian Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 96. Henrik Lundberg, “Between Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim’s Quest for a Political Synthesis,” in David Kettler and Volker Meja, eds., *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* (London: Anthem Press, 2017): 14. Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 47. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 19. Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, “Introduction: The Development of the Sociology of Knowledge and Science,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 1-27.

<sup>29</sup> “Opinan los sicólogos: Los parasicólogos: Brujos del siglo XX,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 4, 1979.

away<sup>30</sup> as a given country advanced on a single scale of progress. Practices not fitting inside the narrow definition of “modern” would vanish with improving conditions—tying it to an older political and economic Liberalism that insisted no price was too high to pay for the sake of progress, which would undo any impoverishment in the long run if unfettered by state restriction or interference.<sup>31</sup> Dr. Corrales was shocked that Chile’s counterpart Colegio refused to attack faith healers: *curanderismo*’s continued existence was holding progress back, thwarting the ascension of all humanity.<sup>32</sup>

David J. Hess’s study of the U.S. “scientific skepticism” movement gives some insight into the process of scientific “boundary-maintenance,” important to understanding the Colegio Médico’s opposition to state M.D.s seeking out herbalism as last resort when pharmacies ran empty. Hess’s “pro-science” activists—scientists or freelancers—would often insist that spiritualism was an artifact of primitive, childlike mentalities were doomed to fade before the light of science. But these supposed group psychoses that had ruled the human species until recently could always stage a recrudescence, which would have to be explained by an intervening factor. The ideologues showed tremendous anger that these false beliefs had not evaporated as all the experts had predicted for decades, something thwarting inevitable secularization and the final acceptance of science as the only possible way of explaining phenomena by all humanity.<sup>33</sup>

The U.S. movement that Hess traces has traits closer to Soviet crackdowns against “bourgeois pseudoscience” than Pyrrho of Elis’s refusal to declare any truth final, Francis Ba-

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<sup>30</sup> Milton Cohen, “The Ethnomedicine of the Garífuna (Black Caribs) of Río Tinto, Honduras,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 57:1 (January 1984): 23-24. Mark Harrison, “A Global Perspective: Reframing the History of Health, Medicine, and Disease,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89:4 (Winter 2015).

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 9, “Introduction,” n31. Daniel H. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2012): 41.

<sup>32</sup> José Modesto Meza, “Brujos y curanderos,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 25, 1983.

<sup>33</sup> Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993: 13, 32, 66. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Society in Latin America* 2012: 54, 60. Will Storr, *The Unpersuadables: Adventures with the Enemies of Science* (New York: Overlook Press, 2014).

con's insistence that any premise ought to be empirically tested and verified, or René Descartes's mistrust of even one's own sense and memory. To these thinkers, the determination of truth was a process, not a finished product.<sup>34</sup> Astrology, "natural" cures, farming without manufactured fertilizers and pesticides, "spooky action at a distance," or the notion of orderly celestial bodies suddenly caroming about like billiard balls were self-evident nonsense: they needed no investigation, only a counteroffensive.<sup>35</sup> However defined, "pseudoscience" was absurd and there was no need to examine any so-called evidence; and its theories were fraudulent by definition.<sup>36</sup> The tacit logic was that if a topic of study were scientific it would *already* have been accepted, and so there was no need to test it or permit further discussion—a classic Goffman-style "loop."<sup>37</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup> Whole fields such as cybernetics, genetics, demography—even the delocalization of electrons among chemical bonds within a single molecule—were dismissed as false, anti-materialist, and political in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Andreas Glaeser, *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 165-67, 189-92, 291, 301. Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars* 2012: 81-111. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, trans. P.S. Falla (New York: W.W. Norton, [1978]2005): 868-71, 892-901, 907. Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 29, 33-44. Axel I. Mundigo, *Elites, Economic Development and Population in Honduras* (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1972): 2, 185-87, 190-91, 232-34.

<sup>35</sup> Skeptics such as James Randi emphasized that stage magicians such as himself—knowing all the tricks—would naturally be more adept at catching deception than professors. But such an arrangement could easily lead to what many saw as "vigilantism" defending what was designated as self-evident "science" without involving the actual experts familiar with the disputes and history of their own field—or even against tenured scientists. As vigilantes they acted in science's name, in opposition to its norms. It simply *rejected* epistemology itself (see above, n15). This parallels 1. the hardline Colegio doctors' emphasis on M.D.s rather than just "supernaturalists" and 2. the tobacco and climate denialists turning science against the consensus of its actual practitioners—by claiming the former were insufficiently "scientific." Within months of its 1975 founding, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal conducted research whose results contradicted its ideology of science, launching a cover-up and immediately declared an end to conducting or sponsoring any actual *experimentation* from then on. Harry M. Collins and Trevor J. Pinch, "The Construction of the Paranormal: Nothing Unscientific is Happening," in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 238-39, 241, 247-48, 250. Dolby, "Reflections on Deviant Science," in *ibid.*: 33. Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993: 88, 107-08, 160, 206. Pinch and Collins, "Private Science and Public Knowledge: The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal and its Use of the Literature," *Social Studies of Science* 14:4 (November 1984): 521-46. Jim Schnabel, "Puck in the Laboratory: The Construction and Deconstruction of Hoaxlike Deception in Science," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 19:4 (Autumn 1994): 467-70.

<sup>36</sup> Merton, "The Sociology of Knowledge," in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 36.

<sup>37</sup> The reasonable-*seeming* syllogism is that "if it was scientific, it would already be researched": so if a topic remained uninvestigated, it was not worth investigating! Instead of investigators, participants in the topic are divided into doubters vs. believers. But this self-contradictory incuriosity is instead presented as not just a rational statement, but a criterion of rationalism: therefore, it is an *ideology* of science, that academic study of certain topics should simply be illegitimated and forbidden. Alvin I. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World* (Oxford and New York:



movement concentrated on defending the products, rather than the process, of physical science—ironically challenging product, process, and practitioners of mainstream science as the decades passed.<sup>38</sup> If science was under siege, then it would have to become a “bastion” to maintain the scientific process viable, even if some valid knowledge from accredited and accepted scientists were lost.<sup>39</sup>

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Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1999): 34. Michael Joseph Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Allen and Unwin, [1979] 1992): 85, 91.

<sup>38</sup> The skeptical movement does not seem to have taken a hard line *within* its defined boundaries of “science”: the target was against counterfeit imitators of the structure or appearance of physical science—parapsychology, astronomical speculation, curious medical treatments: Spiritism or palmistry were not properly pseudo-*science*. But of course proper science also has a need to investigate, to be able to change after falsification or verification. Tying in to the movement skeptics’ separation from actual scientific researchers and the academic community, their skepticism is not consensualist, despite any talk of “weird” beliefs held by seemingly-ordinary persons or advocated by “fringe” cranks: it has a particular (and unstudied) position of what “science” is. Robert Ackermann, review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller, *Erkenntnis* 33:1 (July 1990): 131-35. Stehr and Meja, “Introduction,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 7-8. Wallis, “Introduction,” in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 6.

<sup>39</sup> Sociologists of science note that those holding a “hard line” on the borders of science believe losses and delays of theories *produced* by science are acceptable because they keep the larger *process* of science—the structure—safe. Any loss of later-uncontroversial science was an acceptable price to pay, and initial challenge and rejection was used to redefine them as “fringe sciences” that had won acceptance once proven experimentally and accepted academically. The attitude of Quackwatch’s Stephen Barrett is simply that “a lot of things don’t need to be tested [because] they simply don’t make any sense.” Certain topics were simply *not* to be investigated: the issue was to *defend*—not *examine*—the products of the scientific process. An ideology of science had to be shielded from those refusing to concede to its founding principles or its other tacit claims. The fact that a current or former science was ever, respectively, in doubt or accepted had to be covered up. The ideomotor and placebo effects (which ironically would become the “debunkers”) go-to explanation, once they became accepted, and the neurology of out-of-body and near-death experiences, were rejected as too close to topics of research designated as “parapsychology.” But eventually they (quietly) entered mainstream psychology, losing any status as “anomalous.” The hypothesis that a large crater under the Yucatán Peninsula caused the dinosaurs’ demise likewise faced resistance because of its implication of “worlds in collision.” Ball lighting, gravity waves, epigenetics, or tuberculin faced not just the usual delay that any new theory would face, but a broader midcentury context of 1. scientists and nonscientists whose attention was sharpened to the risk of the “antiscience” assault disguising its way into academic recognition, coupled with 2. an ideology that attacked even the notion of investigating a hypothesis one decade (and then, in the next decade, acting as though it had always been uncontroversial). In the most extreme cases, actual scientists could be intimidated away from certain topics altogether by ideologues claiming to be defending “real” science. Eliot Marshall, “Garwin and Weber’s Waves,” *Science* 212:4,496 (May 15, 1981): 765, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.212.4496.765>. Michael J. Benton, “Dusk of the Dinosaurs,” *Scientific American* 277:3 (September 1997): 95-97. Ben Almassi, “Conflicting Expert Testimony and the Search for Gravitational Waves,” *Philosophy of Science* 76:5 (December 2009): 570-84. Elisabeth S. Clemens, “Of Asteroids and Dinosaurs: The Role of the Press in the Shaping of Scientific Debate,” *Social Studies of Science* 16:3 (August 1986): 421-56. Harry M. Collins, “Surviving Closure: Post-Rejection Adaptation and Plurality in Science,” *American Sociological Review* 65:6 (December 2000): 824-45. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 17, 30. David E. Fastovsky, review of *Night Comes to the Cretaceous: Dinosaur Extinction and the Transformation of Modern Geology* by James Lawrence Powell, *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 74:3 (September 1999): 337-38. Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993: 169-71. David L. Jones, review of *The Mass-Extinction Debates: How Science Works in a Crisis* by William Glen, *Earth Sciences History* 14:1 (1995): 105-06. Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (1979) 1992: 84, 91-92. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 28-34.

So the process or action of boundary-maintenance between para-, proto-, and pseudoscience on one hand versus methodical, material, consensual *science* on the other actually reveals that the dividing line is 1. not automatic and self-evident and 2. that this action had to be tacit and this fact had to be concealed—that it was contingent rather than eternal or intrinsic to scientific practice, a “social” or “human factor” that under the ideology was “contaminating” and non-scientific, rather than necessarily inherent to science.<sup>40</sup> Boundary-drawing was an act of defining categories, constituting the objects by the act of describing them.<sup>41</sup> The Colegio put its effort and its own warrant into prevent anyone other than itself from defining the boundary, and to attack those recognized M.D.s “crossing” it into providing warrant for alleged falsehoods. But this motive alone was not enough for the Colegio’s pursuit of persistent and even vicious campaigns, of its ability to define which foreign or domestic healers were medical “interlopers”—to define *who* would be allowed to define or treat epidemics in Honduras. The Colegio had failed to bring the masses the health they had promised, the medical power and ultimately the Liberal ideology on which the elite doctors had based their tie to the state in the 1960s and 70s.

The Colegio focused on attacking 1. “rumor”—including true reports of venereal disease, and 2. “superstition”—ultimately targeting their fellow recognized doctors’ last-ditch attempt to find local herbal alternatives to the empty pharmacy shelves that left the usual “biomedicine” unable to provide treatment. In this case, the Colegio exercised its warranting power by with-

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Thomas J. Scheff, “The Goffman Legacy: Deconstructing/Reconstructing Social Science,” in A. Javier Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003): 61.

<sup>40</sup> Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (1979) 1992: 84, 91-92. Stephen Turner, “Towards an Integrated Understanding of Science,” review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller, *Social Studies of Science* 19:2 (May 1989): 370-74.

<sup>41</sup> “Campesino herbalism” is conceptually different from “species available for pharmaceutical bioprospecting.” Merton, “The Sociology of Knowledge,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 49-51, 58. Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (1979) 1992: 115. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 22. E. Doyle McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 2.

holding recognition—not a brute threat, but an asymmetry of knowledge. But here warranting power was important because of ability to weather exposure, which had its limits: and their fellow M.D.s could not be denied warrant or recognition.<sup>42</sup> The Colegio framed and dismissed all other existing knowledge-systems as irrelevant and unscientific, as static and anti-modern.<sup>43</sup> But the Colegio was putting this much effort into a decade of anti-curandero raids in the same period that the state’s clinics were paralyzed, sexually-transmitted diseases were spread by FF.AA. militarization, and its own refusal to treat rural patients. Most Honduran M.D.s with practices outside of the state health-and-welfare system were notorious for seeing only those patients who could pay—those who could afford it or find the money. Obviously this was an attack on rival healers and anyone making the Colegio look negligent—but a key definition of ideology is that it leads to counterproductive courses of action, which can be neither anticipated nor a way out of without recognizing and moving beyond the ideology.<sup>44</sup>

To elitist doctors, *curanderismo* was an earlier, fossilized stage of medicine that persisted and thwarted the arrival of modern medicine.<sup>45</sup> Instead of launching a push to make professional healthcare more available, Honduras’s elitist doctors simply campaigned to eliminate *curande-*

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<sup>42</sup> The Colegio acted out of both 1. an interest to hide stories caused by the U.S. servicemen’s presence and 2. anti-rural ideology. Elias, “Knowledge and Power,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 203. Stehr and Meja, “Introduction,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 19.

<sup>43</sup> The Colegio tacitly promoted a narrative of a sharp line between educated “medicine” and mere “healing,” and that the sick could choose only one or another. But the African- and Carib-descended Garífuna on Honduras’s Caribbean coast generated diagnoses and causes of their own for what was called “Garífuna diseases”—so-called partly because M.D.s in even local cities had not even encountered them, due to lack of opportunity, resources, or will. Armus, *Entre médicos y curanderos* 2002: 12. Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 16-17, 25. N. Purendra Prasad, “Medicine, Power and Social Legitimacy: A Socio-Historical Appraisal of Health Systems in Contemporary India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 42:34 (Aug. 25-31 2007): 3,497, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4419944>.

<sup>44</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 56. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 34. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 179.

<sup>45</sup> Analysts of medicine do warn against any possible uncritical valorization of *hybridity* or *eclecticism*—that “medical pluralism,” the coexistence of numerous systems—is a consequence of dismal poverty preventing access to M.D.s in the first place, not a *choice* between different systems, each with something unique to offer. Eric Gable, “The Decolonization of Consciousness: Local Skeptics and the ‘Will to Be Modern’ in a West African Village,” *American Ethnologist* 22:2 (May 1995): 254. Prasad, “Medicine, Power and Social Legitimacy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 42:34 (Aug. 25-31 2007): 3,491, 3,496.

*risimo*, on the assumption that that was the only really obstacle to medical treatment. Without any competition or alternatives, the *empíricos*' once-gulled patients would come to the M.D.s instead. In fact, outside observers found "no sizable segment of the population that is inherently mistrustful of government health care facilities or Western medicine," especially by contrast to the Guatemalan Mayans or Honduran Garífuna's fear of medical maltreatment.<sup>46</sup> The *campesina-to* wanted to use conventional medicine, rather than pursuing alternatives that challenged the Colegio's model of medicine. This model refused social medicine and instead insisted only that the rural areas were noncompliant and would have to have their arms twisted in order to see a real doctor instead of the quacks who had deceived them for years.

The Colegio's ideology blamed Honduran ill-health not on too few doctors, or doctors refusing or unwilling to treat the countryside, but on superstition, fear, and rejection of science keeping potential patients away from it. To elitist doctors, the countryside has a naturally-antiscientific rural "culture"—a mere hang-up, a useless and illegitimate tradition.<sup>47</sup> Most damaging to the ideology of Honduras's medical elitists is the fact that villagers used or did not use M.D.s' treatments entirely according to accessibility, not to any "rural" culture. Campesinos preferred traditional medicine for some conditions, modern for others, calling on local healers, spiritual healers, and visiting nurses from the United States alike, usually according to the disease involved.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jeremy Shiffman and Ana Lucía Garcés del Valle, "Political History and Disparities in Safe Motherhood between Guatemala and Honduras," *Population and Development Review* 32:1 (March 2006): 65.

<sup>47</sup> These studies often frame it as "noncompliance" in treatment, analyzing the patients rather than the medical sector. Anne-Emanuelle Birn and Raúl Necochea López, "Footprints on the Future: Looking Forward to the History of Health and Medicine in Latin America in the Twenty-First Century," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91:3 (2011): 523. Helen Macdonald, "Believing Sceptically: Rethinking Health-Seeking Behaviours in Central India," in Susan Levine, ed., *Medicine and the Politics of Knowledge* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2012): 101-02, 109. V. Sujatha and Leena Abraham, *Medical Pluralism in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012): 14. "Según funcionario del ACNUR: 'Nicas' refugiados en La Mosquitia serían utilizados por los 'contras,'" *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 31, 1983.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 23-25.

Medical anthropologists have emphasized that patients who make recourse to herbalists or spiritual healers are usually pragmatic and even skeptically probing, against the critics insisting that the healers work off of fear or “blind faith.”<sup>49</sup> This was a different sort of skepticism than the one the Colegio invoked—a broader skepticism that could be aimed at the M.D.s themselves, generating objections to Western medicine and to its delivery. This directly contradicted the Colegio’s vision of rural types too stupid to seek out treatment for themselves—and makes the rejection of Colegio doctors knowing and deliberate: rural patients were not “rejecting” modern medicine or gormlessly credulous towards the *santeros* and *curanderos* they consulted. Inexpensive healers were attacked in the name of public health, but there was no social medicine offered to replace them.

Steven Palmer notes that the frame of “the biomedical zealot” is attractive when recuperating what can be termed as “indigenous knowledge”: even in cases when that dichotomy might be completely *accurate*, it is still incomplete. Study of herbalism has been colored by its 1970s valorization as a mode of resistance against a technocratic medicine geared for state control<sup>50</sup>—an attractively eclectic foil to present-day medicine.<sup>51</sup> *Curanderismo* was not targeted for fraud

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<sup>49</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 22-24. Macdonald, “Believing Sceptically,” in Levine, ed., *Medicine and the Politics of Knowledge* 2012: 104-09.

<sup>50</sup> Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993: 112. Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003: 9. Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories* 2009: 123-30.

<sup>51</sup> Eric Gable particularly condemns any assumption that reasoning, skepticism, and empirical behavior had been imported from outside (the “West,” or Abrahamic religion), that his West African informants were inherently magical in their thinking. One could always believe in both “service magicians” and in charlatans, and of course seek to avoid wasting your money on the latter. Despite translating to “witch” in English, a *brujo* is closer to a hired *curandero* or *santero* than the 17th-century Western European narrative of ordinary people accused of covertly undermining their neighborhood in Satan’s name. Donald Cosentino outright condemns most ethnographers of Santería as too “obsequious” and “uncritical,” demanding they cite Robert Todd Carroll’s *Skeptic’s Dictionary*. He condemned his *santeros* for taking advantage of and duping the overly credulous—though in this case it was the scholars rather than the clients who were being tagged with naïve supernaturalism toward something potentially perilous. “Recuperation” of practices framed as “premodern” or “traditional” can easily slide into analytical passivity. Gable also frames the “magical” as something to be overcome, and religiosity as inherently authoritarian and hierarchical. The “*brujos*” José López Rega and Roberto Suazo Córdova, the *sangomas* backed by Manto Tshabalala-Msimang,

or selling patent medicine, but to eradicate a class of healers altogether. When prominent M.D.s began collecting herbal lore they likewise became the Colegio's targets—as medical rivals accused of even stoking guerrilla warfare, not as warranting ineffective treatments.

Unlike students or fortunetellers, but like the *Madres* (Chapter 7) or priests (Chapter 9), doctors could not be discredited and ignored as a group.<sup>52</sup> Without a united medical cohort in the state or among doctors, the Colegio's own attacks began to discredit them instead. Goffman emphasizes how marginalization and stigma aim at ignoring members of society to avoid engaging them; however, the division within the medical community was closer to Cohen's requirements for more indirect denial, aimed against those supplying warrant for a story and its witnesses (Introduction, "Epistemology").

The 1982 austerity plan written by Negroponte and presented by Miguel Facussé directly targeted nutrition, health, and welfare, and gave U.S.-based multinationals deregulation and tax exemptions. By 1984, the austerity program had caused two-thirds of existing state-run rural clinics to be closed due to a lack of supplies, staffers, and money. By 1987, even schools were being shuttered. Over 1982-86 the state cut social spending—health, education, public works—

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nor the *bokor* François Duvalier, certainly do not represent anything close to either progressive politics or medicine. On the other hand again, Fidel Castro easily deployed Santería imagery. Marc Blanchard, "From Cuba with Saints," *Critical Inquiry* 35:3 (Spring 2009): 383-416. Donald Cosentino, review of *Santería Healing: A Journey into the Afro-Cuban World of Divinities, Spirits, and Sorcery* by Johan Wedel, *The Journal of Religion* 85:3 (July 2005): 521-22. Gable, "The Decolonization of Consciousness," *American Ethnologist* 22:2 (May 1995): 252. Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 2018). Ivor L. Miller, "Religious Symbolism in Cuban Political Performance," *TDR* 44:2 (Summer 2000): 30-55. Michael Taussig, "Viscerality, Faith, and Skepticism: Another Theory of Magic," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6:3 (Winter 2016): 453-83.

<sup>52</sup> Note that there is never a stereotype that does not make an epistemic judgment—that the target is not *reputable*, *reliable*, *honest*, or at least inherently less *likely* to be. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963): 4.

by 10 percent a year.<sup>53</sup> In 1980, nearly two-thirds of government spending had gone to social and economic programs—health, education, agriculture—and one third to the military and servicing external debt; by 1984, the situation was reversed, with 18 percent of the 1983 budget going to debt servicing.<sup>54</sup> Between 1980 and 1987 unemployment rose 61%, the real minimum wage fell 25% for urban workers, and the military budget was up almost 50%.<sup>55</sup> The already-poor conditions of health, malnutrition, and medical care in the early 1980s deteriorated by the early 90s. Honduran rural medicine contracted to a few emergency clinics, offering what elitists called “a primitive, vulgar and empirical medicine.”<sup>56</sup> So by mid-decade the Colegio—some of whose members were in the Honduran Congress—was blaming curanderos for worsening all the country’s diseases, had allowed HIV to spread, and part of the same problem as the shockingly-high infant and maternal mortality rates.

