

VETERANS for PEACE

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA CHAPTER

**AMERICAN IDEOLOGY
And The US ARMY
SCHOOL of the AMERICAS**

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PROLOGUE

What was re-energized during the Kennedy Administration and renamed the United States (US) Army School of the Americas (SoA) in July 1963, with Spanish as the official language, had been established in 1946 and located in the Panama Canal Zone. (That was a year after the end of WWII and a year before the National Security Act that created the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).) It was moved to Fort Benning, Georgia in 1984 in compliance with the agreement between the US and Panama ceding sovereignty over the Panama Canal Zone to Panama effective /in 1999. From its inception to 1997, some 60,000 individuals, mainly military but some police officers from 23 nations in Central and South America and some Caribbean Islands (Latin America), have passed through its training programs.

The intention here is to describe the nature of SoA as an instrument of brutal US policies toward Latin America and to help put SoA out of existence. More than that, it is to link American ideology to the crimes committed in our name by those trained at the SoA, by those who approved and carried out the training, and by American leaders who concocted the policies that led to such crimes. The School of the Americas, though, is not an independent organization pursuing its own private goals, but a component of the military forces of the US, answerable to American elected officials. The military, including SoA, carry out policies laid down by these officials. Yes, SoA must be abolished; even more, related US policies must be exposed, condemned, and corrected.

An immediate question arises: why should the US establish a school to train Latin American military officers when it did? Did the countries of Latin America face an external threat to their sovereignty? None, *except possibly from the United States*, as the many past invasions and interventions exemplify. Were there declared wars among Latin American countries themselves? None for many decades. But, even had there been such wars, training the militaries of antagonists could hardly help end them. Why create the SoA, then?

Democracy and the rule of law made an appearance only fitfully throughout Latin America from the time Simon Bolívar fought for independence from Spain in the early 19th century. (Besides being a fighter for freedom, Bolívar showed a profound understanding of the US when he observed: “the United States seems destined by Providence to plague the continent with misery in the name of freedom.”) Nevertheless, within this century, besides Costa Rica and Chile, democracies arose from time to time in such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Guatemala. But with the help of many graduates of SoA, all of those countries (plus Chile) became bloody dictatorships at some time during the 1970s and 1980s. Is there a connection?

The connection becomes evident from declassified documents of the National Security Agency and others that clearly describe the US position. NSC 5432, (US Policy Toward Latin America August 18, 1954), for example, explains that the threat to US interests is “the trend in Latin America toward nationalistic regimes” that respond to “popular demands for immediate improvements in the low living standard of the masses” and for production geared to domestic needs. This is not tolerable because the US is committed to a “climate conducive to private investment.” The US must “encourage” Latin American countries “to base their economies on a system of private enterprise” and “to create a political and economic climate conducive to both domestic and foreign private investment” including guarantees for the “opportunity to earn . . . and to repatriate a reasonable return.” (Most of the time, “repatriate” to the US, of course.)

This being the case, the US would not tolerate any Latin American government that tried to make social investments for the benefit of the vast majority of its people: investments in schools, roads, infra-

structure, health care, agriculture for local consumption, or any other enterprise that would benefit its people. Rather, the US would help to put - and maintain in power - *any* government, no matter how repressive, that would give a free hand to American corporate interests in bleeding the resources of the country for their own profits. Aside from the support of local elites, the US would need to have some kind of control over their armed forces. What better way than to train the officers of those militaries? From such calculations was the School of the Americas born. Noam Chomsky describes it as follows:

“U.S. foreign policy is designed to create and maintain an international order in which U.S.-based business can prosper, a world of “open societies,” meaning societies that are open to profitable investment, to expansion of export markets and transfer of capital, and to exploitation of human and natural resources on the part of US corporations and their local affiliates. “Open societies,” in the true meaning of the term, are societies that are open to U.S. economic penetration and political control. . . . The major enemy, however, is always the indigenous population, which has an unfortunate tendency to succumb to strange and unacceptable ideas about using their resources for their own purposes.”¹

The facts about SoA have gradually come to light. The evidence now is overwhelming that the US Army School of the Americas for decades has been turning out assassins, torturers, and rapists on a gigantic scale that should revolt the sensibilities of all Americans. These graduates have been used as tools of American corporate interests and local elites for suppressing the aspirations of the populace for freedom and for a better standard of life. Furthermore, this has been known, not only by those administering SoA, but by the highest levels of the American government. People in the US State Department, after all, do read cables from ambassadors well informed of the daily goings on in their host countries down to the minutest detail.²

They didn't really have to be informed by reading cables; after all, the State Department had a large hand in setting the overall policies in the first place. For example:

*“We should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts.”*³

Of course, not talking about these vague things would not satisfy propaganda needs; so, that part of the policy was slightly revised. The US continued to *talk about* democracy and human rights, but what it practiced in the real world was carried out in the language of straight power.