In cases where state or private medicine ever *was* acknowledged to have failed, the curanderos were still scapegoated. The Colegio portrayed themselves as rescuing Honduras from ill-health and shoddy healing, as undoing ignorance and misery by enforcing scientific medicine, they were instead reinforcing the elitism and anti-ruralism that had actually permitted the vene-

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<sup>53</sup> The four-page “memorandum” ordered the new President to remove price controls on milk, bread, eggs, and medicine and lower taxes on mining corporations and other U.S.-based multinationals. As a stiff technocrat rather than a cowboy-hatted *populacho*, José Azcona would be even more dedicated to privatization. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 129. Alberto Alvarez García, *Honduras: Contradicciones internas ante la estrategia norteamericana en Centroamérica* (Havana: Centro de Estudios sobre América, 1989): 41. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 101, 116. Stan Persky, *America, the Last Domino: U.S. Foreign Policy in Central America Under Reagan* (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1984): 174. Philip L. Shepherd, “Honduras,” in Morris J. Blachman, William M. LeoGrande, and Kenneth E. Sharpe, eds., *Confronting Revolution: Security Through Diplomacy in Central America* (New York: Pantheon, 1986): 140. Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984): 59-60.

<sup>54</sup> Larry Hufford, *The United States in Central America: An Analysis of the Kissinger Commission Report*. (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen, 1989): 255. Mark B. Rosenberg and Philip L. Shepherd, eds., *Honduras Confronts its Future: Contending Perspectives on Critical Issues* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986): 14. Shepherd, “Honduras,” in Blachman, LeoGrande, and Sharpe, eds., *Confronting Revolution* 1986: 132, 141. White, *The Morass* 1984: 194.

<sup>55</sup> “Ayuda económica y militar de EEUU a Honduras” and “Compra de aviones F-5-E,” *Boletín Informativo CEDOH* 74 (June 1987). “Soldados norteamericanos muertos en Honduras” and “Relaciones EEUU–Honduras,” *Boletín Informativo CEDOH* 75 (July 1987). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 129.

<sup>56</sup> José Modesto Meza, “La farsa de las brigadas médicas,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Oct. 22, 1986.

real disease and death rates.<sup>57</sup> While the Colegio neglected rural areas, it announced that the curanderos were the healers who were providing the country's patients with nothing.

As the Colegio avoided providing treatment to rural areas while publicly backing the claims of the FF.AA.-backed Suazo Córdova government, the state cut its medical spending to the bone: combined with a longer-scale economic crisis, the policies of the Facussé Memo led to literal empty shelves. It was real, material factors that impelled the doctors associated with the Ministry of Public Health to turn to pragmatic secondhand alternatives in the face of the ongoing Colegio campaign. The Colegio's failure was real and material, not some rhetorical squabble over a perceived slippage of hegemony. Elitist doctors made a point of not only avoiding bringing treatment to rural areas, but of objecting when Honduran or Cuban doctors did so, because the latter exposed decades of outright abysmal neglect by the Colegio.

A major factor in this emphasis on local knowledge and protection of medicine-rich jungle as a national resource was the mounting and increasingly-lethal shortage of prepared medicines that had been sharpening since 1979: instead, Hondurans would work to cure themselves with what was locally available, at least. The state could even use the existing network of curanderos to bring more modernized techniques and equipment into the unserved countryside. The liberal, populist *El Tiempo* was not sympathetic to *curanderismo* or *tradicionalista* politicians claiming preternatural powers, but its articles emphasized that scanty training and resources left the Third World to turn to its own culture and flora.

Medicines were imported, and the prices kept rising during the late 1980s, emptying pharmacy shelves. Noticeable pharmaceutical shortages marked 1980-82, and began again 1986-87 past the end of the decade: even modern medical facilities were lacking aspirin, bandages,

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<sup>57</sup> "Lo ratifican en congreso: Colegio Médico participará en guerra contra los 'brujos,'" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 14, 1990.



antibiotics—even tape.<sup>58</sup> President Rafael Callejas’s “structural adjustment” beginning in 1989 further defunded public health and caused further medical and social problems, especially with an end to pharmaceutical subsidies and the state hospitals’ vulnerability to cuts.<sup>59</sup> “*Brujos* and *curanderos* are ignorant people, without culture,” advice columnist Julio Riera wrote in 1985, but concluded that nothing else could be afforded and campaigns were cruel without bringing in replacements.<sup>60</sup> Certified M.D.s working for the state were impelled to analyze and catalogue native medicinal plants, and with sectors as widespread as clergy, small-town herbalists, and civil-society organizations.<sup>61</sup>

To the Colegio doctors dedicated to hunting it down, herbalism was now no longer just a threat coming from the corner pharmacist carrying patent medicines and elixirs.<sup>62</sup> As pharmacy shelves emptied from the budget cuts imposed by a succession of neoliberal Presidents,<sup>63</sup> the medical faculty of the National Autonomous University, the Ministry of Public Health, and representatives of the Pan-American Health Organization and the World Health Organization all met in 1988 to treat local remedies seriously as part of official medical training and practice—

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<sup>58</sup> “En las farmacias sólo hay medicinas para mes y medio,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 14, 1984.

<sup>59</sup> “Lo ratifican en congreso: Colegio Médico participará en guerra contra los ‘brujos,’ ” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 14, 1990.

<sup>60</sup> Julio Riera, “Tía Florentina y los brujos,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 19, 1985. “La medicina popular en la sistema de salud,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 23, 1988. David Sowell, “Race and the Authorization of Biomedicine in Yucatán, Mexico,” in Juanita de Barros *et al.*, eds., *Health and Medicine in the Circum-Caribbean, 1800-1968* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> Since the 1980s India also sought local substitutes when pharmaceuticals were no longer forthcoming. Sujatha and Abraham, *Medical Pluralism in Contemporary India* 2012: 12.

<sup>62</sup> Cohen, “The Ethnomedicine of the Garífuna (Black Caribs) of Río Tinto, Honduras,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 57:1 (January 1984).

<sup>63</sup> Suazo Córdova actually made a slight populist swing, especially refusing to end the lempira’s relative overvaluation from its peg to the U.S. dollar. Near-elimination of the state’s economic powers (coupled with increased military and police spending) was the model for the “structural adjustment” requirements imposed on borrower countries after 1981 by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They restricted the state’s traditional role of ensuring reproduction of labor, and mandating “capital mobility” and “labor flexibility” when it came to production (see Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives,” n19). This model of economics, from the 1983 Caribbean Basin Initiative to the 2004 Central America Free Trade Agreement, was first imposed in Chile and Argentina after their respective 1973 and 1976 coups: even the new chief of Gen. Pinochet’s secret police, the avowed neo-Nazi Gen. Manuel Contreras, was vocally opposed to the deliberate creation of beggars on the street, as causing disorder. Saul Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine: National Security and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988): 123.

they had made a move and crossed the supposed boundary between science and fakery that the Colegio had declared. Headliner Dr. Juan Almeyda Bonilla, UNAH's 1979-82 Rector, noted that 70-80 percent of Hondurans used "popular medicine" due to illiteracy, national poverty, and a sharp absence of healthcare. He said traditional healing had been "devalued by the dominant medical culture," but now they were considering whether even the herbs could even be cultivated at "industrial" scale.<sup>64</sup> But the project was aimed at more than the usual extractive development of tropical plants researched and grown for biomedicine, rendering select elements of herbalism as "scientific" now, the chemicals in the plant species verified and *properly* employed.<sup>65</sup>

Father Fausto Milla, who returned in 1985 after fleeing threats to his life in 1981 (Chapter 4), had begun gathering medicinal plants for the poor in his parish of Corcuín near the Salvadoran border: for this the Army accused him of preparing the locals for insurrection in 1989, as teaching them survival and medic tactics for jungle warfare.<sup>66</sup> On high alert after a resurgence of Cinchonero rebellion in 1988 and fearing another socially-active guerrilla priest like the murdered James Carney, it was the herbalism that the military cited as proof of subversion. Upon his 1985 return Father Milla opened a store in Santa Rosa de Copán, selling herbs and natural drinks—and constantly watched by discreet plainclothesmen. The government clinic indeed re-

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<sup>64</sup> "En congreso médico: Investigarán si medicina natural causa a más daños que beneficios," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 20, 1988.

<sup>65</sup> This has always been the entire point of bioprospecting: there will always be a good likelihood that the "cure" for HIV/AIDS would come from a plant somewhere in Africa. "Traditional healing"—*i.e.*, once-disdained practices formerly defined as unscientific—came under specific academic interest in the 1970s, including the use of plants—and a awareness that pharmaceutical multinationals had little qualm about quietly identifying a species and hiring locals to harvest it for a pittance. Dolby, "Reflections on Deviant Science," in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 41. Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories* 2009: 123, 128-31.

<sup>66</sup> "El padre Fausto Milla, un eterno perseguido," from *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Aug. 22, 1989, in CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 100 (August 1989). "La persecución de la Iglesia en el occidente de Honduras," CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 112 (August 1990). "Padre Fausto Milla, al servicio de la salud y de los pobres," Equipo Nizkor, 2007, <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/honduras/doc/milla.html>. "Honduras: Human Rights: Father Fausto Milla and His Assistant Flee Honduras," July 12, 2011, <https://hondurashumanrights.wordpress.com/2011/07/12/father-fausto-milla-and-his-assistant-flee-honduras>.

ported a 70 percent decrease in admissions after it opened, as campesinos were taught to treat more minor issues themselves.<sup>67</sup>

Dr. Almendáres Bonilla and Father Fausto Milla's project directly condemned Western medicine as colonial, displacing Native practice and conceptions, concluding with the elite inviting in a U.S. occupation that had caused the spread of HIV.<sup>68</sup> Herbalism was connected to a social medicine that took injustice and military and criminal violence into consideration as medical issues.<sup>69</sup> They contrasted herbalism with dependency and scarce imported pharmaceuticals and pesticides: even land use, and the economic distortions and malnutrition it generated, had to come under social medicine's consideration. The two academics stated development and Progress had been false hopes from the beginning.<sup>70</sup>

The project began the process of formalizing, codifying, and testing herbal practice.<sup>71</sup> Campesinas and curanderos were asked about the plants they used and their role in providing treatment.<sup>72</sup> Now clergy and doctors were busy across the country gathering testimonies and

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<sup>67</sup> Philip Tamminga, "Healing by Tradition: Herbs and Liberation Theology in Honduras," in Christine Meyer and Faith Moosang, eds., *Living with the Land: Communities Restoring the Earth* (Philadelphia and Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society, 1992).

<sup>68</sup> Michael Löwy, *The War of Gods: Religion and Politics in Latin America*, Critical Studies in Latin American and Iberian Cultures (London and New York: Verso, 1996): 61. Fausto Milla *et al.*, *Tierra, vida y esperanza* (Tegucigalpa: Instituto Ecumenico Hondureño de Servicios a la Comunidad, 1994): 15-17, 26, 29, 135.

<sup>69</sup> Juan Almendáres Bonilla, "Hacia una medicina popular," Centro de Documentación de Honduras, *Boletín Informativo* special 46 (May 1990).

<sup>70</sup> *I.e.*, that economic development—*Progress*—would automatically undo all of its own damaging side-effects, if only given enough time. Löwy, *The War of Gods* 1996: 61. Milla *et al.*, *Tierra, vida y esperanza* 1994: 15-17, 26, 29, 135.

<sup>71</sup> The academic investigators made sure to differentiate Honduran herbs' effectiveness from any of the associated beliefs. The literature on bioprospecting is often split between seeing it as 1. just another new resource for respectable pharmaceutical science, while others see it as 2. a revolutionary concept moving beyond "allopathy." The concept of "biopiracy" goes further: here those appropriating the tropical plant species have a need to discount and discredit the local knowledge the pharmaceutical multinationals rely on—that it was not legitimate medical knowledge until incorporated into the "Western" system; again we see reinforcement of boundaries by their crossing. Lionel Robineau *et al.*, *Towards a Caribbean Pharmacopeia: TRAMIL 4 Workshop, Tela, Honduras, November 1989* (San-to Domingo: Enda-Caribe and UNAH, 1991): 11. Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories* 2009: 6, 9, 229-31.

<sup>72</sup> Juan Almendáres Bonilla, "Hacia una medicina popular," Centro de Documentación de Honduras, *Boletín Informativo* special 46 (May 1990).

teaching a list of useful local herbs, contributing their own reputations to the new medical discipline and warranting not just specific herbal knowledge as scientific, but a new process aimed at questioning rural herbalists and identifying the plants' effects.<sup>73</sup> So not only had state doctors refused to abide by the elitist doctors' concept of "medical science," but were approaching the same *curanderismo* that the Colegio had dedicated itself to prosecuting.

There was no anti-UNAH campaign by the Colegio to match that against healers and *santeros*, but the Colegio maintained a firm line—this time against their fellow credentialed and recognized doctors. The campaigns at the end of the 1980s against the curanderos appear to have been particularly vicious and political, and by 1990 the Colegio was more open in blaming them for their own failure. To elitist doctors, the medical establishment itself had surrendered control over the terms of discussion, University doctors themselves betraying the community's hard-won legitimacy by letting irrationalism in through the front gate of the bastion of "scientific medicine." To the Colegio, Honduras's popular-medicine movement threatened M.D.s' unity and epistemic superiority. The anti-herbalist campaign could also implicitly fight back against UNAH and the Ministry of Public Health. By the time Hurricane Mitch struck in 1998 (below, "Doctors from Overseas"), the Colegio's stance remained that medicine should be in its hands, and not those of any other recognized institution.

The history of Latin American medicine suggests that the Colegio *oficialistas'* resistance to any form of herbalism was heightened when the University showed interest in it, in the same way that the campaigns against Santería were driven by the influence of that practice among top officials. As an imagined counter-ideology to Modernity and Progress, "ruralism" was far more

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<sup>73</sup> Paul House, Sonia Lagos-Witte, and Corina Torres, *Manual popular de 50 plantas medicinales de Honduras*, 3rd ed. (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1990). Milla *et al.*, *Tierra, vida y esperanza* 1994: 20-24.

threatening when it appeared in the city, as opposed to keeping the countryside backwards and sick. More prosaically, for the Colegio to back down from its uncompromising line against herbalism because other doctors—recognized by itself and backed by the state that the Colegio had defended—would show that their earlier condemnation had been unwarranted, that the old criterion of exclusion had been wrong all along.

Like U.S. “movement skeptics,” the Colegio’s hardliners believed they were defending a beleaguered science and its benefits being put at risk—not just from fortunetellers, faith healers, or “fringe” scientists, but by M.D.s with university degrees and state employment. But their ideology insisted that what they were defending was simply *science*, and was thus unable to explain the actions that the UNAH and Ministry of Public Health regarded as no less scientific—the exploration and experimentation necessary to keep the pharmacopeia growing, especially as imports became dangerously unavailable.

The Colegio’s effort to keep suspect and “unscientific” practices from acceptance and integration into official Honduran medicine was to conceal 1. the contradictions inherent in declaring “scientific medicine” as an impermeable bastion, the ideological consequence of 2. its flagrant medical neglect of rural areas. Official herbalism was a “hybrid” that threatened to debase the profession by *researching* the scourge of superstition rather than abolishing it, by breathing new life into what should be a rural relic of a pre-scientific past. But to the ideologues the country’s top doctors had “abandoned” their training and “gone native,” using quacks (called *empíricos* in Latin American Spanish, in a suitably-epistemic twist) as sources of knowledge and their own “instincts”—their own experience, in other words.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003: 13, 231-32. Sowell, “Race and the Authorization of Biomedicine in Yucatán, Mexico,” in de Barros *et al.*, eds., *Health and Medicine in the Circum-Caribbean, 1800-1968* 2009: 90-92. Margaret J. Wiener, “Dangerous Liaisons and Other Tales from the Twilight Zone: Sex, Race, and Sorcery in Colonial Java,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49:3 (July 2007): 495-526.

Epistemology particularly helps untangle the undeclared “sides” within the medical field which, as ideology would have it, was a science and thus should *not* be capable of such conflicts at all. Historians of science have remarked that the most common explanation for scientific disputes is explained as being extrinsic to the usual process of science—that they are blocked or thwarted by ideologies held by the state or the scientists, “politicized” by direct state intervention or threat of force, derailed by personal issues or financial interest, etc. But the usual conflict was not over any outside interference in science, but a “defender” of science attacking another figure making scientific claims, without themselves being a scientist familiar with the processes and institutions of the scientific discipline in question.

In “classical epistemology,” the “Skeptical” school refers to a radical empiricism that there can be no way to justify any claim without personal verification—that every experiment supporting a theory must be re-run, that the roundness of the Earth must be re-verified. This exists more as an illustrative caricature than a real stance on sense-perception.<sup>75</sup> The “denialists” studied by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, or the doctors of the Colegio in this chapter, attacked accepted science by insisting that it was under siege by politicized or inappropriate figures who were only masquerading as scientists—pseudoscientific “cranks” taking advantage of the concept of “fringe” science under guise of new mainstream scientific subdisciplines. But both cranks and denialists are defined by being overly skeptical, that they declared the accepted processes and products of science were being shielded from the rules of evidence, demanding it be proven from the very first principles.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture* 1996: 28. Richard Moran, “Getting Told and Being Believed,” in Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Epistemology of Testimony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 274-75, 280. Potter, *Representing Reality* 1996: 86.

<sup>76</sup> Newer physical sciences were labeled as “soft” sciences—statistical arguments, the computer modeling behind theories of nuclear winter and global warming, the environmental epidemiology of tobacco, ethyl lead, and pesticides. Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product* 2008: 41-42. Mulkay, *Science and*

Sociology of knowledge warns that ignorance and truth *coexist*—that they shape one another, that they should not be analyzed separately.<sup>77</sup> Following David Bloor, they insist that it is not only false scientific outcomes where incorrect theories could produce answers that nevertheless explained real data that require a sociological account. One cannot simply appeal to a successful theory's *post-facto* truth: to understand how some theories were wrong, we must understand why correct theories were right.<sup>78</sup> Contemporary observers described the extent that David Stoll or Fred A. Leuchter, Jr., insisted they were only trying to establish and verify the basic facts of the Guatemalan or German states' annihilation of the Maya or the Jews as obsessive, as *disquieting*. Their epistemic stance was just one of "prove and verify," but the central topic of debate was their concealed motive.<sup>79</sup> This gets closer to the heart of "denialism"—that there *is* was no way accepted by scientists to keep this sort of verificationism away from the most accepted, mainstream consequence of science: it was simply agreed to be "badgering" or "crankery" in bad faith. If Thomas Kuhn's definition of "normal science" was ever second-guessed, at least there were accepted procedures for doing so.<sup>80</sup>

Steven Paul Palmer and David J. Hess note that definitions of "irregular" and "official" medicine lacked any inherent long-standing difference: yesterday's quackery became today's

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*the Sociology of Knowledge* (1979) 1992: 112-15. Oreskes and Conway, "Challenging Knowledge," in Proctor and Shiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008. Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* 2010. Proctor, *Cancer Wars* 1995.

<sup>77</sup> José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 294.

<sup>78</sup> Nancy Tuana, "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance," in Proctor and Shiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 108.

<sup>79</sup> To David Hume or Ludwig Wittgenstein, a rational human (by definition) simply did not *have* certain doubts. The visits of Leuchter (himself an executioner) to swab down the gas chambers of several death camps for cyanide residue drew condemnation in and of themselves, for bringing crude and questionable empirical *verification* to humanity's greatest single atrocity. Lackey, "Testimony," in Goldman and Whitcomb, eds., *Social Epistemology* 2001: 76. Storr, *The Unpersuadables* 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Collins and Pinch, "The Construction of the Paranormal," in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 251. Merton, "The Sociology of Knowledge," in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 54. Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (1979) 1992: 85.

conventional practice, and vice-versa.<sup>81</sup> History of science examines the mutual relationship between science and “pioneering,” “fringe,” or “pseudo” science on its boundaries, mutually constituting themselves in terms of their supposed opposite. One common pattern is that after the phase of resistance to a new concept or framing, both of the formerly-disputing sides makes believe that the now-accepted idea never faced any resistance.<sup>82</sup>

Part of what drove the ideology of medicine as a *modernizing* project comes from the fact that numerous disciplines—from surgery and pharmacology to osteopathy and midwifing—had had to undergo a rationalizing processes to elevate them to “professions.” Historians of medicine assert that U.S. and European M.D.s themselves had been legitimated from a mass of irregular practitioners at the end of the 19th century, producing a “elitist medicine” championed by those who had gotten themselves legitimated.<sup>83</sup> This legitimation required that its own fact be effaced—that there had ever been a contention between doctors. Mainstream thinking could be dismissed as *outré* pseudoscience a generation later, and a field or discipline was deemed scien-

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<sup>81</sup> Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979, is a lode of sciences later rejected, describing the social and scientific processes of the rejection and then erasure from the domain of “mainstream” science. This “erasure” had to be quiet, and uncontroversial, to even take place. Phrenology, luminiferous ether, phlogiston, and homeopathy originated in accepted 18th- and 19th-century science, and several key elements remain accepted to today. This makes them protoscience, but in the skeptical literature they are go-to “weird” pseudoscience—a definition *consequent* to the passage of “nonscience” into “science” and vice-versa. Historically there is no self-evident division between science and pseudoscience.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Kuhn insisted on a narrative of a threatened establishment: facts not explainable under the dominant “paradigm” of “normal science” accumulated, until their verity forced acceptance and change. Both Pierre Bourdieu’s theories (that the transmission of true ideas, including scientific ones, follow economic factors and the transmitters’ social capital) and Foucault’s (that the spread of knowledge is conditioned by power, force, and negotiation) go beyond Kuhn, who focused on the trueness and reproducibility of a scientific discovery. Max Planck said new theories were simply a generational issue among the scientists—science advancing one funeral at a time. Whatever the explanation, the process of a theory “migrating” between nonscience and science, or vice-versa, is not interpreted by scientists or historians as the self-evident result of accumulating evidence, or the progressive advance of time. It is something that must be concealed—science had to stay *science*, or else the integrity of the entire process of producing scientific knowledge itself could come into question. (See above, n43.) Dick Pels, “Mixing Metaphors: Politics or Economics of Knowledge?” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 279.

<sup>83</sup> Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003: 3-4, 121, 124, 126, 138, 231, 235.



tific or expelled through a human process, not because of any self-evident characteristics.<sup>84</sup> History of science makes a key contribution that the fact that what was or was not “medicine” *could* change, and that that fact had to be concealed in the usual manner of ideologies—objective material research *ought* not to have any such disputes in the first place.<sup>85</sup>

Here, arbitrariness was a strength rather than a vulnerability: it served the needs of an ideology by mystifying the notion of inherently “self-evident science” and by concealing its historical contingency. Ideologues insisted that science had to be fortified, since the stakes of the unity of science was apocalyptic consequences for all human society if the bastion “fell.”<sup>86</sup> Especially challenging was that the boundary was reinforced by being *crossed*: therefore scientists, being already “inside,” could pose the greatest potential threat of all, now requiring internal policing rather than debunking nonscientists.<sup>87</sup> The Honduran state-backed effort to officially regulate, promote, and even license herbalism threatened to expose the lack of a firm, obvious, or permanent dividing line between the “scientific” and “antiscientific” practitioners of Honduran health.

So here the relationship of “magic”—a specific religious tradition connected to supernatural practice—with the state is a separate issue from disputes between M.D.s. Peter Pels concludes that, rather than some monolithic Modernity pushing back practices and beliefs it deems

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<sup>84</sup> Jojada Verrips, “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: Modern Medicine Between Magic and Science,” in Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels, *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003): 236.

<sup>85</sup> Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993.

<sup>86</sup> Carleton B. Chapman, “Medical Education: The Physician—Then, Now and Tomorrow,” in Charles Vevier, ed. *Flexner: 75 Years Later: A Current Commentary on Medical Education* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1987): 47-62. Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993: 88, 155, 158, 160.

<sup>87</sup> For example, “insulin shock therapy” professed to target mental issues by putting patients through weeks-long diabetic comas: one key motive for this therapy was to make psychiatry seem more medical—more “scientific”—than simply a “talking cure.” A few decades later, those same shock therapies were brandished as archetypal “pseudoscience,” a mockery using the *indicators* of science without any of the recognized *processes*. Deborah Blythe Doroshov, “Performing a Cure for Schizophrenia: Insulin Coma Therapy on the Wards,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 62:2 (April 2007): 213-43. Hess, *Science and the New Age* 1993. Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003: 124.

as superstition or magic, the state is “haunted” by what it represses, that they are essential to the myths it builds about itself. Secularization is betrayed by its reliance on the supernatural as an “Other” it is intended to destroy, but never can.<sup>88</sup> Michael Taussig similarly finds that the problems still bedeviling modernized states (especially if unsure about their “Modern” status) are blamed on the “primitive,” the state legitimating itself by replacing and repressing the latter, but still unable to shake its haunting specter. It justifies itself by fighting the “premodern,” and thus ultimately needs it.<sup>89</sup>

### Surgeon-States and Doctor-States

We have the three rough players in the medical debate—1. “elitist” doctors backing a counterinsurgent state; 2. social medicine characterized by doctors employed by the state in public health; and 3. the curanderos themselves, herbalists and eclectic healers, typically with the Catholic- and African-derived practices and iconography of Santería. Those in this last category had a diversity of relations to the state and “scientific medicine”: pharmacies could sell the same products as *botánicos*, and many of the prosecuted curanderos had licenses from the municipality itself in the absence of a local M.D.

As a religion with beliefs and practitioners, Santería was as connected to politics as much as Catholicism or Evangelicalism (Chapter 9). Carleton Corrales particularly warned that the “*brujos*” had upper- and middle-class clients, giving them disproportionate influence and drasti-

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<sup>88</sup> Peter Pels, “Introduction: Magic and Modernity,” in Meyer and Pels, eds., *Magic and Modernity* 2003: 38.

<sup>89</sup> Pels, Taussig, and Coronil agree that magic is at home in modernity, not an intrusion or antithesis, repressed and concealed, but always a potential resource to be tapped by officials. Modernity is “enchanted”—mystified, really—into a narrative where the state has the power to directly dispense an abstraction of “health” rather than the determination to provide healthcare: legerdemain rather than budgeting. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997). Pels, “Introduction,” in Meyer and Pels, eds., *Magic and Modernity* 2003: 30-33. Michael Taussig, *The Magic of the State* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997): 23. Waitzkin *et al.*, “Social Medicine Then and Now,” *American Journal of Public Health* 91:10 (October 2001).

cally threatening society and democracy by making its leaders “suggestible,” damaging even upper-class reason and decision-making, a catastrophic threat to state function as well as threat to well-being.<sup>90</sup> It was the role of *santeros* and *parasicólogos* at the apex of urban society, the officer and official elite, that spurred professional Hondurans’ outrage at its influence and continued existence. Not only was the Ministry of Public Health inviting it into the halls of science, but educated urbanites and elected statesmen were consulting clairvoyants and faith healers.<sup>91</sup>

Col. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, in charge of Honduras’s northwest, was intensely involved in San Pedro Sula’s anti-Santería campaigns until his 1982 ascent to Commander-in-Chief. The 1979 campaign he launched shows the fundamental ambiguity of the situation: it was enforced by Minister of Governance Col. Cristóbal Díaz García, who ordered FUSEP to stop municipalities from officially licensing “cartomancy, chiromancy, interpretations of dreams,” divination, and herbalism.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, the 1990 assault was justified on the fact that under Honduras’s Municipal Law curanderos were authorized to exercise their profession in towns where there were no professional doctors.<sup>93</sup> But this practice of licensing curanderos was not true integration: there was no large-scale incorporation into medical campaigns, as with Brazil’s anti-

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<sup>90</sup> “Opinan los sicólogos: Los parasicólogos: Brujos del siglo XX,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 4, 1979.

<sup>91</sup> The teachers, lawyers, pharmacists, etc., of the 20th-century “professional class” around the world consulted traditional health workers—who in turn modernized and adapted. The process of modernization itself created the category of “traditional,” separating pragmatism and empiricism vs. rationalism and academic legitimation. This 1. disrupts the contemporary ideologies that “spiritism” was a fossil of the rural past, but also indicates 2. that the interpretation that the literate classes and the state simply “irradiated” society with “biomedicine”—from the top down and from the center outwards—is categorically flawed. María Paula G. Meneses concludes that, since they constitute one another, traditional and modern/scientific medicine cannot really be *separated* from one another: one is defined by the other. María Paula G. Meneses, “‘When There are No Problems, We are Healthy, No Bad Luck, Nothing’: Towards an Emancipatory Understanding of Health and Medicine,” in Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed., *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London and New York: Verso, 2007): 352-80.

<sup>92</sup> “Brujos y advinadores serán sancionados por explotar los incautos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 7?, 1979. “Los brujos y adivinos se burlan de gobernación,” *El Tiempo*, Feb. 22, 1979.

<sup>93</sup> “Exitosa primera etapa de campaña contra los brujos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1990.

HIV efforts, India's explicitly scientific public-health regime,<sup>94</sup> or the entirely-unique system of Costa Rica.<sup>95</sup>

President Roberto Suazo Córdova was both a country doctor and reputed to be a *santero*—“the *brujo* of La Paz.”<sup>96</sup> He was condemned for using Santería to appeal for votes and his method of controlling the Liberal Party called “folkloric” and anti-modern by newspapers and critics within the party. A controversy broke out over the late *santera* he had consulted, who had reportedly told him to run in 1981 and prophesied his victory, and the President's own “revelations” about the Virgin Mary's condemnation of the rival Nationalist Party.<sup>97</sup> By 1988 *El Tiempo* complained colorfully that even as ex-President he had turned Liberal politics into a “mysterious magical game, with *santones*, *brujos*, prognosticators, prophecies, crowned *pichetes* [lizards].”<sup>98</sup> Santería was associated with political backwardness through its very connection to a doctor-President, a *caudillo* who had seized the Liberal Party and terminated decades of its anti-militarist tradition.<sup>99</sup>

Liberals and reformists of the early 1980s framed Santería as keeping Honduras *folklórico* in politics, medicine, economics, etc.—as part of the same problems as corruption, hunger, and disease.<sup>100</sup> It was blamed for diverting the working classes from effective treatment and curanderos frightening their patients away from seeing anyone actually qualified to treat them

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<sup>94</sup> Sujatha and Abraham, *Medical Pluralism in Contemporary India* 2012:12.

<sup>95</sup> Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003.

<sup>96</sup> The city had its reputation as “the city of witches.” One example of Suazo Córdova's “folkloric” style of largesse was building a stadium with 35,000 seats—in a town of 10,000. “Al gato y al ratón,” *Patria* 5:199 (Mar. 14, 1981). “Aclara presunto ‘brujo’: ‘A pesar de que soy de La Paz, no soy brujo ni me he esfumado del DNI,’” *El Herald*, 26, 1984. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 73.

<sup>97</sup> “Según santera: Suazo Córdova evitó derrame gracias a ‘santos’ protectores,” *El Tiempo*, Oct. 25, 1989.

<sup>98</sup> “A la brujería de Suazo Córdova le teme presidente del Congreso,” *El Herald*, Aug. 28, 1987. “El oráculo de la bruja Martina y la noche negra de Honduras,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Dec. 10, 1988. “Según santera: Suazo Córdova evitó derrame gracias a ‘santos’ protectores,” *El Tiempo*, Oct. 25, 1989.

<sup>99</sup> “En el aire: Suazo Córdova vrs. Rivera López,” *El Tiempo*, Dec. 8, 1988. Douglas Montes, “Pájaro ‘encantado’ ...” *El Tiempo*, Dec. 9, 1988.

<sup>100</sup> René Cantarero, “Acusa la Iglesia Católica: Los brujos: Unos farsantes que viven de la ignorancia,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 20, 1986.

(above, “*Curanderismo* and *Medicalismo*”). That is to say, herbalism was not yet being framed as an avenue for rural self-sufficiency. Analysts have researched the preternatural in South Africa and Latin America as a metaphor for economic relations, and statecraft as secretly relying on numinous qualities to mediate its relation to those it governed.<sup>101</sup> As it did with Catholic religiosity, the state not only persecuted Santería to undermine its influence among officers and civilian officials, but the *santero* Suazo Córdova made his efforts at “religious engineering” to use it to intervene in civil politics. Ultimately, Santería’s state connection (through officials or the Presidency itself) did not strengthen *curandería*: it proved unable to mobilize establishment ties against the persecutions coming from the top of the military and medical hierarchies.

Social medicine was not necessarily centered on rural issues—let alone on incorporating the local figures that campesinos already used to tend to their health. But it had an emphasis on the patients and their local context, and a pragmatist willingness to consider treatments not accepted by the existing community of M.D.s. In this situation the doctors and professors at UNAH and the Ministry of Public Health were willing to make some experiment with local herb-lore, whereas the elitist doctors held that some sources were simply not pursuing in the first place: they in fact went further, maintaining an implicit narrative that those doctors who persisted in

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<sup>101</sup> There is plentiful literature giving the state a theological dimension, or a specific relationship to religious institutions (Chapter 9, “Introduction”). But state involvement in other preternatural traditions has notably less material to work with. For Iran-Contra, that would be the Latin American far right’s connections with the clandestine Propaganda 2 Masonic lodge or the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance’s leader López Rega, an astrologer and Spiritist. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, eds., *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2001). Coronil, *The Magical State* 1997. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 47-48, 69, 73. Miller, “Religious Symbolism in Cuban Political Performance,” *TDR* 44:2 (Summer 2000): 30-55. Yoshinobu Ota, “Strange Tales from the Road: A Lesson Learned in an Epistemology for Anthropology,” in Christina Toren and João de Pina-Cabral, eds., *The Challenge of Epistemology: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011). Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991): 43-44. Michael Taussig, *The Magic of the State* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

pursuing those sources were complicit in the damages done by faith-healers and false mediums, by giving warrant to herbalists, refusing to recognize the latter as a separate category.<sup>102</sup>

Steven Palmer's study of social medicine singles out Costa Rica's doctors for their un-doctrinaire attitude, pragmatically adopting techniques that worked even if they were inexplicable at the moment. But he also put them in the context of licensing and strengthening the fragile web of San José's public power after the 1948 civil war and abolition of the Army. Herbalists became pharmacists and curanderos public-health employees, *empíricos* were recognized as frontier doctors by the state, popular healers adopted clinical procedure, and pharmacists filled curanderos' prescriptions.<sup>103</sup> In Palmer's account, "biomedicine" won out even before the 1948 Revolution, not by suppressing the competition but by serving as the foundation for a welfare state unique in Latin America. The difference was that campesinos, curanderos, herbalists, santeros were not subject to outright epistemic justice—a complete block from meaningful knowledge-sharing.<sup>104</sup>

In Honduras, this effort by state-tied social doctors was attacked by elite doctors (also state-tied, but under their Colegio Médico bar association) in the name of scientific medicine. The Colegio doctors also supported the "medicalized" politics of Gen. Alvarez Martínez and President Suazo Córdova's civil-military state, dedicated to excising the supposed insurgent "cancer" in Nicaragua and to concealing the venereal diseases spreading around Palmerola. Ei-

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<sup>102</sup> Public Health concerned itself with rural herbalists—but never approached the media-hogging *amarillista* fortunetellers such as Marina Guifarro.

<sup>103</sup> Besides Steven Palmer, few Latin American histories of health seem to have covered healthworkers besides conventional M.D.s: herbalists, spiritual healers, and *curanderos*. Diego Armus, "History of Health and Disease in Modern Latin America," Oxford Bibliographies, Sept. 30, 2013, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766581/obo-9780199766581-0094.xml>. Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism* 2003.

<sup>104</sup> Even the worst extractive "biopiracy" is *not* strictly an example of "epistemic injustice": the exploitation *relied* on local knowledge, on taking it seriously. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 52. Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, "Introduction," in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, 2017: 1. Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* 2013: 3-4. Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories* 2009: 107-09.

ther one of these salients carried the threat of becoming potential stigmatizing news in the international and then the U.S. press. The police and military “surgeon-state” used doctrines of political contagion and social hygiene as motive and as justification for kidnapping, torture, and murder; officers presented militarized politics as an extension of medicine.<sup>105</sup>

Scholars, however, also warn against seeing medicine in general as only an enterprise to discipline and rationalize individual and society, to label difference and to legitimate cultural and ideological systems.<sup>106</sup> “Mainstream” doctors worked with herbalist and midwives precisely because modern medicine is not reducible to a tool of social engineering and repression, a boundary justifying elitism, or inevitably doomed to providing inappropriate treatments imposed from the top down. Gramscian analysis holds that—however much the state and its enforcement mechanisms have been created by the class that owns the material means of production to perpetuate the economic *status quo*<sup>107</sup>—the state as a whole is separate from any one economic class, which are dependent on their creation for initiative.<sup>108</sup> Following the Gramscian line, a state will have a need to seek hegemony, and the ability to fight for it. But this level of autonomy allowed doctors to bring social medicine into the state and challenge the Colegio’s entire concept

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<sup>105</sup> It appears that such medicalized analogies were what made “totalitarianism” different from previous autocracies and witch-hunts: now dissent was a deadly, contagious “virus” of the mind that had to be stamped out of the body politic. Even the *attacks* against it had to be “sanitized,” lest they re-evoked the plague by giving details of the dissidents’ thoughts.

<sup>106</sup> Amy Allen, “Power/Knowledge/Resistance: Foucault and Epistemic Injustice,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 191-92.

<sup>107</sup> Against both Foucault and Marx, Gramscians note that militaries are *stronger* where the civil state is weaker. This goes against 1. the Liberal assumption that they developed in tandem (and opposed by a Habermasian “civil society”) or 2. a materialist interpretation that the state force was an instrument of 2a. the classes “sponsoring” the state or 2b. the state itself, if interpreted as having more autonomy from the upper and middle classes. “Power” is defined not as pure threat of force, but the ability to have *others* act: therefore it is always in *others’* hands, requiring ideology to keep them convinced of the state and social order (or at least following orders). David L. Blaney, “Gramscian Readings of the Post-Cold War Transition,” review of Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, *Merston International Studies Review* 38:2 (October 1994): 283. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 99. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 122. Pels, “Mixing Metaphors,” in Stehr and Meja, eds., *Society & Knowledge* 2005: 285.

<sup>108</sup> Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 52. Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* 1989: 13-34, 41.

of what medicine *was*. So the doctors of the Ministry of Public Health faced attacks on both scientific and political grounds.

The Liberal ideology of “Progress” predominant in Central America until the 1960s held that economic growth, given due time without state “interference,” would treat all the problems that it had created. Once M.D.s began to deliberately work—even live—with the poor, social medicine directly attacked the concept that economic development inevitably lead to better income and health for the poorest. But in Honduras medicine and militarism converged and clashed with a surging budget for the FF.AA. (and even more U.S. cash and arms) while the civil government cut the healthcare budget: as with many other military regimes in 20th-century Latin America, the FF.AA.’s weakest point would prove to be its inability to rouse the economy to satisfy all classes.<sup>109</sup>

The National Security Doctrine had defined “subversion” as an all-pervasive and lethal threat to the whole “organism” of the nation, to be “treated,” excised, rooted out down to the last contaminated or alien cell. Gen. Alvarez Martínez favored talk of the “necessity of extirpating the malign cancer,” or the “gravity” or “imminence of the death of the patient.” The surgeon-state would keep the body politic healthy and provide ideological vaccinations against the general’s “virus of atheist totalitarianism.”<sup>110</sup> Proponents of the Doctrine declared that all aspects of society were potential avenues for conflict, insisting on a diabolical Communist menace behind

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<sup>109</sup> This weakness is present in the Brazilian regime’s efforts at self-sufficiency through Amazonian colonization, and “import-substitution industrialization” in the rest of Latin America, as much as it does to export-based Liberalism (see Chapter 6, “Alvarez Martínez: Beyond Condor,” n144).

<sup>110</sup> “Durante la concentración del ‘Día del Trabajo’: Alto a la infiltración marxista demandan los obreros organizados,” *El Heraldo*, May 3, 1982. “APROH: Origen, desarrollo y perspectivas,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 9 (March 1984). Leticia Salomón, “La Doctrina de las Seguridad Nacional en Honduras: Análisis de la caída del General Gustavo Alvarez Martínez,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* special 11 (May 1984). “Militarismo en Honduras: El reinado de Gustavo Alvarez: 1982-1984,” CEDOH, *Cronologías* 2 (August 1985). “105 años al servicio de la nación celebra Fuerza de Seguridad Pública,” *Proyecciones Militares* 8:67 (January 1987): 22-24.



of Army drug trafficking (Chapter 8, “A Right-Wing Student Riot”) and quotes from St. Ambrose of Milan (Chapter 9, “Regalado: Theological Usurpation”).<sup>111</sup>

With officers trained to perceive all problems in terms of counterinsurgency and domestic warfare: “superstition” was thus a military concern as much as herbalism or the Society of Jesus. In and of itself, Santería was considered a relatively rustic threat, if at all—rural superstition and rural subversion were not too tightly associated in government rhetoric, especially by comparison with the Red-baiting attacks on Catholicism. But the Doctrine contributed to FUSEP’s role as a very willing instrument of the Colegio, the ideologies of anti-ruralism and elitist medicine merging easily.

The programs against Santería and *curanderismo* recorded between 1979 and 1993 were highly martial in tone, and deployed counterinsurgent rhetoric. When *spiritualistas’* centers were raided in 1981, their tarot cards, books, and potions were displayed on the street, in the same manner as brothels or guerrilla safehouses at the time were in newspapers.<sup>112</sup> Gen. Paz García’s Minister of Governance Arnulfo Pineda López promised to “eradicate the presence of such persons” and the Colegio agreed that *curandería* was an “epidemic” that the state had to cure, excise, stamp out. This was no idle rhetoric: the state had perpetrated nearly two hundred “disappearances” that decade (Chapters 6 and 7). Governors like Norma Castro de Gallardo publicly urged citizens to denounce *brujos* to FUSEP (regardless of fear of reprisal), paralleling the calls for informers during the state’s periodic claims of the guerrillas’ subversive menace.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> In Argentina the hardliners considered Marxism as a virus, Peronism its latent phase, and lower-class participation in political processes as the vector. “Torres Arias utilizado en la campaña de desinformación orquestada por marxistas,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula Sept. 3, 1982. Roberto Williams, cartoon, *La Prensa*, Sept. 3, 1982. “La campaña antsubversiva: Caso La Estancia,” Centro de Investigación e Información Regional, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 16-26. “Comunicado de la Compañía de Jesús en Honduras,” CIIR, *Informaciones* 9, 2nd epoch (August-October 1987): 26-27. “La lógica militar es realmente ilógica,” *CODEH* 5:41 (October-December 1987).

<sup>112</sup> “‘Brujas’ tendrán que aprender ‘hechizos’ contra la policía,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 22, 1981.

<sup>113</sup> “Gobernadora de Cortés pide que denuncien a los brujos,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 11, 1986.