The School of the Americas Watch, established by Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois, with offices right outside the gate at Fort Benning, is one of the organizations monitoring the activities of SoA graduates. *They* didn't really need to read the cables since they already knew what was happening in different countries in Latin America from first-hand experience there.

What has been learned includes the following.⁴ Graduates of SoA constituted the majority of all those military and police officers implicated in documented atrocities of the most shocking character

¹ Noam Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology*, Boston : South End Press, 1987, pp 6,9.

² Ambassador Hinton in El Salvador, informed the State Department by cable of the assassination of Cardinal Oscar Romero by SoA graduate Roberto d'Aubuisson at the cathedral in El Salvador on March 24, 1980 – on the very day it took place. In view of the CIA's complicity in other assassinations (eg Diem in Vietnam in 1963 as described in *The Pentagon Papers*, NY: Bantam Books, 1971 and the several admitted attempts to assassinate Cuba's Castro), it can easily be expected that the CIA was fully pre-informed of this plot as well.

³ US State Department Policy Planning Study 23, February 1948. (See footnote 1, p16.)

⁴ Much of the information about SoA, the SoA training manuals, and the recently released CIA manuals comes from: (a) Lisa Haugaard's analysis of the manuals for the Latin American Working Group (LAWG), a coalition of over 60 non-governmental groups (<http://www.igc.apc.org/lawg/soafull.html>);

(assassinations, rapes, murders, blackmail, torture, disappearances, false imprisonment). Graduates include 10 officers who became presidents of their countries: e.g. Banzer of Bolivia, Noriega of Panama, Galtieri of Argentina, Regalado of Honduras. None of them were elected; all took power by illegal means. They also include 23 ministers of defense and such others as the late bloodthirsty Salvadoran death-squad leader, Roberto d'Aubuisson. Those Latin American countries with the worst record of human-rights abuses have sent the most candidates for training at SoA, including Nicaragua during the Somoza dictatorship. (Many Contras that conducted atrocities in Nicaragua during the Sandinista period, using CIA training manuals under the guidance of CIA Director William Casey and Oliver North, were SoA graduates.) The training manuals used at SoA gave specific instructions in how to hold prisoners in clandestine jails, using force or threats of force on them; how to “neutralize” political opponents; how to infiltrate and spy on civilian organizations, opposition political parties, labor unions and youth groups; and other human-rights abuses. (Some quotes from the manuals are given in Appendix 3.)

Violations of civilized conduct became so bad in El Salvador, among others, that the United Nations established a “Truth Commission” to investigate. The UN released its report on March 15, 1993, listing the names of military officers it found to have participated in rape, assassinations, murder, torture, and massacres during El Salvador’s bloody nightmare, including the massacre of 900 villagers in El Mozote by the Atlacatl Battalion. SoA Watch discovered, by checking these names against the roster of SoA graduates, that almost three-quarters (74%) of those implicated by the UN were SoA graduates.

For many years, attempts were made by various organizations to have the SoA training manuals declassified. The Department of Defense finally released them on September 20, 1996, accompanied by a “Fact Sheet”.⁵ (The released English versions are US Army translations of the Spanish versions. That explains their many awkward phrasings.) Even though the manuals are acknowledged by the Pentagon to contain “materials inconsistent with US policy”, the Army absolved everyone from responsibility and took no action against any individuals responsible for their production or their use.

On February 21, 1997 the Pentagon’s Inspector General issued a further report on the matter. (See footnote 4a.) The IG’s report acknowledged that “many mistakes were made” but that there was no evidence of “a deliberate attempt to violate DoD policies.” One need not be a lawyer to see that such a statement can be understood in two ways. It could mean that DoD policy is pure and low-level personnel made no deliberate attempts to violate this pure policy, although a few, sort-of-insignificant, mistakes were made. But, “no deliberate attempt to violate” policy might mean that, indeed, policy was not violated; that everything was done precisely according to policy!

In any case, the IG report likewise fails to assign individual or collective responsibility for actions that it claims to be contrary to US policy and it fails to hold anyone accountable. A corollary to “nobody is responsible” is “no corrective actions need be taken” to ensure that it doesn’t happen again. Indeed, *no actions have been taken* against those responsible nor are any contemplated. Nothing is being done to ensure that such materials will never again be used.

(b) SoA Watch (<http://www.derechos.org/soaw/ig-report.html>);

(c) The June 28, 1996 “Report on the GUATEMALA REVIEW” by the Intelligence Oversight Board; it makes passing reference to the SoA manuals;

(d) Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *School of Assassins*. Maryknoll, NY : Orbis Books, 1997; and

(e) Inside the School of Assassins, documentary video narrated by Susan Sarandon, 1995. Richter Productions, 330 W 42 Street, New York, NY, 10036.