The media-friendly *santera* Marina Guifarro boasted of consultations by Congressional aides and UNAH's dean of economics in 1988.<sup>114</sup> Guifarro's predictions of plots and coups would outright panic the government into a national crackdown in 1991, President Rafael Callejas issuing executive decrees forbidding *santeros* and *curanderos* from speaking to the media or from operating at all. The Information Minister revealed that the real danger was that Guifarro's clients were FF.AA. officers' wives: even the top of the chain of command was infiltrated by unreason.<sup>115</sup> The attack was motivated *by* Santería's influence on the state, rather than over any rural "backwardness."

Gen. Alvarez Martínez's reign of terror ended 1984, but the FF.AA.'s Contra project was exposed and its existence publicly questioned 1985-86 (Chapter 5, "Azcona: Two Holy Weeks"),<sup>116</sup> leading to increasingly-heavy-handed campaigns against folk medicine and fortunetelling. Assuming that power is revealed when hegemony breaks down, the choice of target after the fact would not be arbitrary. It had openly lost its avowed legitimation—preventing foreign invasion—but combating Santería was as good a substitute justifications as any.<sup>117</sup>

The 1990 campaign in Cortés Department was nationwide and particularly militarized: Governor Ramón Flores Mejía combined medicalized politics with political repression, gathering the heads of FUSEP, Treasury Police, and the Ministry of Migration "to plan the eradication of all the exploiters of the innocence of the people."<sup>118</sup> Professor Flores Mejía was practically eu-

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<sup>114</sup> "No soy brujo, ni farsante soy clarividente: N. Rivera," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Jan. 29, 1988.

<sup>115</sup> Tim Johnson, Knight-Ridder, "Honduran Psychics Face Cloudy Future After One's Forecasts Vex Government," *The Miami Herald*, Dec. 8, 1991.

<sup>116</sup> "La 'zona recuperada' vuelve a manos de los nicaragüenses," *Boletín de la Defensa Nacional* 46, 2nd epoch (June 1986).

<sup>117</sup> Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 4. Leticia Salomón, *Poder civil y Fuerzas Armadas en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 1997): 93-94.

<sup>118</sup> "Hoy toman medidas contra los 'brujos' de emisoras," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 6, 1990. "Ojalá no sea como la lucha contra la Lambada: Guerra a los brujos," *El Tiempo*, July 7, 1990.

phoric, boasting of the full backing of the citizens, military authority, and medicine to “cleanse” society of false diviners and obscurantist “enemies of culture,” and backed by a letter from the Colegio Médico.<sup>119</sup> The governor said no “naturalist” medicine would be allowed in the metropolitan area, “spiritist centers” and meetinghouses to be eradicated: anyone treating patients with roots, potions, or spiritual effects was to be arrested.<sup>120</sup> Flores Mejía saw his various campaigns as different approaches to social prophylaxis and against disorder, from street lotteries to pornographic cinemas.<sup>121</sup> But he feared that this attack on fortunetelling would turn out as poorly as his campaign against the lambada dance (also backed by the Colegio and the Church).<sup>122</sup>

Superstition was not openly equated with subversion, but often rhetorically parallel to it. More importantly, “social prophylaxis” was double-barreled, hunting for superstition and Communist infiltration at once. 20th-century colonial powers had also attacked local magical belief, seeing that as preventing future uprisings.<sup>123</sup> Both campaigns in 1980s Honduras theorized the masses as childlike—unable to act and react on their own without outside agitators’ involvement.<sup>124</sup> The elites believed superstition made Hondurans easily misled by *santero* or *Cinchonero*—so mired in ignorance and primitive thinking that they were outright hallucinatory, making massacres mere rumors in a land of mass hysteria.

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<sup>119</sup> José Trinidad Mejía y Mejía, “Aplauda campaña contra ‘brujos,’” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 30, 1990.

<sup>120</sup> Radio stations hosting *ranchera* disc jockeys were threatened with US\$5,000 fines for suggesting randomized numbers for the lottery during their music shows. “Exitosa primera etapa de campaña contra los brujos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 17, 1990. “No soy brujo; me consultan hasta militares: Zavaleta,” *El Tiempo*, Sept. 13, 1990.

<sup>121</sup> “Gobernador anuncia que seguirá guerra contra brujos, adivinos y pornografía,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Sept. 11, 1990. “No soy brujo; me consultan hasta militares: Zavaleta,” *El Tiempo*, Sept. 13, 1990.

<sup>122</sup> “Ojalá no sea como la lucha contra la Lambada: Guerra a los brujos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, July 7, 1990.

<sup>123</sup> Wiener, “Dangerous Liaisons and Other Tales from the Twilight Zone,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2007.

<sup>124</sup> The lower class “victims” who hired the *brujos* were not prosecuted, on the belief they were mere literal *paganos*—“rural folk” in the original sense of “pagan.” “Ante tribunales llevarán a ‘bruja’ bajo acusación de calumnia y estafa,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Feb. 23, 1982. Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

## Doctors from Overseas

Honduras's medical issues in the 1980s were particularly defined by their relationship to the rural areas of the country. The Colegio's most elitist doctors openly neglected the countryside, and civil officials denied and denounced reports of the arrival of sexually-transmitted diseases in rural Comayagua. UNICEF revealed in 1989 that child malnutrition had risen in the 1970s and 80s, leaving 12,000 children dying annually from preventable illnesses. Infant mortality was 59 per 1,000 live births nationwide and 157 in rural areas thanks to lack of access to water and sanitation facilities. Only one-third of Hondurans had access to potable water and half lacked the most rudimentary sewage disposal. There were no clinics or doctors in isolated areas and what government clinics there were often lacked medicine and equipment. It was debt servicing and austerity that had left less money to import drugs, causing shortages.<sup>125</sup> When the older medical establishment did expend time and reputation, it did so on a campaign to combat "rural" *Santería* and *curanderismo*.<sup>126</sup> A decade later, they launched a campaign to expel Cuban doctors who had arrived after Hurricane Mitch in 1998. But the campaign against Cuban M.D.s was not too far different from the 1980s opposition to U.S. military's "Civic Action" programs.<sup>127</sup>

Rural medicine in Honduras was taken over by U.S. military doctors, whom Hondurans quickly noticed were operating out of ulterior motive. Honduras was the focus of U.S. forces' medical assistance in Central America: between 1983 and 1985 alone, joint military exercises allowing U.S. doctors and dentists to treat 94,000 Hondurans and to inoculate a hundreds of

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<sup>125</sup> Kent Norsworthy and Tom Barry, *Inside Honduras* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1994): 109-11.

<sup>126</sup> To distinguish them, *Santería* is Catholic- and African-tradition religion and *curandería* multi-tradition healing; the former is integral to *Santería* but not vice-versa. A *curandero* ranges into both spiritual and herbalist functions: they can be someone a village simply "knows," or operate a for-profit *tienda* or *botánico*.

<sup>127</sup> Tom Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts: The New Battlefield in Central America* (Albuquerque: Resource Center, 1986). White, *The Morass* 1984: 34-35.

thousands.<sup>128</sup> Most rural Hondurans never saw a Honduran doctor in their lifetime, a fact that embarrassed the Honduran doctors into having the Cuban rural doctors expelled after Hurricane Mitch in 1998.<sup>129</sup>

U.S. Civic Action in Honduras was certainly focused on the shortest-term, “one-and-done” medical interventions—vaccinations, tooth-pulling—and having few goals other than “We want them to remember us when the troops come over the hill.” The U.S. military chose each “civic action” site based on where the population was likeliest to “respond” with goodwill—not necessarily on direness of need.<sup>130</sup> Palmerola hospital commander Col. Joan Sajtchuk described Honduras as already in the midst of “low-intensity conflict. We’re helping people medically to realize what we have to offer.”<sup>131</sup> Health and suffering were concerns only because they provided the opportunity to prepare those near a potential battleground to favor the FF.AA. and those behind them, against the revolutionaries of Nicaragua. The FF.AA. and U.S. military advisers saw itinerant healthcare as a method of “soft” domestic warfare, as tactical humanitarianism or “tremendous PSYOP potential.” Medics accompanied servicemen in areas of U.S. deployment—Gracias a Dios and Yoro Departments and “in sensitive western or southern border areas.”<sup>132</sup> Even the most isolated Honduran campesinos noticed whether care was being done for ulterior purposes: the sense was that—as with most Honduran policies of the 1980s—healthcare was not being done for the sake of anything in that country but for Washington’s grander designs.

Drs. Stephen Gloyd and Paul Epstein concluded that these Civic Action Programs were “insensitive to the particular health care needs of Hondurans. Most of the treatment they gave out

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<sup>128</sup> Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts* 1986: 52-57.

<sup>129</sup> Víctor Meza, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, August 2012.

<sup>130</sup> Eva Gold and Mary Day Kent, “What’s Good for the U.S. is Good for the World,” in Nancy Peckham and Annie Street, eds., *Honduras: Portrait of a Captive Nation* (New York: Praeger, 1985): 306-07. Maj. Bernard Eugene Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action in Honduras, 1982-1985: Tactical Successes, Strategic Uncertainty* (Langley AFB, Va.: Army–Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, 1988).

<sup>131</sup> Bill Dietrich and Emmett Murray, “The Tug of War in Central America,” *The Seattle Times*, Apr. 21, 1985.

<sup>132</sup> Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action in Honduras, 1982-1985* 1988: 3, 11, 18-19.

was inappropriate and the good they did was probably offset by the side effects”—handing out Kaopectate rather than following the Honduran Ministry of Health’s guidelines for oral rehydration, and unaware of the easy in-country availability of anti-hookworm drugs.<sup>133</sup> It was “demonstration medicine,” “medicine for show” to give even wrong treatments, as long as it *appeared* that Hondurans were being helped. Beneficiaries who had not seen a doctor in the area in twelve years still remarked that the military presence exacerbated the problems of rural poverty and delayed change to Honduras’s “organized malpractice” neglecting the poor.<sup>134</sup> They replaced the absent elitist doctors of the Colegio, but were also wholly a part of a counterrevolutionary doctrine that saw the Honduran *campesinato* as a potential enemy to be divided. But Colegio doctors attacked their fellow counterinsurgents from the U.S. Army, for the reason that they showed them up.

Even U.S. officers were warning that their medical brigades were undercutting the state by exposing just how vast its lack of healthcare provision was. In 1983 alone 70,000 medical and dental patients were treated in conditions and for diseases that shocked the visitors—but U.S. medical teams rarely stayed more than a day in a village to provide the only care residents were ever going to get in their lifetimes from a healthcare professional.<sup>135</sup>

The Colegio certainly fit all the stereotypes of elitist biomedical zealots backing political repression and denialism of venereal disease. Neglect or weakness had spurred many of its members to action—in abolishing any potential challenge to monopoly by inciting and backing the anti-*curandero* campaigns. The goal was not to attack a competition—there was little move

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<sup>133</sup> Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts* 1986: 52. Colin Danby, “U.S. Military Health Programs Criticized,” *Honduras Update*, September 1984. Eric Shultz, “Medical Counterinsurgency in Honduras,” *Honduras Update* 7:2-3 (November-December 1988).

<sup>134</sup> Eric Shultz, “Medical Counterinsurgency in Honduras,” *Honduras Update* 7:2-3 (November-December 1988).

<sup>135</sup> *The Baltimore Sun*/Knight Ridder, “U.S. Military Presence Taking a Toll on Honduran Civilians,” *The Seattle Times*, May 4, 1986. Bill Dietrich and Emmett Murray, “The Tug of War in Central America,” *The Seattle Times*, Apr. 21, 1985. Sam Dillon, “Troops and Streetwalkers Transform Honduran Town,” *The Miami Herald*, Apr. 11, 1986. Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action in Honduras, 1982-1985* 1988: 15, 17, 36, 41-42.

to make doctors more accessible to the poor—but to ensure that there was no conceptual alternative, to ensure that there could only be one sort of medical practitioner around and to preserve a class, more than to force any new “customers.” Elitist attacks on Honduran or Dominican *curanderas* working in Honduras may parallel the opposition to licensed healthworkers from the United States and then Cuba, but they actually reveal differing approaches to the failure of the “doctor-state.”

Even a decade after the conclusion of the Nicaraguan Civil War, many Honduran doctors and Colegio Médico leaders openly preferred to see rural Hondurans deprived of healthcare, if that meant there would be no more attention paid to the fact that they refused to extend medical treatment past their urban practices. Cuban volunteer doctors arrived *en masse* after Hurricane Mitch in 1998, as part of that country’s famous “brigades” that were core to Havana’s sense of global prestige.<sup>136</sup> The Colegio’s response to the fact that most rural Hondurans had never seen a Honduran doctor in their lifetime was to fight to have the *Cubans* expelled, a move supported even by the Pan-American Health Organization on grounds of supporting appropriate and locally-knowledgeable healthcare. This matched progressive criticism of U.S. “Medical Readiness Training Exercises” in the 1980s—but without any option to actually *provide* locally-appropriate healthcare: Havana even offered to train Honduran doctors, which the Colegio used as an opportunity to make a demand that middle-class medical students, rather than poor and marginalized ones, be trained on Havana’s peso. Analysts such as Víctor Meza agree that the call for the Cubans’ expulsion was out of embarrassment, not any concern for Honduran doctors or patients.

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<sup>136</sup> Robert Huish and John M. Kirk, “Cuban Medical Internationalism and the Development of the Latin American School of Medicine,” *Latin American Perspectives* 34:6 (November 2007): 77-92. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 76.

Colegio Médico President Felicito Montalvan repeatedly condemned the 120 Cubans giving free care to the poorest and isolated parts as taking jobs from Honduran graduates, though the acknowledged Honduran doctors had not yet happened to manage to reach the areas where the Cubans had gone.<sup>137</sup>

However, the “officialist” Colegio faced pushback from even state doctors, President Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé’s government pointed out that the doctors had not addressed the problems of Honduran medicine, and that the Cubans were indeed appropriately treating Hondurans. Both the Foreign Ministry and the UNAH Medical Faculty opposed the Cubans expulsion as immoral and as an epidemiological danger, given the devastation, and underscored their disgust at Montalvan.<sup>138</sup> Medical nationalism was invoked in the 1990s and 2000s, but by xenophobic reactionaries within the state, not by progressives demanding the state devote the barest minimum towards its medical duty to its own citizens.

Any state effort to provide medicine as a show of its own power had publicly failed; the state’s backup—bringing in U.S. doctors in the 1980s or Cubans in the 90s—only ended up exposing an appalling neglect by Honduran M.D.s. Reformists proposed training Hondurans to replace any foreign doctors, and to incorporate traditional healers into providing care; but over two decades the elitists maintain an ideology that drove them to attack the healers and expel the foreigners, not because they were providing inadequate care but because they were publicly work-

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<sup>137</sup> David Gonzalez, “Havana Journal: To Latin Neighbors, Cuba Plays the Good Doctor,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2000. Jordan Swanson, “Unnatural Disasters: Public Health Lessons from Honduras,” *Harvard International Review* 22:1 (Winter/Spring 2000): 34. Associated Press, “Honduran Doctors Seek Expulsion of Cuban Colleagues,” Feb. 21, 2001. Víctor Meza, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, August 2012.

<sup>138</sup> The Honduran upper middle classes circulated articles such as *The Wall Street Journal* proclaiming the Cuban doctors “Fidel’s foot soldiers” bringing “soft indoctrination” to make Honduras “ready when political opportunity presents itself, as it has in Venezuela.” The Cubans were ultimately expelled in 2005, to public and Congressional protest. Steve Brouwer, “The Cuban Revolutionary Doctor: The Ultimate Weapon of Solidarity,” *The Monthly Review* 60:8 (January 2009). Thelma Mejía, “Health—Honduras: Doctors Criticise Cuban Medical Brigades,” Inter Press Service, Feb. 18, 1999. Brouwer, *Revolutionary Doctors: How Venezuela and Cuba Are Changing the World’s Conception of Health Care* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011): 52.



ing with a sector that the Colegio would rather face discredit and stigma than actually treat: as opposed to social health, “public health” envisioned a few state-funded welfare doctors going afield to represent the “doctor-state.”

Doctors were key players on the side of the state against popular movements, lending their standing to attack the reputability of witnesses threatening the premises on which the Cold War in Honduras relied. But many of their fellow doctors began to share lived experience with their patients, learning which particular problems to pursue—the same path as that taken by clergy since the 1950s (Chapter 9, “Introduction”). The Colegio’s medical positions reinforced social and political repression.

In the history of HIV/AIDS, 1990s South Africa is the exemplary case of spreading disease through denialism, the state insisting on local herbal cures against HIV in stead of anti-retroviral medicines. In 80s Honduras a different situation prevailed: the civil-military government was no more “denialist” than contemporary Brazil, which managed to make some containment of the epidemic despite several political and medical similarities to Honduras. Instead, the FF.AA. supplied the U.S. soldiers at Palmerola with a web of prostitution under protection of the state—and officials who regularly had to deny the arrival of one venereal disease after another, to keep Honduran diseases out of U.S. newspapers. This dissertation concentrates not on how much of an influence these factors had by contrast to HIV in Brazil, Nicaragua, Haiti, etc., but argues that the state-sponsored prostitution and VD denialism were all part of a bigger apparatus oriented towards denial by both the Honduran and U.S. states, who were intent on continuing fighting a counterrevolutionary war in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

## The Epidemic Epicenter

Honduras is notorious for having HIV infection rates much higher than its neighbors’—as of 2012 it had 17 percent of Central America’s population but nearly 57 percent of reported AIDS cases.<sup>139</sup> There have been numerous plausible explanations for the country’s vulnerability to venereal disease. The first is prostitution, the state complicit in creating a tremendous network centering on Palmerola Air Base in Comayagua to “service” U.S. soldiers—including girls as young as fourteen.<sup>140</sup> Towns near U.S. bases saw inflation, child beggars, and rising prostitution and venereal disease by 1984.<sup>141</sup> The Catholic Church, pious conservatives, and political progressives united against the sleaze, prostitution, crime, “depravity, [venereal] disease, and moral corruption” imposed by the “Saigonization” of Comayagua. The city was resident to hundreds of prostitutes, and dozens more were trucked in from Tegucigalpa on the weekends, all under Honduran state supervision.<sup>142</sup>

Shawn Smallman doubts that the U.S. soldiers were the source, given the disease’s spread and its strong concentration in the cities and on the Caribbean, but agrees that the prostitution explained its spread and domination by heterosexual transmission. Even if U.S. soldiers were not HIV vectors, Washington played a larger role in the spread of HIV by militarizing and neoliberalizing Honduras—the former bringing nationwide prostitution and the latter hobbling healthcare and social services. Manuel Sierra and Smallman agree that Honduras’s epidemiological profile was also distinguished by the country’s Cold-War role. Thousands of U.S. soldiers and Nicara-

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<sup>139</sup> García Trujillo, Paredes, and Sierra, *VIH/SIDA* 1998: 7, 9-10. Smallman, *AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* 2007: 115.

<sup>140</sup> “Norteamericanos protestan frente a embajada de USA: Honduras es un preso de los Estados Unidos,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Feb. 26, 1987.

<sup>141</sup> “What’s Good for the U.S. is Good for the World,” in Peckham and Street, eds., *Honduras* 1985: 308.

<sup>142</sup> William Branigin, “Brothels Put Off-Limits Plead for Return of GIs: Security Move Perplexes Honduran City,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 26, 1987. Fagen, *Forging Peace*, 106. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 219-20.

guan Contras led to a boom in sex workers, playing a “major role” in HIV.<sup>143</sup> Honduran epidemiologists currently find both the Caribbean and U.S.-military vectors plausible, though the disease arrived at both the Atlantic coast and Comayagua city no earlier or later than most of the rest of Honduras. It seems unlikely that numerous Honduran epidemiologists would agree on a role for U.S. soldiers in the HIV epidemic solely out of “medicalized nationalism” rather than concern about “unsuitable treatment” blocking Honduran M.D.s from treating Honduran patients.

But HIV would not be the only venereal disease to suddenly appear in Honduras after the arrival of U.S. troops: as a news story, venereal disease was 1. highly stigmatizing and 2. highly salient. The threat was already aimed at children in 1983, and then global attention was focused on the detection and seeming eruption of HIV/AIDS. State officials and elitist doctors worked to prevent the warranting of stories, in order to keep U.S. troops’ presence quiet in the United States’s own press.

M.D.s up to the Minister of Public Health categorically accused the media reports from Tegucigalpa and Comayagua—of surging prostitution, alcoholism, and child begging, rampaging penicillin-resistant gonorrhea, and the arrival of HIV—of being different facets of one great covert Soviet disinformation campaign. Each new venereal disease was vocally denied by officials and state doctors, and anyone reporting it was labeled a subversive. Then a few months later the presence of the disease was admitted, and the next disease in turn denounced as a Communist trick. The government ended up in a cycle of denying a disease had arrived and denouncing any-

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<sup>143</sup> Jon Cohen, “Honduras: Why So High?: A Knotty Story,” *Science* 313:5,786 (July 28, 2006): 481-83, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.313.5786.481>. María Elena Méndez Ordóñez, *Mujer y SIDA en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Estudios de la Mujer Honduras, 1995): 8, 10, 12-13, 20-21. Smallman, *AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* 2007: 151-53.

one who reported it—then later admitting it. The debunking campaigns could not help but fail, but the goal was to attack the standing of anyone reporting the new diseases, even if it meant a loss of reputation as new diseases went untreated instead.

The first new disease to appear was penicillin-resistant gonorrhea, tellingly named “*flor del Vietnam*” or “the flower of Saigon”—evoking the main U.S. antiwar narrative of “a new Vietnam War”: Dr. Gustavo Adolfo Corrales, director-general of Public Health, was more interested in insisting that “this series of rumors could be the product of persons who oppose the presence of North American troops in our country.” The Ministry admitted in November 1983 that it was in Honduras and that its introduction was related to the arrival of thousands of U.S. troops, peaking in Comayagua.<sup>144</sup> Before the U.S. troops arrived, Comayagua had only ever had one case of resistant gonorrhea: by 1984 it comprised 17 percent all of the town’s venereal-disease cases, and by 1986 80 percent of Comayagua’s gonorrhea was of the resistant strains.<sup>145</sup>

In 1984 the Health Ministry was still categorically denying both HIV and *flor del Vietnam* again, while U.S. soldiers themselves were privately concerned about the latter disease’s presence and spread in Comayagua and the growing potential for AIDS given Comayagua’s concentration of prostitution.<sup>146</sup> The doctors were sent out simply to maintain the civilian state’s bigger narrative—that these were false rumors spread by the real hidden “social disease” in Honduras, the all-pervading subversives.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> “Flor de Vietnam pone en alerta a autoridades de Salud Pública,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Nov. 3, 1983. Francisco Valeriano, “Aseguran funcionarios de Salud: No hay casos de ‘flor del Vietnam,’” *La Tribuna*, Nov. 3, 1983. George Black, “Fortress Honduras: Delivering a Country to the Military,” *The Nation* 238:3 (Jan. 28, 1984): 90-91.

<sup>145</sup> Sam Dillon, “Troops and Streetwalkers Transform Honduran Town,” *The Miami Herald*, Apr. 11, 1986. *The Baltimore Sun*/Knight Ridder, “U.S. Military Presence Taking a Toll on Honduran Civilians,” *The Seattle Times*, May 4, 1986. William Branigin, “Brothels Put Off-Limits Plead for Return of GIs: Security Move Perplexes Honduran City,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 26, 1987. Richard R. Fagen, *Forging Peace: The Challenge of Central America* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1987): 106.

<sup>146</sup> ACAN-EFE, “Según informes médicos: Soldados de U.S.A. traen el SIDA,” *El Tiempo*, May 30, 1984.

<sup>147</sup> “Manifestantes distorsionan el problema de Comayagua,” *La Prensa*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 15, 1986.

With the U.S. garrisoning of Palmerola base near Comayagua, opposition to U.S. influence and to the compliant Honduran state became quickly tied to notions of disease—organ-stealing, injury, illegal adoption, or prostitution and trafficking of children and adults.<sup>148</sup> The official arrival of AIDS in Honduras, in San Pedro Sula 1984, revealed the extent to which Hondurans' bodies were not being taken care of.<sup>149</sup> The popular movement quickly took public notice that the ruling classes could offer only disease, hunger, and war thanks to their servility. Peace and women's groups protested the rising financial and social costs of militarization and warfare, which included prostitution and STDs around Palmerola.<sup>150</sup>

Governor Haydée de Méndez and the Embassy's Arthur Skop blamed the 1985 Comayagua protests on “professional dissociators” of society or “part of a coordinated disinformation campaign,” claiming outsiders manipulated the conservative townsfolk. who threatened to bring a different sort of warrant than progressive and antiwar activists—the warrant of outraged churchgoing, “family types” against elitist doctors insisting news reports of venereal disease was simply slandering doctors' good name by saying that they weren't paying attention to national health.

In March 1986 local doctors began to report that primary-school girls in Comayagua were being sexually abused by U.S. soldiers, and that they and other children had chancres and

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<sup>148</sup> “Desaparecen 90 niños al mes,” CEDOH, *Boletín Informativo* 143 (March 1993). Comaroff and Comaroff, eds., *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism* 2001: 21. David Samper, “Cannibalizing Kids: Rumor and Resistance in Latin America,” *Journal of Folklore Research*, 39:1 (January-April 2002): 6-8. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Theft of Life: The Globalization of Organ Stealing Rumours,” *Anthropology Today* 12:3 (June 1996): 5, 8. Note that one of Samper's sources is USAID spin-master Todd Leventhal, head of the U.S. State Department's “Counter Misinformation Team” under George W. Bush.

<sup>149</sup> “¿El Tercero Mundo, depósito de órganos para injertos?” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Dec. 16, 1989. Lapper and Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* 1985: 117-18.

<sup>150</sup> Donald E. Schulz, “Making a Country Anti-American,” *The Washington Post*, June 20, 1988. Deborah Eade, “International NGOs and Unions in the South: Worlds Apart or Allies in the Struggle?” *Development in Practice*, 14:1/2 (February 2004): 74. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 198.

Congresspersons demanded they all be expelled from Honduran soil.<sup>151</sup> Venereal disease (though not specifically HIV) sparked protests against the presence of all foreign troops, U.S. or Contra.<sup>152</sup> Doctors and officials drew against their own reputation to insist that locals could simply not correctly perceive what was going on in their own city—that they had been tricked as to what was happening under their very noses, in their own bodies. The campaign against Santería had been part of broader, vaguer “implicatory denial” that could diffuse responsibility for Honduran ill-health: that is, the appearance in Comayagua of one specific and recognized venereal disease after another. But the state had not been able to make the U.S.S.R. broadly accepted as the first suspect behind any negative news: the state conspiracy theory (Chapter 8, “Conclusion”) had not achieved any hegemony in the press. Sexually-transmitted diseases required literal denial, more risky because it attacked “the reliability, objectivity and credibility of the observer”<sup>153</sup>—which in this case were their fellow state-employed M.D.s, meaning that their warranting power could not be directly impeachable.

Palmerola’s base command boasted of the free checkups it gave to Comayagua’s poor, but that also included syphilis checks for U.S. soldiers and 220 prostitutes a week by 1985.<sup>154</sup> It was literally visible—for any witness coming to the city—that the medical aid at Comayagua, like the U.S. Military Police patrolling its streets, was there to serve U.S. goals first. Comayagua’s 3,000 resident prostitutes—almost 60 percent of the country’s total by 1990—were inspected by U.S. Army medics, but four who tested HIV-positive in 1987 fled without being

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<sup>151</sup> “Si son ciertas denuncias de corrupción: Diputados dispuestos a expulsar del país tropas norteamericanas,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 11, 1986. “Juan Almendáres: Sectores de Comayagua no mienten,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 13, 1986. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 129. Smallman, *AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* 2007: 152.

<sup>152</sup> Juan Ramon Duran, “Honduras: Rising Opposition to Presence of U.S. Troops, Contras,” Inter Press Service, Mar. 20, 1986.

<sup>153</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial* 2001: 7-9, 105.

<sup>154</sup> Bill Dietrich and Emmett Murray, “The Tug of War in Central America,” *The Seattle Times*, Apr. 21, 1985. Barry, *Low Intensity Conflicts* 1986: 55.

counted amongst the patients.<sup>155</sup> Six prostitutes in Comayagua were detected to have had HIV exposure April 1986, and fled or were forced to flee the town.<sup>156</sup>

The Ministry of Public Health concluded that Honduras's military position maximized the spread since foreign troops increased prostitution and STDs in cities where the troops were stationed, particularly through new entertainment venues.<sup>157</sup> Prostitutes were brought by the busload from San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa arrived every weekend, destined for the restricted-access restaurants and discotheques of Comayagua, and very young females "attended" to the U.S. soldiers. U.S. soldiers were given leave to go to San Pedro Sula: the important factor was that the U.S. presence had created high numbers of prostitution in a small country. Dr. Almendáres Bonilla and the Ministry of Public Health demanded that the soldiers' diplomatic immunity be revoked so that Hondurans could test them independently. The U.S. troops never went through customs or immigration and the Honduran state did not know even how many there were.<sup>158</sup>

Other explanations for Honduras's prominence in AIDS remain—that, by contrast, poor Salvadorans and Nicaraguans were significantly shielded from the disease by the active wars in their countries<sup>159</sup>; cladistics rules out a particularly-virulent strain of HIV in Honduras, confirm-

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<sup>155</sup> "Juan Almendárez: Salud Pública oculta datos epidemiológicos de Comayagua," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 7, 1987. "Imposible practicar los exámenes anti-SIDA a tropas norteamericanas," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 8, 1987. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 129. Faizury Figueroa, *El SIDA en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa, CEDOH 1993): Appendix I.

<sup>156</sup> "Dos de las prostitutas portadoras del SIDA fueron hospitalizadas," *El Tiempo*, Apr. 4, 1986. Sam Dillon, "Troops and Streetwalkers Transform Honduran Town," *The Miami Herald*, Apr. 11, 1986. *The Baltimore Sun*/Knight Ridder, "U.S. Military Presence Taking a Toll on Honduran Civilians," *The Seattle Times*, May 4, 1986.

<sup>157</sup> García Trujillo, Paredes, and Sierra, *VIH/SIDA* 1998: 10.

<sup>158</sup> "Juan Almendárez: Salud Pública oculta datos epidemiológicos de Comayagua," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, May 7, 1987. "Para contener el SIDA y enfermedades sexuales: Salud debe controlar tropas norteamericanas y a 'contras,'" *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, May 20, 1987. Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 117, 129. Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* 1994: 219-20. Smallman, *AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* 2007: 152.

<sup>159</sup> Smallman, *AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* 2007: 155-56.

ing a U.S. origin and that Honduras was the virus's entry-point for the rest of Central America.<sup>160</sup> Honduras had also been subjected early to the neoliberalism that devastated healthcare expenditures, a *década perdida* meaning poor women were coerced, economically or otherwise, into prostitution.<sup>161</sup>

Full AIDS did not reach Comayagua itself until 1988—three years after San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa: between 1985 and 1993 Honduras's cases remained concentrated in these two cities.<sup>162</sup> Smallman asserts that if U.S. soldiers had introduced the virus, there would be more infections in Comayagua, but he agrees that sex workers were key to the spread of HIV, regardless.<sup>163</sup> Honduran epidemiologists agreed that Palmerola played a key role in HIV's rapid dissemination: Jorge Fernández said these buses were “the most significant factor that fueled the epidemic”<sup>164</sup>—and, if the U.S. servicemen were the main source, could account for the virus's initial concentration in the two major cities and the northwest, following an outbound vector.

As a lethal, sexually-transmitted disease that originated from distant countries and could continue threaten children who had been raped, HIV/AIDS was an issue that had tremendous potential to be interpreted in the most simplistic xenophobic terms. The 1986 allegations of child

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<sup>160</sup> Nor did the strain that became pandemic in mid-1980s Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras come from Haiti, which had carried earlier strains since the 60s, but only endemic—that is, pre-epidemic until 1982/3. Wendy Murillo, *et al.*, “A Single Early Introduction of HIV-1 Subtype B into Central America Accounts for Most Current Cases,” *Journal of Virology* 87:13 (July 2013): 7,463-70, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3700274>. Israel Pagán and África Holguín, “Reconstructing the Timing and Dispersion Routes of HIV-1 Subtype B Epidemics in The Caribbean and Central America: A Phylogenetic Story,” *PLoS One* 8:7 (July 2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3706403/pdf/pone.0069218.pdf>. Stansbury and Sierra, “Risks, Stigma and Honduran Garífuna Conceptions of HIV/AIDS,” *Social Science & Medicine* 59:3 (August 2004).

<sup>161</sup> “Ayuda económica y militar de EEUU a Honduras” and “Compra de aviones F-5-E,” *Boletín Informativo CEDOH* 74 (June 1987). “Soldados norteamericanos muertos en Honduras” and “Relaciones EEUU–Honduras,” *Boletín Informativo CEDOH* 75 (July 1987). Acker, *Honduras* 1988: 129.

<sup>162</sup> Figueroa, *El SIDA en Honduras* 1993: 61, Appendix I.

<sup>163</sup> “Tropas norteamericanas no trajeron el Síndrome,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, June 18, 1987. Smallman, *AIDS Pandemic in Latin America* 2007: 151-56. U.S. Agency for International Development, “HIV/AIDS Health Profile: Honduras” (2010), available at [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdacu641.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacu641.pdf).

<sup>164</sup> Ernesto Londoño, “Subtle Killer, Brazen Threat,” *The Dallas Morning News*, Dec. 26, 2005.



abuse in Comayagua provoked the heaviest backlash, but in terms of occupation by Central America's longtime superpower, and not than their status as foreigners.<sup>165</sup> The FF.AA. refused to investigate the allegations that U.S. servicemen were bringing HIV, unsurprisingly labeling them a Soviet trick.<sup>166</sup> To both the state and the popular movement HIV was a particularly "alien" disease, no matter what the Honduran conditions that encouraged its spread were: in rhetoric it was more tied to the United States or Cuba or Africa or "African" Haiti than to any actual predicament of the Honduran patients. Ambassador John Ferch called newspaper stories of servicemen's ties to child abuse and to AIDS "two classic cases of leftist disinformation."<sup>167</sup> Dr. Manuel Armando Erazo of the Honduran Institute for Social Security said HIV "is solely accessible to homosexuals, h[e]mophiliacs, drug addicts and Haitians. These last, he said due to the promiscuous way in which they live." Dr. Erazo complained that the yellow press had produced an AIDS "psychosis" in Comayagua.<sup>168</sup> Another doctor insisted that the town's prostitutes were Nicaraguan and thus the AIDS could be from Cuban soldiers returning from Angola.<sup>169</sup>

The establishment insisted that any talk of the disease, or fears of it, were by their nature part of a larger plot to discredit the government by outsiders—whether in Managua or from "professional agitators" importing "exotic doctrines" into a very conservative backwater town. Departmental Governor Haydée de Méndez of the National Party said "that it is a shame that students of the locale let themselves [be] manipulated by outside persons to whom the problems of Comayagua do not interest them." The right-wing *La Prensa* complained that the locals' regular

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<sup>165</sup> By contrast to the state-backed 1968-69 pogrom against the Salvadorans in Honduras, there were no popular moves against U.S. or other foreign civilians anywhere in Honduras (see Chapter 9, "The Sumpul Massacre").

<sup>166</sup> "De su abuso de los niños ... : No existen pruebas contra norteamericanos: FF.AA.," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Mar. 15, 1986.

<sup>167</sup> Sam Dillon, "Troops and Streetwalkers Transform Honduran Town," *The Miami Herald*, Apr. 11, 1986. *The Baltimore Sun*/Knight Ridder, "U.S. Military Presence Taking a Toll on Honduran Civilians," *The Seattle Times*, May 4, 1986.

<sup>168</sup> "Amarillismo de informaciones ha provocado la sicosis sobre SIDA," *El Tiempo*, Mar. 26, 1986.

<sup>169</sup> Richard Mauer, "Uncle Sam's Base in Honduras: U.S. Brings Medical Help, Troops to Train and a Doctrine of War," *The Anchorage Daily News*, Dec. 5, 1986.

marches were joined “by a strong number of professional [social] dissociators” and that, united, “The citizenry censures the attitude of the outsiders for taking advantage of a situation [...] for unsettling the community with manifestations in which offense and vulgarity predominate.” She insisted “[T]he majority were youths unknown in Comayagua” and they were irreverently singing the national anthem.<sup>170</sup> The right-wing *El Heraldo* said that Comayagua’s residents were refusing to touch one another in the street—but also that this was due to an “unjustified campaign,” which locals say was started by leftists “with a confessed anti-gringo position.”<sup>171</sup>

In 1987 U.S. Embassy Information Officer Arthur Skop called the continuing turmoil around Palmerola “part of a coordinated disinformation campaign to discredit U.S. troops. It’s disgusting, and it’s untrue,” and cited Consultoria Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo/Gallup polls saying that 85 percent of Hondurans were in favor of the continuing military presence.<sup>172</sup> To media and local government, the protesters were either outside agitators—1. that the protests didn’t mean that any Comayaguans were dissatisfied with the situation—or 2. *comayagüeños* could simply not correctly perceive what was going on in their own city, that outsiders could trick them into seeing illusory disease and child prostitution going on in the streets, right under their noses. According to state narrative, international and Honduran journalism, the Church and Army themselves, and of course any popular groups had all been infiltrated. Outsiders were now literally corrupting the body politic through sex and disease, infecting even children with actual diseases, against the florid government rhetoric of the troops protecting them from Communist cancers and subversive viruses.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> “Manifestantes distorsionan el problema de Comayagua,” *La Prensa*, Mar. 15, 1986.

<sup>171</sup> Eduardo Maldonado, “Comayagua, víctima inocente de una campaña ‘anti-gringa,’” *El Heraldo*, Mar. 15, 1986.

<sup>172</sup> Lois Fecteau, [“As Chief of Staff for the U.S. Armed Forces Stationed at This Honduran Air Force Base, Lt. Col. Tony Witter is Used to Being Asked Who’s Provoking Whom in Central America”], *USA Today*, Apr. 12, 1987.

<sup>173</sup> The accusations never combined: they never coalesced together into a single “ugly American” figure. Honduran demands for individual and national bodily integrity did not generate any broad xenophobia in civil society, whether against Salvadoran refugees or U.S. soldiers.

Parallel to the denial around the Contras' continued presence (Chapter 5), the Honduran state entered into a constant cycle of denying a disease had arrived and denouncing anyone who reported it—then later admitting it. This cycle of accusation and self-debunking increasingly discredited Honduras's power structure. The panic over AIDS and other venereal diseases turned Honduran bodies into metonyms, Elvia Alvarado reporting rural rumors that everything from toilet seats to rivers had been penetrated by the HIV virus.<sup>174</sup> The country itself was feared to be contaminated with the new disease, literally down to the water and soil. AIDS was swiftly brought into politics: for the 1985 election President Suazo Córdova—after failing to engineer his own reelection—borrowed a helicopter from the U.S. military, whose commanders were horrified to discover that he had cheerily used it to drop leaflets over Marcala, La Paz, which called the National Party's candidate Rafael Callejas a “sodomite” infected with AIDS.<sup>175</sup>

The only really violent protest of 1979-91 was the riot on the night of April 7, 1988, where four Hondurans were killed by Honduran guards after the druglord Juan Ramón Matta-Ballesteros's unconstitutional extradition to the U.S., in exchange for the State Department concealing the names of officers tied to the Medellín Cartel (Chapter 8, “A Right-Wing Student Riot”).<sup>176</sup> In the aftermath, cartoonists portrayed Honduran subservience in extremely sexualized iconography. Minister of Natural Resources Rodrigo Castillo had defended the extradition, saying that “The Constitution must be violated sometimes when it would be necessary.” A cartoon by *La Tribuna*'s Napoleón Ham had Castillo giving the quote after having raped a battered

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<sup>174</sup> Elvia Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart*, trans. and ed. Medea Benjamin (Oakland, Calif., and New York: Institute for Food and Development Policy and Harper and Row, 1989): 110-11.

<sup>175</sup> Tim Golden, Knight-Ridder, “Honduran Drops ‘Sodomite’ Leaflets from U.S. Copter: Honduran Chief Uses U.S. Copter in Election Ploy,” *The Miami Herald*, Nov. 21, 1985.

<sup>176</sup> “Según Radio América: Estados Unidos comprometido a ocultar los narco-militares a cambio de Matta,” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 8, 1988.

woman labeled “Constitution.”<sup>177</sup> *El Tiempo*’s cartoonist “Doumont” (Douglas Montes) showed a tattered, pants-less woman labeled “Honduran Justice” beside a half-naked Uncle Sam, re-buckling his pants and telling her, “Thank you!” in English. Later, Doumont’s character fretted that since “It has been violated [*violado*—alternatively, “raped”] by *gringos*, Contras, soldiers, Presidents, judges, [Congressional] Deputies, civil servants, drug traffickers, etc., etc.,” now “The Constitution has AIDS!”<sup>178</sup> In Honduran discourse, what is infected by AIDS is sapped of all strength—simply no longer *works* any more.<sup>179</sup> Doumont had previously rendered the FF.AA.’s repression of journalism by forcibly conscripting reporters rendered Free Speech as a woman (whom he had obviously drawn from pornography).<sup>180</sup>

Honduran AIDS has become symbolic of a state that has carefully made itself incapable of protecting Honduran bodies from contagion and prostitution, that preferred to discredit and delegitimize opposition to addressing problems. Politicians, officers, and doctors compensated for their own fecklessness with denunciation and denial, which was critical to letting the disease spread. The state and the Colegio Médico staked their rhetoric on providing progress and healthcare, then lost that legitimacy by showing themselves unable to cope with HIV or even admit its presence. The root of this self-debunking was “epistemic closure”: the elitist doctors relied on a scientific tautology, that neither venereal diseases nor herbalism were legitimate, for the reason that the Colegio refused to investigate them. And, after defining themselves as the sole warranting power, the elitist doctors were then forced to admit the verity of the vast majority

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<sup>177</sup> “Doumont,” “Inaptado ...” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 9, 1988. Napoleón Ham, “Ultrajada,” *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Apr. 9, 1988.

<sup>178</sup> “Doumont,” “El Mattador ...” *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Apr. 7, 1988. “Doumont,” “El Mattador ...” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 8, 1988. “Doumont,” “Promiscuidad ...” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 18, 1988.

<sup>179</sup> Olga Joya, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, July 2012.

<sup>180</sup> Douglas Montes de Ochoa often used metaphors of violation of the Constitution by politicians’ shenanigans and xenophobia. “Aquí no ha pasado nada ...” *El Tiempo*, June 21, 1983. Cartoon, *El Tiempo*, Dec. 28, 1984. “Muriéndosenos ...” *El Tiempo*, Mar. 18, 1985. “‘Arreglos’ ...” *El Tiempo*, May 30, 1985. “¡Basta!” *El Tiempo*, Sept. 28, 1985.

of Honduran doctors, who actually *did* work with the patients or herbalists. An ideology is defined as being counterproductive, unable to countenance ideas not conceived and defined under its terms, and why ruling “coalitions” of state and class groups are unable to even realize that the ideology is damaging their hold over social hegemony.<sup>181</sup> The Colegio’s doctors would not even let Public Health doctors tackle medical conditions that they insisted were nonexistent: the elitists were able to attack even the state, because the conditions required to keep stories of prostitution, disease, and abuse by U.S. soldiers from U.S. newspapers extended far beyond simply keeping a single fact as a “secret.”

In the 1980s and 90s, Honduras faced all the epidemiological, financial, and elitist factors necessary for a tremendous failure to contain HIV/AIDS. The spread of the virus in these decades was fostered by the state-sponsored prostitution network, fiscal austerity targeting healthcare spending, and the Colegio explicitly going out of its way to neglect new diseases. The National AIDS Commission concluded that the direct factor in promoting the virus was lack of access to services and the limited reach of social-security programs.<sup>182</sup> Similar to the case of 1980s Honduras, other countries also failed to make a strong initial response to HIV/AIDS—the new civilian regime in Brasília was even pleased that a disease *not* associated with poverty or the tropics had broken out. As in Honduras, Brazilian officials announced that men having sex with women need not concern themselves. Blood transfusions, the main vector, were neglected until

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<sup>181</sup> But of course one can overemphasize social/state determinants—that material conditions do not matter in the face of individual or group choice. Lorraine Code, “Epistemic Responsibility,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 95. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 34. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* 2006: 32. Martin, *Gramsci’s Political Analysis* 1998: 150. Charles W. Mills, “Ideology,” in Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 102, 104. Scheff, “The Goffman Legacy,” in Treviño, ed., *Goffman’s Legacy* 2003: 61. Tuchman, *Making News* 1978: 207.

<sup>182</sup> Norsworthy and Barry, *Inside Honduras* 1994: 110-11.

1990.<sup>183</sup> Neither country would admit the arrival of the disease for years, but by 1986 Comayagua's prostitutes were already being rapidly processed to detect any HIV from U.S. servicemen, followed by those of Tegucigalpa<sup>184</sup>—only a year after the first case was admitted.<sup>185</sup>

Despite its habit of rural neglect, the medical establishment was still shocked by the 1990 report that the maternal mortality rate was four times higher than had been believed. This time a medical crisis of confidence and legitimacy spurred a network of maternal clinics in remote areas, which brought the rate down to 108 per 100,000 births in 1997 from a high of 182, the sharpest decline ever documented so quickly in the developing world. Even in the 1980s the Suazo Córdova and Azcona administrations achieved 40- to 50-percent increases in rural auxiliary health centers, staffed by nurses, and clinics run by M.D.s.<sup>186</sup>

While many Honduran analysts and academics conclude that their medical system was a failure, international observers call the country's well-baby/pregnant mother system a signal accomplishment, and the leveling-off of HIV rates by the mid-1990s (even after Hurricane Mitch) would be notable for a country with ten times the *per capita* medical budget. 21st-century Honduras is ahead of the rest of Central America in its healthcare infrastructure because of lack of war, which may even *account* for its high rate of HIV.<sup>187</sup> However, any credit goes to the Minis-

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<sup>183</sup> Francisco Valeriano, "Aseguran funcionarios de Salud: No hay casos de 'flor del Vietnam,'" *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Nov. 3, 1983. "Amarillismo de informaciones ha provocado la sicosis sobre SIDA," *El Tiempo*, San Pedro Sula, Mar. 26, 1986. Armus 2013: 297-300.

<sup>184</sup> "Sin control sanitario más de 100 prostitutas en Comayagua," *La Tribuna*, Tegucigalpa, Sept. 3, 1987.

<sup>185</sup> Figueroa, *El SIDA en Honduras* 1993.

<sup>186</sup> Marjorie A. Koblinsky, ed., *Reducing Maternal Mortality: Learning from Bolivia, China, Egypt, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, and Zimbabwe* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003). Robert J. Magnani *et al.*, "The Effects of Monetized Food Aid on Reproductive Behavior in Rural Honduras," *Population Research and Policy Review* 17:4 (August 1998): 305-28. Shiffman and Garcés del Valle, "Political History and Disparities in Safe Motherhood between Guatemala and Honduras," *Population and Development Review* 32:1 (March 2006): 65.

<sup>187</sup> Shiffman and Garcés del Valle, "Political History and Disparities in Safe Motherhood between Guatemala and Honduras," *Population and Development Review* 32:1 (March 2006): 54.

try of Public Health and the Institute of Social Security, the state organs saddled with all the *unprofitable* patients—and not to the Colegio Médico.<sup>188</sup>

“We shall then see, whether you go out at the door or the window; and whether you really doubt if your body has gravity, or can be injured by its fall; according to popular opinion, derived from our fallacious senses, and more fallacious experience.”

—David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 1779

“anyone who believes that the laws of physics are mere social conventions is invited to try transgressing those conventions from the windows of my apartment”

—Alan Sokal, 1996

## Conclusion

1980s Honduras was saddled with both militarized medicine and medicalized politics, with officers and mayors who profited from setting up a network of prostitution, leaving the common folk with the diseases while the state insisted they were Communist tricks. Even the crudest cartoon about HIV reinforced the idea that Hondurans were fighting someone else’s war and paying someone else’s price, the state’s true interests far outside its own borders. The Colegio Médico demanded to be the sole body defining “Honduran medicine,” fighting *curanderismo* 1. as rivals offering ineffective material treatment and 2. as obstacles to the ideology of Progress. The Army and the civil state called on foreign and state doctors to treat the countryside the Colegio had abandoned; after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which had killed over 14,000, the elitist doctors’ main effort was at expelling the Cuban volunteer doctors, to keep professional witnesses from the villages they had neglected for decades. As an institution, the Colegio preferred a highly-discrediting inaction and isolation, rather than allow others to act but also warrant and give impulse to true stories that would reach the media. They diverted from their neglect of the countryside, asserted that venereal disease was a lie sown by the Soviets and their

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<sup>188</sup> Mauricio L. Barreto, “The Globalization of Epidemiology: Critical Thoughts from Latin America,” *International Journal of Epidemiology* 33:5 (October 2004): 1,132-37, <https://academic.oup.com/ije/article/33/5/1132/623926>. Waitzkin *et al.*, “Social Medicine Then and Now,” *American Journal of Public Health* 91:10 (October 2001).

all-present agents, and attacked *curanderos*, herbalists, Cuban doctors, and their own fellows in the Honduran Ministry of Public Health.

The Colegio's efforts to retain its degree of hegemony over the discourse of "scientific medicine" was challenged by the M.D.s of the state itself, warranting herbalism, rural neglect, and the arrival of venereal disease—not the *santeros* and *curanderos* it spent its efforts attacking, instead of treating Hondurans who could not afford the elitists' rates. But the new division between social versus elitist medicine presented a quandary for the Colegio: the state doctors could not be unwarranted like the witnesses on the Río Sumpul (Chapter 4), nor replaced like Catholic priests (Chapter 9). The Colegio had directly served the immediate needs of the FF.AA.—keeping U.S. troops coming through Palmerola and preventing the highly-stigmatizing news generated by their presence from spreading. It was state doctors who were insisting the Honduran government be put to use to *treat* disease, rather than "medicalize" politics and attack dissidents (see Chapter 6, "Doctrines of National Security"). The press and popular movements used medical issues to challenge the state's legitimacy on deadly STDs, healthcare, prostitution, organ-trafficking, foreign adoptions, child molestation, deepening poverty, and empty pharmacies.

1980s Honduras was pushed into an intricate conflict over the definition of scientific medicine: the primary participants were 1. elitist doctors attacking herbalism, reports of venereal disease, and Honduran or Cuban doctors practicing in rural areas; 2. state doctors concerned with social medicine, open to *curanderismo* and Cuban doctors; and 3. the Honduran and U.S. militaries, directly providing a cursory form of rural public health, out of ulterior motives. One subgroup of Honduran doctors directly pitted themselves against another, and attacked the accepted processes and results of scientific investigation in the name of defending "science." The Colegio was not so much challenging rival scientists or phenomena inexplicable by the theories of the



time, but having to fight their fellow credentialed, recognized, and state-employed M.D.s.<sup>189</sup> But clearly elitist doctors and state officials were easily able to use scientific medicine to obfuscate its failure and accuse rivals of abandoning objectivity for politicization.

The scientific fight between Honduran doctors was—perhaps not coincidentally—reflected in the United States under Ronald Reagan. His economic, environmental, and foreign policies<sup>190</sup> had been drafted by think tanks, a 1970s innovation that tailored academic endowments, press releases, reports, and scientific studies for the chemical, petroleum, atomic, logging, pharmaceutical interests funding them.<sup>191</sup> Their ideology assailed state regulation or involvement in the economy, but they were themselves entirely dependent on the outcome of the 1980 election to seize the state. The Reagan White House was the first one with an explicit “counter-science” agenda: it opposed the experts on the Strategic Defense Initiative, acid rain, chlorofluorocarbons, asbestos, even denying Reyes’s Syndrome, delaying the Food and Drug Administration action on the aspirin manufacturers and resulting in the deaths of hundreds of children.<sup>192</sup>

Denialism is motivated by an ideology of science, not simply by the immediate interests of the industrialists who had the cash to buy the results they wanted: the most radical figures like Aaron Wildavsky or Gov. Dixy Lee Ray (D-Washington) declared that environmentalism and its associated scientific subdisciplines were simply a pretext to weaken industry, demoralize the

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<sup>189</sup> Under classic sociology of knowledge an “ideology of science” is an impossible contradiction—Karl Mannheim held that physical science was exempt and thus not in need of examination. (See above, “*Curanderismo* and *Medicinalismo*,” n32.) Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 28, 30.

<sup>190</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 23-24, 26-27.

<sup>191</sup> See Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives,” n19.

<sup>192</sup> Like the hardline Cold Warriors who came with Reagan in 1981, the “denialists” had little academic or popular position, instead riding the late-1970s’ New Right Movement into power—in Gramscian terms, sheer war of maneuver. (See Chapter 3, “Global News War,” and Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security.”) Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* 2010: 36-42, 45-47, 58-61, 65, 74, 83-86, 125, 130-31, 145, 148, 164. Proctor, *Cancer Wars* 1995: 128.

public, increase taxes, redistribute wealth, or even launch a UN world government.<sup>193</sup> The Reagan Administration targeted the ability to *know* itself, from the stratosphere over Antarctica down to villages in El Salvador.

Epistemologists point out that any (minimally-believable) falsehood uses the same means of certification and transmission as true stories—disguised and counterfeited as trustworthy.<sup>194</sup> Sociologists of knowledge had assumed that falsehood came only from *distortion*: by financial or class interests, ideologues, by vested interests (the tobacco and oil lobbies, in this case), or by cranks and conspiracists (defined as impervious to all reason or evidence).<sup>195</sup> But simply buying off experts is too simple: the New Right spun off seemingly-independent organizations to attack journalists and scientists, planted news stories, sent out shills, and “astroturfed” letters to create the appearance of mass support or independent science.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> The denialist scientists believed they had dedicated their work to fighting Communism, and that it was infiltrating into academic science as well. Oreskes and Conway, “Challenging Knowledge: How Climate Science Became a Victim of the Cold War,” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 78. Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* 2010: 28, 38, 57-9, 134, 144-45, 238, 244, 252, 254-55. Proctor, *Cancer Wars: How Politics Shapes What we Know and Don't Know About Cancer* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995): 172.

<sup>194</sup> Jon Christensen admits that agnotology, while heavily concerned with politics, lacks in-depth examination of the role of media and communications. He even treats journalism as transparent—though its values of “objectivity, fairness, balance, and facts” are what make it a perfect accomplice to the generation of ignorance. “Fake news” or “disinformation” can of course be *believed* by academics studying the topic, especially on a partisan issue, and distort the analysis. Bernecker and Pritchard, *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* 2011: 28. Jon Christensen, “Smoking Out Objectivity: Journalistic Gears in the Agnogenesis Machine,” 266-82, in Robert N. Proctor and Londa L. Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008): 266-67.

<sup>195</sup> More information can *reduce* true knowledge, if it is decontextualized: viewers knew less about the 1991 Gulf War the more television they watched, and South African President Thabo Mbeki’s 1999 denial of HIV/AIDS came from a free online browsing of promised alternative treatments and economic explanations. Epistemology’s concern is usually *true* information—the conditions of knowledge-production, the processes of verification, warranting, and justification, the reliability of individual experience or the profile of knowledge inside a collective. Proctor, “Agnotology: A Missing Term to Describe the Cultural Production of Ignorance (and its Study),” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 6.

<sup>196</sup> Accuracy in Media spent more time attacking science than it did suppressing El Mozote, reframing industrial regulation as harmful to employment or encroaching on individual liberty. Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* 2010: 147. Proctor, *Cancer Wars* 1995: 95.

The shills' mode of attack was to assert that the vast majority of scientists themselves were "unscientific," and therefore without value. By the 1970s the ideologues attacked whole subdisciplines of science—epidemiology, risk assessment, statistics, computer modeling and forecasting—as departing from a (theoretically impossible) ideal of bare empiricism with no human factors allowed, as *politicized*.<sup>197</sup> Firm science and mainstream scientists were attacked in the name of fighting a supposed wave of looser standards excused by leftist politics or untoward deference towards non-Western cultures.<sup>198</sup>

Naomi Oreskes provides a model of "denialism," which is separate from Cohen's denial, which targets a past or present event: *denialism* as a concept, targets unknown future challenges, to preempt any specific discovery. The stance of a "hard science" suddenly rendered soft by trendy 1970s concerns—ecology, peace, gender—let the ideology dismiss rather than engage with witnesses and warrantors, even scientific ones.<sup>199</sup> The denialists of the 1980s anticipated the "Science Wars" conflict over alleged dishonest "veriphobes" insinuating themselves into academia, knowingly obfuscating known truths. This accusation targeted obscurantists, "postmodernists," "Luddites," and the "academic left" but also Pragmatists—or really any theorizing of science other than reducing it to bare grade-school empiricism.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> They were attacked as "soft sciences" or even Soviet-sympathetic (since scientists and academics would regularly go to conventions attended by Eastern European scientists). Christensen, "Smoking Out Objectivity," in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 268. David Magnus, "Risk Management Versus the Precautionary Principle: Agnotology as a Strategy in the Debate over Genetically Engineered Organisms," in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 251.

<sup>198</sup> They were the first to accuse their opponents of politicization, and it would be insufficient to just end the analysis by pointing out that they were far more "political" than those they denounced, taking a hardline and even decades-outdated attitude to politics and science alike. This does not question the terms *they* had set, using their attack as the criterion and letting them determine the boundaries to the conflict (Introduction, "Ideology and Hegemony"). Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 6. Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* 2010: 63.

<sup>199</sup> Stephen Turner, "Towards an Integrated Understanding of Science," Review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller, *Social Studies of Science* 19:2 (May 1989).

<sup>200</sup> Pragmatism and Fallibilism let scientists take a softer line against critics and those seeking more exploratory investigation: science as a practice has a need for new knowledge, instead of being a bastion of firm knowledge needing defense against besiegers. The hardliners coined a new category of supposed "veriphobes" who not just denied the category of findable, objective truth, but willfully and gratuitously promoted any epistemology that attacked the

Organizations such as the Tobacco Institute deployed a broad range of approaches to science in order to contest its results and delay government response. In the 1940s and 50s they 1. demanded balance and uncertainty, then 2. switched to an empirical stance, fighting science with science, funding cancer research in the 60s that carefully looked to everything *other* than tobacco. With the 80s they could 3. declare that the accepted science had become “politicized” and “attack[ing] entire fields and methods of science, such as epidemiology, risk analyses, statistics, modeling, and forecasting”: the promotion of doubt and controversy actually relied on a hardline positivist position of denying “the existence or relevance of anything seen as ‘nonscientific,’ ”<sup>201</sup> matching the approach of Honduras’s Colegio Médico. So “denialism” is not simply twisting science once out of ideological or mercenary motives, but a hard-fought Gramscian “war of position”: denialists accidentally reverse-engineered a sophisticated philosophy of science in order to attack the actual results of science.<sup>202</sup>

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concept. They reserved particular ire for fellow academics who would open the back gate to the bastion of science and thereby doom U.S. democracy and humanity to World War III and a new Dark Age. Others in the “Science Wars” posed themselves as an Old Left, betrayed by an anti-technology, anti-humanist, demagogic, relativist New Left—citing the rise of denialism. Robert Ackermann, review of *Social Epistemology* by Steve Fuller, *Erkenntnis* 33:1 (July 1990): 131-35. Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 30. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World* 1999: 7. Oreskes and Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* 2010: 28, 222-25, 227-33, 256-59. Proctor, *Cancer Wars* 1995: 94-96, 126, 145. Langdon Winner, “The Gloves Come Off: Shattered Alliances in Science and Technology Studies,” *Social Text* 46/47 (Spring-Summer 1996). Alison Wylie, “Questions of Evidence, Legitimacy, and the (Dis)Unity of Science,” *American Antiquity* 65:2 (April 2000).

<sup>201</sup> The last stage of denialism is actually admission—“everyone knows” that tobacco was carcinogenic or that the Iraq War was based on untruths: therefore it was no longer an *issue* and anyone trying to revive it was hairsplitting. Christensen, “Smoking Out Objectivity,” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 266-82. David Magnus, “Risk Management Versus the Precautionary Principle: Agnotology as a Strategy in the Debate over Genetically Engineered Organisms,” in *ibid.*, 250-65: 263.

<sup>202</sup> “Agnotology” studies the undermining of scientific consensus, the artificial creation of reasonable doubt or plausible deniability, appeals to anti-dogmatism, criticism of experimental design, bending science against itself (as opposed to cruder manipulation of just experimental *data*), and manipulating the burden of proof. Even “settled science” has to be in scare quotes here because the assault successfully forced the defenders of the science to retreat to a consensualist position, in turn letting them be portrayed as establishmentarian, conformist, institutionalized, having a hidden agenda—refusing to inspect contrary data or dissenting explanations. The tobacco industry’s earliest tactic was to simply pit 1. science versus science—buying “decoy” research. This approach was empiricist and positivist, to even a philistine level: “no evidence was good enough.” The open-ended call for more research also reinforced the concept that trying to “close” the “controversy” was dogmatism—the enemy of inquiry. 2. Next they switched to manufacturing doubt and controversy by nitpicking real scientists’ experimental design, and funding research on non-tobacco causes of cancer. 3. By the 1970s they attacked whole subdisciplines of science as insufficiently scientific. 4. After the 1998 Master Settlement, the industry conceded defeat on the science—but now that they admitted

As with conspiracy theories (Chapter 8, “Conclusion”), the literature on scientific “denialism” emphasizes that it is no extrinsic aberration imposed purely from outside. The scholars even seem bemused that it attacks honest scientists as fraudsters, “anti-science,” “politicized,” or “quackademics.” Denialists were only able to produce any narrative of representing “sound science” because they used the very same processes, tools, and logic that accepted science did. The motives and conclusions indeed came from outside and against the regular course of scientific investigation, but the process was expertly disguised, aimed not at other scientists but appealing to politicians and the media.<sup>203</sup> Denialism was *internal* to science—they were not *forging* experimental data or *doubting* “science,” they were attacking scientists and scientific conclusions in the name *of* science. Honduras’s elitist doctors were able to turn medical legitimation against itself, condemning Honduran herbalists and M.D.s and expelling Cubans, disputing having wielded their warrant to deny one venereal disease after another.

Another connection to U.S. debates over science and medicine is the Skeptical movement, like the Colegio Médico, targeted practices such as herbalism and Santería and strenuously

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tobacco caused cancer, it was no longer “news,” and they could insist that they had just been waiting for the evidence to come in and that the danger was now common knowledge (rather than their own liability). Because of the need to outmaneuver actual scientific developments, scientific denialism could be positivist or constructivist, populist or establishmentarian. Experimental science is epistemically characterized by *verifiability* and *replicability*: Robert A. Kehoe, covering up for leaded gasoline, also insisted he wanted just the facts—labwork, not *statistics*. Kehoe, Stoll, or Leuchter made dishonest demands for evidence, a faux empiricism that exploited the fact that there *is* no consensually-accepted, self-consistent way to keep endless badgering by bad-faith demands for verification away from “mainstream” science or history. Putting the annihilation of Europe’s Jews or the roundness of the Earth to experimental test is stigmatized as appalling, obscene “denialism”—claiming that accepted and relevant truths were simply being shielded from the rules of evidence. Epistemology is not trivial in analyzing this exploitation of scientific methods: polluters are equally happy to deny evidence, but also to provide distracting evidence, demand evidence, etc. Christensen, “Smoking Out Objectivity,” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 267-69, 279. Fuller, *Social Epistemology* 1988: 111, 238. Magnus, “Risk Management Versus the Precautionary Principle,” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 263. Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product* 2008: 48-50. Proctor, “Agnotology,” in Proctor and Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology* 2008: 8, 11-18. Winner, “The Gloves Come Off,” *Social Text* 1996: 86.

<sup>203</sup> William J. Talbott, “The Case for a More Truly Social Epistemology,” review of *Knowledge in a Social World* by Alvin I. Goldman, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (January 2002): 201-04.

objected to doctors and scientists investigating topics designated *a priori* as unscientific.<sup>204</sup> Both “movement skepticism” and the attacks on “junk science” share several assumptions about what does and does not count as “simply science,” but the former is not funded by deep-pocketed think tanks.<sup>205</sup> Current researchers on science denialism remain quite clear about what “counts” as science—HIV’s causality of AIDS, global warming, tobacco—and what does not. “Boundary cases” like herbalism, Santería, or the appearance of new diseases have a more complex relation to science and politics than either “acceptance” or “denial.” But this differentiation is not self-evident, as shown by the history of how scientific fields and theories come to be actively accepted or rejected, as with the case of herbalism in Honduras.<sup>206</sup>

Sociologists of knowledge note that there is no *a priori* way to keep such skepticism away from accepted science, to designate what should not have to be re-proven by experimentation at every step of the way, and, as denialism shows, *anything* can be rationalized and explained away, even completely-warranted physical-science conclusions. In this view, “political”

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<sup>204</sup> Interesting to note is how badly the movement skeptics 1978-80 misjudged the direction of attack: Carl Sagan correctly feared the effects of deindustrialization and unrepresentative government—but sincerely worried about a future United States “clutching our crystals and nervously consulting our horoscopes,” that New Agers would open the Salarian Gate to a new Dark Age. But science was threatened by a pantomime version of itself, more than any Velikovsky fanatic, organic farmer, UFOlogist, or even creationist fundamentalist. In an inverse of Honduras’s controversy, degreed scientists used the processes of truth-seeking against science, in service to tobacco, chemical, pharmaceutical, or atomic interests.

<sup>205</sup> The general push is to make a certain definition of “science” hegemonic, in order to restrict debate within boundaries imposed from outside—but having the advantages of being tacit, implicit, effaced, undebated.

<sup>206</sup> James Randi could win widespread acceptance as a defender of “science,” whereas JunkScience.com’s Steven Milloy was invariably condemned as having erected a mockery of science to attack actual scientists. Movement skeptics hold mock “overdoses” on diluted homeopathic water—but not by ingesting vaccines. An extract of Dalmatian chrysanthemum, Cape periwinkle, Pacific yew, or Peruvian fever-tree draws no “horse-laugh” response, no refusal to further investigate a subject pushed outside the bastion. This has raised the question of how accepted and productive sciences would “fail” if put to the skeptics’ tests that they wield against “pseudosciences” without controversy: that is, where the boundaries, demarcations, stopping-points are—how the “framing” of “scientific” or otherwise is made. This “movement” skepticism is overripe for research and theorizing, for historical and scientific analysis (as opposed to interested works, whether *pro* or *contra*). Raymond Cooper and Jeffrey Deakin, “Africa’s Gift to the World,” the Royal Society of Chemistry, Dec. 20, 2015, <https://edu.rsc.org/feature/africas-gift-to-the-world/2000064.article>. Allison B. Kaufman, ed., *Pseudoscience: The Conspiracy Against Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2018). Massimo Pigliucci, *Philosophy of Pseudoscience: Reconsidering the Demarcation Problem* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Pinch and Collins, “Private Science and Public Knowledge,” *Social Studies of Science* 1984: 537. Storr, *The Unpersuadables* 2014.

or “social factors”—the consensus of scientists, peer review, acceptable venues of debate—defines what is “mainstream” science.<sup>207</sup> To those with a hardline epistemology, delaying the acceptance of new knowledge that would be accepted in future decades by refusing to venture too far beyond current science was a fair cost to science if it was believed to protect the wider knowledge-generating institution itself from falling to quackery and superstition.<sup>208</sup>

The intent of this chapter is not to simply combine epistemology with epidemiology, or to add a new mode that HIV/AIDS was neglected at its outbreak. The civil-military government and the Colegio Médico were preoccupied with seizing the ability to produce knowledge or to deny recognition to others, while other doctors continued offering warrant to stories of the severe poverty, neglect, and infection of Honduras. HIV was allowed to spread by a combination of elitism, anticommunism, and the effort to maintain who could and could not be witnesses on local outbreaks—branches of the Colegio’s bigger fight over what was and was not “legitimate” medicine.

In the now-classical case of 2000s South Africa, medical nationalism and insistence on ineffective herbal treatments was the most crucial factor in explosive spread of HIV/AIDS. In 1980s Honduras one of the top factors in the epidemic was a medical establishment busy fighting both 1. herbalists and 2. other established M.D.s, damaging the medical community past its functioning point and leading the state to abandon its responsibilities. Elitist medicine was defeated

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<sup>207</sup> Neuropsychologist Donald O. Hebb (himself later elected to the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal’s “Pantheon of Skeptics”) wrote in 1951 that parapsychologist J.B. Rhine “has offered us enough evidence to have convinced us on almost any other issue,” but still could only reject both Rhine’s evidence and interpretations. It is not tackled by experiment, not critiqued on proof, consistency, or evidence—simply excluded *a priori* as a category of investigation. Kendrick Frazier, “History of CSICOP,” from Gordon Stein, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Paranormal*, <https://skepticalinquirer.org/history-of-csicop>. Collins and Pinch, “The Construction of the Paranormal,” in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 244, 251. Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (1979) 1992: 84-85.

<sup>208</sup> Dolby, “Reflections on Deviant Science,” in Wallis, ed., *On the Margins of Science* 1979: 30.

on the same terms its itself had set, and even alienated itself from numerous state actors. But it managed to keep enough of a monopoly to the point of being able to force the state to end free healthcare provided by Cuban doctors, without supplying any replacement—as long as the Colegio’s role in neglecting the countryside and helping turn Honduras into an epicenter of AIDS had vanished from the headlines.



## Conclusion

### Final Considerations

Covert wars are never *secret*—but while several key elements of “Iran-Contra” appeared in the newspapers 1981-85 and the scandal led to extensive Senate investigations, only one person served a prison sentence for helping the Contras: Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, with Lt. Col. Oliver North and five others given full pardons 1992.<sup>1</sup> Only some works (focusing on the El Mozote Massacre (Chapter 3) or on CIA Director William Casey (Chapter 2)) have provided much detail on *how* covertness operated, transmitting, blocking, distorting, or leaking knowledge. The secrecy of covert warfare has been well theorized (Chapter 1), but still light on actual detail. Generally *secrecy* itself appears to be taken for granted in analysis so far, but it is not a natural or automatic condition of intervention: it is an active process that relies on constant involvement by partner states, keeping several potential stories out of the U.S. press at the same time.

Reagan faced a strong chance of impeachment, but treating the Contra War as a stand-alone Presidential scandal is incomplete: the “intervention cycle” shows that the scandal was not just one specific misdeed in Central America. All of the actions investigated after 1986 were

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<sup>1</sup> Many were recorded as even being relieved at William Casey’s death from brain tumor—he (or even growing bad judgments caused by the tumor itself) now could be blamed as a single mastermind of the scandal, with the added benefit that his secrets would be buried with him. Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan’s Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2014): 87-88, 173, 229-31. Steven Emerson, *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (New York: Putnam, 1988): 110. Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America’s Undeclared Wars* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2014): 376. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* (New York: Carol, 1990): 170, 293-94, 317. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 150-51, 390-92. Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011): 278, 297-98. Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018): 117. Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990): 404, 478-80, 557-59, 561, 570. John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006): 521. Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991): 65-74, 78, 157, 169-70. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Anchor, 2008): 233.

standard tactics developed since 1950 to hide a war from the U.S. public.<sup>2</sup> The patterns common to almost every intervention explain why the White House launched the Contra War despite little chance of victory, even punishing potential unauthorized leakers in order to maintain the “commitment”—and why Iran-Contra perpetrators returned to power so easily a decade later.

It may be a common cliché that “covert wars” are kept secret only from the U.S. public, while expert specialists or even well-read citizens of Paris, Tashkent, or Stockholm can have significantly more knowledge on an intervention in any given corner of the globe. Contemporary Honduran observers noted that it was well-known that the Central American war and the Contras were the White House’s special project; Honduran locals were expelled from their border hamlets, and foreign journalists saw the Contras being run by U.S. agents out of El Aguacate Air Base in Olancho Department even before 1985.<sup>3</sup> Paramilitary activities can be highly visible in a partner state as long as the stories do not accumulate and reach the U.S. media. Hondurans on the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan borders could be free to see what they wished, since the borders were relatively isolated and under strict military control—so a casual news consumer in Tegucigalpa would know less than an illiterate *paraiseño*.<sup>4</sup> However, the cliché that any citizen of Honduras knew more than any citizen of the United States glosses over the actual processes used to “prevent” news. The Honduran press repeatedly complained after the 1985 revelations of the

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<sup>2</sup> Even specific techniques to hide pilots’ U.S. ties, down to the contents of their pockets—which Eugene Hasenfus failed to follow (see Chapter 1, “4: Escalation and Conventionalization,” and Chapter 5, “Conventional Military Deception: Nicaragua,” n140).

<sup>3</sup> “Hondurans Seek Removal of Contras from Their Country,” CAHI, *Update* 5:44 (Dec. 12, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> These regions had the highest illiteracy rates and, in the east, spoke Miskito or Garífuna Carib as their primary language, whereas the urban press was purely in Spanish. But there was no simply “conveyor belt” of news from rural Honduras to the newspapers in its two cities. This fits with Foucault’s analysis of hegemony as force being restricted to the marginalized until an exception has to be made. Erving Goffman’s stigma is even more aggressive and specific against its targets than marginalization. Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” in Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 52. Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 52. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963): 4.

Contra that they and the public—and even the state—had to rely on U.S. news to find out what was going on in their own country: knowledge did not simply in the direction of the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Historians of the war against Nicaragua emphasize U.S. dependence on the Honduran state to provide training, infrastructure, air and ground combat.<sup>6</sup> Some conclude that the country was taken over by U.S. forces for the sake of fighting against its neighbors, a *país de nada* with handpicked reactionary generals in charge—even the 1982 Constitution written specifically to serve the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran Civil Wars (Chapter 6, “The Honduran Context”). But Honduras’s role has precedent across covert warfare—a “partner state” (Chapter 1) that supplies more than simply space for bases and airstrips.

FF.AA. officers explicitly threatened locals and restricted access using physical force. The Honduran civil-military state deployed various techniques to maintain the covertness of the wars: eyewitnesses were suppressed and the professionals who gave their stories “warrant” were undermined. It would be picayune to simply say that the White House and CIA had a need for local secrecy that only be *supplied* by the FF.AA., as though it were materiel of a different sort.<sup>7</sup> The White House had made sure that the FF.AA. was the only observer in the country that the U.S. press would trust without making qualifications, letting Tegucigalpa easily extort its “patron” by throttling Contra aid in 1985 or the 1986 and 1988 Holy Week incidents (Chapter 5). It would also be banal to simply conclude that the Reagan Administration was dependent on Tegu-

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<sup>5</sup> “La complicidad con la contra y la penetración en Honduras,” *El Tiempo*, Apr. 10, 1989. David Romero Herles, “United States Promises to Shield *Narco-Militares* in Exchange for Matta,” *Honduras Update* 6:8 (May 1988), from *El Tiempo*, Apr. 8, 1988.

<sup>6</sup> The first such conclusion was by Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> In other words the Honduran Armed Forces that provided the necessary collaboration against the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan Revolutions—whether enthusiastic or reluctant—emerged from a specifically-Honduran context. It shared the other Central American nations’ violent military rule, export economics, and Liberal anticommunism and anticlericalism, but also reformism and downright mercenary officers willing to run arms and launder money for any guerrilla in Honduras’s neighboring countries.

cigalpa to keep warranting the pretexts needed for the Senate to vote for aid 1985-88.<sup>8</sup> Rather than simply a “blank spot” on the map—conveniently without any history of revolution, spectacular acts of repression, or media coverage—Honduras had an active role in the cover-up and partial exposure of what became known as “Iran-Contra.”

Chapters 4 through 7 cover the Río Sumpul Massacre, the Holy Week incidents, and Battalion 3-16. Maintaining counterrevolution required a decade of attacks against true knowledge of massacres, battles, secret murder, epidemics—against illiterate campesinos, doctors, lawyers, un-revolutionary priests, journalists, legislators, even the FF.AA. and secret policemen themselves. Direct Red-baiting against literate professionals by the Honduran state was ineffective in the immediate short term: the White House (and FF.AA.) favored “softer” efforts such as spreading doubt and Red-baiting to quail critics beforehand.

Directly attacking journalists or clergy as Reds actually did not successfully cause any discredit to accumulate on the target, and few U.S. citizens were persuaded to back death squads and *narco*-terrorists. But no public figure publicly questioned Reagan’s revived Cold-War thinking (lest they open themselves to accusations of being on Russia’s side).<sup>9</sup> The Honduran state was unable to fully discredit the journalists, doctors, lawyers, or death-squad defectors who helped warrant campesinos’ stories: the only exception was the successful deliberate replacement of Catholicism with state-supported Evangelicalism (Chapter 9, “Regalado: Evangelical Substitution”).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The New York Times*, National Public Radio, and Witness for Peace were sufficiently defeated as witnesses and as news channels without involvement from the Salvadoran or Honduran governments (Chapter 3).

<sup>9</sup> Arguably, the hegemony provided by the renewed general anticommunism was an important covering “umbrella” for the attacks even if not “believed,” especially in hampering targets from defending themselves.

<sup>10</sup> Classical “epistemic injustice” centers on attacks against marginalized witnesses: but the fighting *within* the state and medical establishment impeded any effort by the state to directly erode recognized and institutionalized profes-

Chapters 9 and 10 cover the emphasis on undermining of priests or M.D.s: while they could not be undermined as warrantors of stories, the Contra War would have been impossible to pursue without the Honduran state constantly attacking their stories of Contra camps and venereal disease for a decade. Without constant attacks by generals and Evangelicals and the Colegio Médico, Honduras would have become a constant *source* of news rather than a collaborator in secrecy. The net built to catch true stories was more sophisticated than simply covering up particular incidents or sowing a broader denialism: it comprised a media “landscape” that reached from rural La Paz or Olancho Department as far as Paris, Buenos Aires, and Washington. The only way to directly contest a professional’s status as warrantors of stories was to find someone who could counterattack them on their own terms—a newspaper editor to fire a reporter, a fundamentalist church to condemn the Jesuits, a doctors’ organization with a strictly limited view of medical science. Only opponents with a claim to be intercessors for the divine or to defend “sound science” could successfully tackle the corresponding critics of the state: pronouncements by generals simply did not “fit” the target.<sup>11</sup>

It would also be just banal to conclude that the largest cover-up efforts were activated by the largest potential embarrassments—terrorism, massacres, and drug trafficking by Salvadoran or Contra forces. The “Enterprise” was operated by the CIA Director separately from his own Agency, setting up an autonomous army and air force in order to deliberately sidestep explicit law, answering only to him and funded by Mexican kingpins and autocrats from Saudi Arabia or Brunei. William Casey set more of a precedent than even Allen Dulles did (Chapter 2), culminat-

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sionals (just as FF.AA. officers could not directly attack the Catholic Church). There was a limit to how convincing anticommunism could be, even if it was hegemonic.

<sup>11</sup> This simply returns to Pierre Bourdieu’s “fields” of contention (Introduction, “Epistemology”): a figure from the political, journalistic, or economic fields would have little purchase in science or theology, unless themselves using terms and arguments appropriate to science or religion.

ing the idea of a “deep state” beholden to nobody else, independent of the President, running arms-for-drugs schemes, integrated with Operation Condor and numerous smaller death squads, and quashing stories in the U.S. and Honduran press. Even if it was successfully able to avoid legal consequences, the Administration was left with no “buffer” space or plausible deniability, always fighting a rearguard action against discovery and exposure.

But hundreds of campesino witnesses and the professionals warranting them could pose a direct threat not only to Ronald Reagan but to the scheme set up by the CIA Director himself without the President’s knowledge. Instead, the efforts media control can be taken as an indicator of *vulnerability*—that the state has not sufficiently convinced (or cowed) the public, that it felt itself threatened by some of the poorest people in the world. Working together, U.S. and Honduran state officials may certainly have managed to throttle publicly-available knowledge and the willingness of investigators to follow up on the story.<sup>12</sup> The ultimate application of this dissertation is that there are numerous opportunities where the war, with its crimes and massacres, could have been exposed to scandal and would have been forced to come to a halt. The White House had sacrificed credibility for secrecy, and so rural parish priests, investigative journalists, or the President of Honduras would have been able to threaten stories that could have opened much bigger breaches if they had been pursued further.

But even the most explosive stories—the El Mozote Massacre, Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt’s Mayan genocide, the Enterprise’s involvement in cocaine trafficking—could lose their saliency in only a few years (except to historians or investigative journalists). If Raymond Bonner or Robert Parry had been able to investigate their stories further, the news would have erupted be-

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<sup>12</sup> Exposure of covert warfare by itself rarely produces a scandal: running the Hmong “Secret Army” or fueling the Chadian Civil War had less saliency than trading arms for hostages with Tehran or setting up a quasi-private trafficking network to flout the Constitution.

yond control before 1986. These stories were *potential* threats to Reagan when they were reported 1981-85—but they were not pulled together into a serious counternarrative even after 1986 Hasenfus’s shutdown. Lt. Col. North was directly implicated in coordinating drug flights into the United States, but only in 1989. Not until 1995-96 did *The Baltimore Sun* and *The San Jose Mercury News* dig deeper into the potential crimes of torture, trafficking, and murder during Iran-Contra.<sup>13</sup>

Jack A. Blum concludes that although “Access to the historical record is the beginning point for serious political debate and action” and potential accountability, there was no post-Cold War reckoning with the 1970s and 80s’ measures. Casey had coordinated cooperation with some of the most murderous felons across four continents, shaping the organized crime, terrorism, and warfare of the 21st century. Decades after the end of the Cold War, the covert-war cycle shows no sign of stopping—counterproductive interventions that could not withstand honest public discussion.<sup>14</sup>

Whether they called themselves neoconservatives or liberal interventionists, the planners of the covert-intervention cycle felt themselves vindicated by the “unipolar moment” of 1991.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The Sun* ran stories directly connecting John Negroponte to systematic torture as part of his Ambassadorship (Chapters 6 and 7), and Gary Webb investigated the regular “ticket-punching” of traffickers by several Federal agencies; Inspector-General Frederick Hitz’s 1996-97 investigation was then stonewalled (Chapter 7). Robert Parry, *America’s Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama* (Arlington, Va.: The Media Consortium, 2012): 220-21.

<sup>14</sup> (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare.”) Jack A. Blum, “Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem,” in Craig Eisendrath, ed., *National Insecurity: U.S. Intelligence After the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 77.

<sup>15</sup> It was a single unique hyperpower—and not the UN or any multinational coalition—was what could deem its opponents as terrorists, rogue states, or nuclear threats. Only one state would be permitted to have a crucial security zone, and that zone extended uniformly across the globe against any other Power. The Republicans took credit for the end of the Soviet Union—that all the deficit spending on arms rather than education or infrastructure had been worthwhile. Bill Clinton’s National Security Advisor Anthony Lake advocated assertiveness against the leftover “backlash states” refusing the new world-system—Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Serbia. The supposed Neoliberalism had conquered Deng Xiaoping’s China and Boris Yeltsin’s Russia and so-called “late” capitalism handily outlived all predictions of its end (even if it was only “financial” rather than industrial capitalism, creating no new

Foreign-policy assumptions remained uninterrogated; the counterproductive consequences of covert warfare remained concealed; covert warriors retained their state secrecy and their legal impunity.<sup>16</sup> If a previous covert war was even admitted to have been a disaster, it was only to buttress a new proposal for intervention—*we've learned our lesson, this time will be different*.<sup>17</sup>

History provides a sense of “object permanence”—the ability to simply recognize the consequences of past choices: otherwise events such as revolutions, wars, and hijackings can easily be presented as unprovoked and inexplicable crises, shocks, outrages—which must be answered with a renewal of covert warfare, or direct invasion. This restarted the “intervention cycle” after the September 11, 2001, attacks—themselves “blowback” from the worldwide fundraising networks for “Afghan Arab” mujahedeen set up in the 1980s.

The same Iran-Contra figures would return with the controverted 2000 election—Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, Michael Ledeen, Elliott Abrams, Otto Reich, John Negroponte. Crude or subtle, the techniques used in 1980s Central America were revived for Iraq 2002-03. The neo-

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mode of production). Gramscian foreign-policy analysts note that the supposed collapse of state sovereignty did not leave an “open space,” but was rapidly filled by North Atlantic capitalism. “Reaganism” may simply have been better at shaping the successors of Marxism-Leninism than in actually *defeating* it 1989-91. David L. Blaney, “Gramscian Readings of the Post-Cold War Transition,” review of *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, ed. Stephen Gill, *Mershon International Studies Review* 38:2 (October 1994): 283. Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018): 206. Stephen Gill, “Epistemology, Ontology, and the ‘Italian School,’” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 32. Stephen Gill and David Law, “Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital,” in *ibid.*: 101. Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008): 147. Willard C. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 348. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 231. John Schwarzmantel, “Introduction: Gramsci in His Time and in Ours,” in Mark McNally and John Schwarzmantel, eds., *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2009): 13. Daniela Spenser, “Standing Conventional Cold War History on its Head,” in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008): 394.

<sup>16</sup> Ed Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1991): 225. Melvin Gurtov and Ray Maghroori, *Roots of Failure: United States Policy in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984): 206-07.

<sup>17</sup> (Since 2002 there have been as many covert wars and coup attempts per decade in the 2000s or 10s as there had been during 1949-71 or 1979-92. Many analyses interpret the persistence of covert warfare as triumphant imperialism or a way to preserve the petrodollar, but all of the elements of the “secret-war cycle” have remained intact—economic motives, strategic misjudgment by a closed group of decision-makers, periodic revival of jingoism, and refusal of any longstanding “dovish” tendency (Chapter 1, n1, and “8: After the End”).



conservatives explicitly followed Casey's models—exploiting executive privilege against all legal regulations on the White House, “cooking” intelligence, launching a media campaign to punish dissidents as unpatriotic (even making the same risky specific accusations against the target state and the same risky attacks on journalists), and inventing new agencies to artificially create support for the invasion of Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

### Future Possibilities

Scholars are divided over whether a decade of multinational support for the Contras was even the cause for the Sandinistas' surprise electoral loss to Violeta Chamorro in 1990. By the end of the decade the civil war had killed 30,000 combatants and civilians: the EPS cost nearly half the budget and the Nicaraguan Revolution had ended in embargo, conscription, crackdowns, and austerity to fight inflation. By 1988 the Sandinistas no longer talked about literacy, healthcare, or land reform: few doctors were brave enough to bring vaccines through Contra

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<sup>18</sup> That is, the Afghan Arab former allies were not supported in the 1980s with the intent of causing blowback that could be taken advantage of to attack another former ally (Iraq). Joe Bryan point out that the figures who courted Sunni extremists or Saddam Hussein against the Soviet Union and Iran in the 80s never anticipated themselves going to war against Iraq in 1991 and 2003. He notes that the neoconservatives had no coherent strategy over the decades (let alone comprising some “smoothly operating machine” of imperialism and deliberate criminality under a permanent cabal): they acted in stark ignorance of the countries they designated as enemy or ally. But foreign-policy history must account for *why* they keep getting in charge after nearly ruining the Presidencies of Reagan or George W. Bush (despite their initial high polls). Each period of U.S.–Russian détente was ended with a supposed crisis—the decolonization of the 1950s, the surprise revolutions of 1979, Sept. 11, 2001, and so on—the likes of Max Boot, David Frum, Robert Kagan, or Bill Kristol have been present in every post-Reagan Administration. The disappointment of the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan had to be redirected into blaming the neoconservatives' target since 1991. In 2001 only 3% of unprompted U.S. citizens polled volunteered Iraq as the country behind it: by 2003 almost half believed that all or most of the hijackers were Iraqis (rather than the true answer, that they were Saudi) and even more believed that Iraq was involved (though arguably that prompted response was unchanged from the 2001 polls). After the 2003 invasion, Negroponte was given proconsular powers and initiated the “Salvador Option” of U.S.-trained battalions as proxy forces in the country's sectarian warfare. Dana Milbank and Claudia Deane, “Hussein Link to 9/11 Lingers in Many Minds,” *The Washington Post*, Sept. 6, 2003. Joe Bryan, “Trust Us: Nicaragua, Iran-Contra, and the Discursive Economy of Empire,” in Carole MacGranahan and John F. Collins, eds., *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018): 357-58. Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, “Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric,” *Perspectives on Politics* 3:3 (September 2005). Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 137-38, 251. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007). Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 480-82, 490-99. Andrew J. Rotter, “Narratives of Core and Periphery: The Cold War and After,” in Bevan Sewell and Maria Ryan, eds., *Foreign Policy at the Periphery: The Shifting Margins of U.S. International Relations Since World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 71.

lines, leading to hundreds of children dying of measles. The Contra tactic of targeting teachers, nurses, community leaders, and agrarian workers specifically aimed to undermine Managua's ability to provide such services to the rural population. But the Sandinistas' position in Managua had not budged, nor the EPS on the field.<sup>19</sup> President George H.W. Bush sent US\$50 million in nonlethal aid for the Contras in 1989 and \$9 million in covert aid for the *Unión Nacional Opositora* campaign, and threatened to keep the Contra War going if Nicaragua insisted on voting the wrong way. Chamorro was rewarded with US\$300 million in aid and a lifting of the embargo. But in February 1990 most U.S. officials had believed the Sandinistas would not allow themselves to be fairly voted out. The Central American solidarity movement dwindled after Reagan's departure, and Nicaragua joined all the other countries that no longer posed the danger of an economic or political alternative to U.S. hyperpower.<sup>20</sup> El Salvador and Nicaragua were

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<sup>19</sup> The Contras and the EPS were unified into one military under the 1990-97 Chamorro government; by contrast the Salvadoran peace accords demobilized the FMLN and the paramilitaries, with no coalition government. John A. Booth, "Review: Through Revolution and Beyond: Mobilization, Demobilization, and Adjustment in Central America," *Latin American Research Review* 40:1 (2005). E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987): 54, 141. Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1988): 27. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 186-87, 216, 222. Kyle Longley, "An Obsession: The Central American Policy of the Reagan Administration," in Bradley Lynn Coleman and Kyle Longley, eds., *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981-1989* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017): 231. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 570.

<sup>20</sup> Economic motives were often key in intervention, especially in Latin America—Anglo-Persian Oil, United and Standard Fruit in Central America well before 1954, the *Union Minière* in Congo, Domino Sugar in Cuba, International Telephone and Telegraph in Chile (causing a scandal for Nixon even before the 1973 coup). Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Nigeria, Venezuela, Libya all have significant petroleum deposits. But John Prados notes that even United Fruit's leadership got cold feet: if their involvement became public, they feared they would be expropriated in every country in the hemisphere! Tim Weiner argues that "the CIA was not fighting for bananas. It saw Guatemala as a Soviet beachhead in the West and a direct threat to the United States" and United Fruit's go-between with Eisenhower as an irritant—but they supplied the Agency with vessels and employment as cover for field officers, and may have been the factor pushing Truman and Eisenhower to continue with a plan both they and the Directorate of Intelligence were highly reluctant about. Eisenhower had little care whether a British oil company was expropriated and Kissinger explicitly rebuffed ITT. Lindsey O'Rourke argues that most target countries were chosen for being small and marginal, without strategic position against the USSR or crucial resources. Supposed security fears drove the wars in Indochina, El Salvador, and Nicaragua—there were no U.S. investments being nationalized. José Manuel Fortuny of the *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* lamented that "they would have overthrown us even if we had grown no bananas." Noam Chomsky, Melvin Gurtov, and Ray Maghroori take a more general approach to economic intervention—that the goal was to use reactionary military regimes to secure private property and cheap labor, to force the economic development that Walt Rostow (anticipating Jeane Kirkpatrick) argued had to happen before any liberal democracy could evolve: so hostile reactionaries were preferable to pro-U.S. reformists. Others argue that intervention was to keep a country *underdeveloped*, and thus able to offer cheap labor and re-

one of the places where members of the Global South tried to mount a “war of maneuver” against hyperpower economic and political dominion—where any alternatives were merely brutalized into submission.<sup>21</sup>

Shifting the perspective to Latin America almost reverses the entire arrangement of the Contra War: rather than a Presidential scandal or another instance of the intervention cycle, it instead appears as part of a network of Cuban smugglers and Guatemalan and Argentinean death squads: the most important Contras were Lt. Col. Enrique Bermúdez and “Comandante Suicida” Pedro Pablo Ortiz Centeno—not the handpicked civilian Directorate giving regular press conferences from their Florida hotels. Honduras was forced to undergo the consequences of the Contra

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sources, with little restraint on cash flow and a captive market for U.S. industrial exports. But even Chomsky notes that intervention harms multinationals’ interests and investments in the target country—each intervention produced a much less friendly successor in the long term (and confirmed that U.S. interests were indeed imperialistic and increased hostility against the multinationals): everyone involved would have been better off not overthrowing reformists who needed to stay on Washington’s good side. One Sandinista leader noted that the true “threat” of revolution was that of the proverbial “good example”: that small, poor countries could show themselves as able to offer a minimum quality of life. Chomsky notes the many attacks against agrarian reform, worker ownership, and domestically-oriented economics: economic alternatives from Vietnam to El Salvador were drowned in blood, and supply-side economics were imposed by the bayonet in Chile 1973 and Argentina 1976. Regimes that put infant mortality, illiteracy, and food insufficiency at the top of their agenda came under the gun (even if agrarian reform and “civic action” could be pursued by military forces in South Vietnam or El Salvador). But he gives little evidence that attacking economic alternatives was a key factor in any particular intervention, inferring from the consequences: the debate over “economics” versus “security” might be imposing an artificial distinction. (See Chapter 2, “The Neoconservatives,” n6.) Augelli and Murphy, “Gramsci and International Relations,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 134. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua* 1987: 8-10, 85, 87. Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 49, 54, 58, 68, 70, 80, 82-84, 129, 158-60. Robert W. Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method,” in Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* 1993: 65. Stephen Gill and David Law, “Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital,” in *ibid.*: 100. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence* 2008: 10. Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace* 1991: 219. Gurtov and Maghroori, *Roots of Failure* 1984: 26, 115-16, 119, 181, 188, 198-99, 203. Larry Hancock, *Creating Chaos: Covert Political Warfare, from Truman to Putin* (London and New York: OR Books, 2018): 101, 107. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 80, 377. Guillermo A. O’Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-73, in Comparative Perspective*, trans. James McGuire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 31-33, 115. Héctor Perla, Jr., *Sandinista Nicaragua’s Resistance to U.S. Coercion: Revolutionary Deterrence in Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 221. Prados, *Safe for Democracy* 2006: 111, 581. Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 349. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes* 2008: 142, 307-08, 562-63. Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 56.

<sup>21</sup> In the history of neoliberalism, they did not learn any liberal conviction but instead could get contracts as *compradores* under free-trade agreements and at industries in free-trade zones. (See Chapter 2, “The Casey Doctrine,” n93.) Siba N. Grovogui and Lori Leonard, “Uncivil Society: Interrogations at the Margins of Neo-Gramscian Theory,” in Alison J. Ayers, ed., *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 174.

War. The civil state was established with the 1980 and 1981 elections as a façade for the FF.AA., in order to allow for a “democratic” state to manipulate the news and for the military to be strengthened far beyond the size it had taken under the 1963-81 military regime with millions of dollars from Washington.

The Contras had been a destabilizing force at the national level since their arrival, editorials depicting them as about to topple the government—of Honduras, not Nicaragua.<sup>22</sup> They outnumbered and outgunned the FF.AA. until their conclusive 1987-88 defeats, and they sold their arms, contributing to intentional homicides surpassing accidental ones for the first time in 1987—a pattern which continues to today. State doctors denied stories of new venereal disease, and the state provided the U.S. soldiers with busloads of prostitutes every weekend: together these factors made Honduras one of the hotspots of HIV in the 1990s and 2000s (Chapter 10, “The Epidemic Epicenter”).

Honduras “returned” to international news coverage in 2009, with the second Latin American coup of the millennium after Haiti 2004: the overthrow of President Manuel Zelaya and his Cabinet spurred a right-wing wave across Latin America. Presidents Porfirio Lobo Sosa and Juan Orlando Hernández were then involved in state drug trafficking and land evictions that caused the direct murder of hundreds of campesinos, urban youth, journalists, and lawyers. However, the *narco*-coup made sure to hire Lanny Davis as a spokesman to produce a narrative for U.S. consumption.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “Jerónimo,” “Efectividad,” *La Tribuna*, May 26, 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Davis—no stranger to representing dictatorships for hire, such as the regimes of Pakistan and Equatorial Guinea—found a ready audience for his private lobbying to old boss Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and his public insistence that Zelaya had been arrested on orders of Congress and the Supreme Court for attempting to let himself be unconstitutionally reelected with the Nov. 29, 2009, election. These talking points were quietly dropped when Hernández actually broke Constitutional law to succeed himself in the 2013 election. The businessmen who moved cocaine and murdered campesinos to grow oil palms on their land had to offer an aura of civilized *respectability* incompatible with the 1998-2002 “social cleansing” of minors under President Carlos Flores Facussé or the explosion of plainclothesmen and rural death squads after 2009—both worse than anything perpetrated by Gen. Alvarez Mar-

Every covert U.S. war has relied on the participation of a “partner state” bordering on the target state (Chapter 1). This provides the partner state with an influx of U.S. cash, arms, and training—and a shield on the international stage as the “ally” of the world’s only hyperpower. Usually they are “middle powers” with enough military force to influence or fight countries near them in their region, and often have an ideological influence that can extend globally.<sup>24</sup> But explicit “middle power” status is not necessary to being a partner state: and relatively small as they were, the Guatemalan and Salvadoran militaries expressed impatience at being “trained” by Argentinean or U.S. advisors or otherwise feeling treated as “client states.”<sup>25</sup> Like all covert-war

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tínez. The agro-export classes clearly see the murder of hundreds of *mareros* or campesinos alike as an unfortunate but necessary way to *maintain* society. The most recent works on post-coup Honduras are Dana Frank, *The Long Honduran Night: Resistance, Terror, and the United States in the Aftermath of the Coup* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018); Nina Lakhani, *Who Killed Berta Cáceres? Dams, Death Squads, and an Indigenous Defender’s Battle for the Planet* (London: Verso, 2020); James J. Phillips, *Honduras in Dangerous Times: Resistance and Resilience* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2015); and Adrienne Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). Daniel Beckman, “The Labyrinth of Deceit: Secretary Clinton and the Honduran Coup,” Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Apr. 12, 2017, <https://www.coha.org/a-labyrinth-of-deception-secretary-clinton-and-the-honduran-coup/>.

<sup>24</sup> “Middle powers” rank below old colonial Powers such as France, Britain, or Germany, but still have significant regional presence, power projection, and ideological influence. They could not directly confront the United States militarily, but still could pursue agendas independent or contrary to those of the hyperpower. They characteristically annexed neighboring West European-held territories in the name of decolonization, territorial integrity, ethnolinguistic unification—India and Portuguese Goa; Indonesia’s *Konfrontasi* with British North Borneo and the annexations of Dutch West Papua and Portuguese Timor; South Africa and Rhodesia’s unilateral declarations of independence; Brazil’s proposed invasions of French Guiana (1961) and Uruguay (1973); Guatemala and British Honduras/Belize; Argentina and the British Falklands, even sending guerrillas to Gibraltar. These states also shared internal colonization—the Brazilian Amazon, the Javanese *Transmigrasi* to the other islands of the archipelago out to “Irian Jaya.” Smaller regional powers could also get away with wars—Peru made credible threats against Gen. Pinochet’s Chile, and Tanzania and Vietnam respectively invaded Uganda and Cambodia 1978. Algeria and Libya presented themselves as anticolonial icons, defeating France or the United States and inspiring global movements. Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia made extensive use, and changes to, political Islam; even Costa Rica played home to the Caribbean Legion—against reactionaries based in Fulgencio Batista’s Cuba, Rafael Trujillo’s Dominican Republic, Guatemala, François Duvalier’s Haiti, or the Somozas’ Nicaragua. They favored the Non-Aligned Movement opened by decolonization, the Sino-Soviet Split, and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, even coordinating to avoid domination of the movement by any one Non-Aligned power (Beijing, New Delhi, Jakarta). Their intelligence agencies could even lead on the CIA itself (Chapter 1, “1: The Ignorant Armies”). This all takes us beyond hierarchical histories of the Cold War, “center” and “periphery” shifting terrain. Hancock, *Creating Chaos* 2018: 144, 148. Tanya Harmer, “Dialogue or Détente: Henry Kissinger, Latin America, and the Prospects for a New Inter-American Understanding, 1973-1977,” in Sewell and Ryan, *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 236, 240. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 200. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 39. Andrea J. Pitts, “Decolonial Praxis and Epistemic Injustice,” in Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* 2017: 151. Andrew J. Rotter, “Narratives of Core and Periphery: The Cold War and After,” in Sewell and Ryan, *Foreign Policy at the Periphery* 2017: 60.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter 6, “Introduction,” n22; “Doctrines of National Security,” n67.

partner states, Honduras was able to use the U.S. resources they obtained to pursue their own agendas, to feed factional disputes—or even to obstruct the U.S. covert war itself and directly extort Washington (Chapter 5, “López Reyes: Discovery, Then Denial”). Treating the covert-war cycle as unstoppable simply treats whistleblowers, journalists, and the public as helpless in the face of secret state actors, when in fact the historical record shows how each intervention had several instances that, if pursued, would have produced a scandal threatening the Presidency itself.

The more Argentina-centered histories of “Operation Charly” complement the U.S.-centered analysis of the counterrevolution in Nicaragua. The Contras’ first sponsor was Buenos Aires independently of the 1977-81 Carter Administration, and even at his most hawkish the Argentinean junta knew that Reagan was only temporary—while itself planning to reign until 2000 without the complications posed by democracy. At best, Washington was perceived by the junta as a convenient umbrella for its actions in Bolivia and Nicaragua—or even against Chile and Britain.<sup>26</sup> The Central American counterrevolution was never a “proxy war” between Havana and Buenos Aires, but instead a war of maneuver that operated at all levels, down to Honduran frontier provinces.<sup>27</sup> William Casey led a “buy-in” to the existing Caribbean–Central American

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<sup>26</sup> Many of the supposed “partner” states were more anticommunist than the White House, Pentagon, or Langley (neither “used” by Washington against a target state, nor simply using Washington to fund their own vendettas). Reagan himself had to choose between pro-Argentineans like Jeane Kirkpatrick versus allies of Margaret Thatcher and Gen. Pinochet (whom she called “Brits in American clothes”). (See Chapter 6, “Doctrines of National Security,” n69.) Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018: 136-38. Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988): 118. Spenser, “Standing Conventional Cold War History on its Head,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold* 2008: 386.

<sup>27</sup> Both countries had histories of independent power projection: Cuba’s forces abroad were ahead of the Soviet Union’s and second only to the United States, and its medical and aid programs surpassed those of the UN and World Health Organization. 1962-2006 Havana sent 400,000 soldiers (to Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Syria, Angola, and Ethiopia) and 70,000 aid workers abroad by 2006. The Argentinean junta had agents in Miami and Paris and was far ahead of the CIA in intervening in Bolivia and Central America. Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997). Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right* 2018. Hancock and Wexler, *Shadow Warfare* 2014: 278. Mat-

network 1982, followed by the 1984-86 Enterprise adopting a network of drug and arms traffickers. So the full story can not be investigated from U.S. sources alone.<sup>28</sup>

The Honduran newspapers used by this dissertation have shown that a marginalized and ignored country can be granted enough epistemic “warrant” in the U.S. press to practically blackmail its supposed covert-war “patron” when Reagan needed the FF.AA. to certify a Nicaraguan “invasion.” Honduran sources give details that can be used to gauge the level of agency that the state had with regards to Washington and the regional counterrevolution.<sup>29</sup> The media provides a key avenue for eyewitnesses and marginalized groups to challenge state power—even against the *narco*-conspiracy termed “Iran-Contra.”

Tegucigalpa’s periodical archives have provided enough material to create a database of 40,000 news articles. Future investigation into the patterns of revelation and concealment around the Contra War will make use of U.S. documents declassified under the Freedom of Information Act and the news and state archives in capitals such as Buenos Aires or Guatemala City. Iran-Contra historians might have already examined *what* was hidden at the time, but these sources can detail *how* it was hidden across several “partner states” and regional “middle powers”: it was an active, multistate project. “Covert” military operations were visible in the partner state, and the news coverage could be repressed—or deliberately spread—from there. The partner state itself must be given a significant measure of warranting power in the U.S. press, in order to con-

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thias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 278. J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change* 2018: 39. Robert Sierakowski, *In the Footsteps of Sandino: Geographies of Revolution and Political Violence in Northern Nicaragua, 1956-1979*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Assuming of course that 1. Casey or Lt. Col. North actually set any details down in writing, 2. the written material was not all destroyed, and 3. that the top managers even *knew* all the details in the first place. Neither media nor encrypted channels can be assumed to have the Real Truth—hawks and neoconservatives were never appointed for their *knowledge* of the target country or the greater Cold War, after all.

<sup>29</sup> The Honduran FF.AA. were not simply recruited by the CIA and following Langley’s orders: Gen. Alvarez Martínez did not take power and turn the military away from its Salvadoran rivals until Washington demanded the 1980-81 elections—but the generals had met with their Guatemalan and Salvadoran counterparts to prepare for counterrevolution on their own initiative before that (Chapter 4, “The Triangle of Iron”).

ceal the covert war or to supply it with a favorable image in case of controversy (again, giving the “client state” and its factions a certain amount of leverage<sup>30</sup>).

“Iran-Contra” posed a scandal larger than Watergate—even El Mozote alone could have put the whole post-WWII “national security state” into question: conducting warfare against Congressional law, murdering prisoners, intimate ties with the cartels. Instead of a sophisticated system of media control by a movie-star President and a newly aggressive CIA, the 1980s campaign against witnesses and warrantors was “damage control”—arguably even a rearguard action against the stories that presented the most vulnerabilities. But Reagan was not alone in endangering his entire Presidency over the promises of low-risk covert warfare—that it was a way to “do something” while avoiding controversy or U.S. deaths.

Harry Truman and David Eisenhower embraced secret warfare, allowing Allen Dulles to flagrantly lie to their face, overthrowing democracies, shattering the Congo, filling Miami with ruthless mobsters, and permanently damaging the United States’s postwar reputation. Lyndon B. Johnson and Dick Cheney knowingly started the most disastrous wars of their respective centuries (thus far). Honduras was overthrown under Barack Obama by officials who later barely remembered the coup. Every President after 1950 has had at least two or three covert wars going on at once—so every President has a had a potential “Iran-Contra” in their Administration.<sup>31</sup> The lack of contemporary scandal does not mean that present-day historians cannot uncover the dangers posed by covert action: history cannot be judged only by its outcomes.

This dissertation has focused on the techniques used in 1980s Honduras to manipulate the coverage of one particular covert war (and the Conclusion reviews some other cases from the

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<sup>30</sup> Austin Carson emphasizes a rival Power as an “exposer” (Chapter 1, “4: De-Escalation”), but a partner state can just as easily reveal what is obvious to anyone actually involved in the covert war.

<sup>31</sup> Here, covertness is analyzed as allowing a target to be attacked or methods to be used, which would never pass muster with Senate or public if honestly debated: they are only presented as a *fait accompli* once they become exposed (Introduction, “Theories of Covert Warfare”).



other countries of Central America, above). The Contra War therefore opens the possibilities for investigation in dozens of target or partner states: the techniques of media influence and of undermining the epistemic standing of witnesses and warrantors is not a toolkit limited to one particular case. News stories originated or had to be quashed in the Thai or Israeli press; likewise a complete story of Angolan interventions requires use of archives in Kinshasa and Pretoria—and that of Indonesia in Manila and Canberra, that of Afghanistan in Islamabad and Riyadh, that of Indochina in Bangkok or even Seoul.<sup>32</sup> Without any penalties for the executors of the Casey Doctrine and the Iraq War (not even the proverbial slap on the wrist), the planning and execution of covert interventions will continue—but so will opportunities to investigate true knowledge about the wars, before it is left up to just the historians.

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<sup>32</sup> This simultaneously 1. “globalizes” the Cold War as more than a Superpower against a target state, and 2. regionalizes it. Note that usually these were *not* the partner state using U.S. resources to pursue longstanding feuds against neighbors—U.S. agents were the ones who chose the target state (see Chapter 1, “1: The Ignorant Armies,” n70.) Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders* 2001: 273.

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