⁵ “FACT SHEET CONCERNING TRAINING MANUALS CONTAINING MATERIALS INCONSISTENT WITH US POLICY”, US Department of Defense (DoD) September 20, 1996.

According to an SoA brochure⁶ the mission of SoA “is to provide doctrinally sound, relevant military education and training to the nations of Latin America; promote democratic and human rights . . .” An examination of the training manuals will show that the opposite is true. (What is the meaning of “doctrinally sound”? Could it mean: in accordance with counterinsurgency, low-intensity-warfare doctrine?)

The brief samples from the manuals given in Appendix 3 belie the SoA brochure’s and SoA apologists’ claim of promoting democratic and human rights; this claim is bogus. Instead, the manuals make clear that US policy was to utilize Latin America’s militaries to carry out US policies to prevent any independent groups with ideas unacceptable to the capitalist controllers of the US from participating in the democratic process. This is antithetical to democratic ideals and quite contrary to SoA claims. Such claims are also belittled by Retired US Army Major Joseph Blair who was an SoA instructor, 1986-1989: “In 3 years at the School, I never heard of such lofty goals as promoting freedom, democracy, and human rights.”

Consider the practice of spying on opposition political parties, explicitly taught at SoA. When Richard Nixon ordered such spying on an opposition political party, he was saved from impeachment only by resigning the Presidency of the US, a historically unprecedented act. Yet, the US Army taught Latin American trainees not only to spy on opposition political parties but that such parties were “the enemy” and **anything** done to them was acceptable.

Lest one reach the conclusion that those running SoA are unique rogues, one should be reminded of the CIA training manual – outed in 1984 -- used to train Nicaraguan Contras that caused a considerable stir at the time. Two other CIA training manuals were declassified on January 24, 1997. One of these, “KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation” is dated July 1963. (Is it a coincidence that this is the same time that SoA was renamed and given new impetus?) The second one: “Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual” is based heavily on the first one. It was used in at least seven training courses conducted in Latin American countries between 1982 and 1987. These manuals are even more obviously unprincipled than the Army manuals. (See footnote 4a.) Furthermore, the SoA manuals were used also by mobile trainers, who were not part of SoA, in the countries themselves, not just at Fort Benning.

AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY

It is important to place the School of the Americas in perspective. The existence of the School of the Americas and the nature of the instruction carried out there are not aberrations, something that can be dismissed as a failed initiative of an otherwise benevolent American system. What happened at SoA has to be understood in terms of deliberate policies established by the post-WWII US national-security apparatus; in the broader context of the images most Americans have of their political/economic system; and of what is hailed as the American Dream. This almost-theological concept is assumed to have an uplifting, liberating, ennobling, moral quality but it is more like a nightmare — a debilitating, perverse, ignoble and immoral nightmare.

More than anything else, the American Dream was founded on acquisitive greed and social irresponsibility; two of its operative concepts were frontier and expansion. Whatever else the concepts of frontier and expansion implied, they meant that other people were “barbarians” whom Americans had a mission to civilize; whose lands were available for Americans to expand into. Far from being peace-loving, Americans have always been violent and expansionist. One of the slogans of American leaders in the 19th century was “extending the area of freedom”. Operationally this meant forcibly displacing the Native Americans from their lands. Treaties were made with Indian nations only to be broken.

⁶ *The US Army School of the Americas*, available from Commandant, US School of the Americas, ATTN: PAO, Fort Benning, GA 31905.

The case of Lewis Cass is illuminating. At various times he was a US Army officer, governor of the Michigan Territory, Cabinet member under Presidents Jackson and Buchanan, and Senator from Ohio. At a treaty council in Ohio on May 11, 1825, Cass solemnly pledged the word of the US to the Cherokees and Shawnees that if they just moved across the Mississippi they could live there undisturbed. We know how much *that* treaty was worth. If Native Americans refused to participate, they were removed forcibly. If they resisted, they were massacred. During the Vietnam War a particularly vivid photograph and TV coverage in 1967 showed American soldiers destroying a Vietnamese village (in order to save it, the Army said) by applying their cigarette lighters to burn down the gasoline-soaked thatched huts.⁷ This wasn't a newly acquired barbarism; in an article titled *Burning the Cheyenne Village* in the 19 April 1867 issue of Harper's Weekly, exactly one century earlier, there is a sketch showing American soldiers running from teepee to teepee burning them down with their torches.⁸

"Extending the area of freedom" also meant territorial conquest at the expense of Mexico. Vast areas that include Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, California, and parts of Colorado were simply taken from Mexico by claiming a "manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."⁹ (Texas should also be included in this list but there was a slight, roundabout, difference in the way Texas was acquired whose explication would require excessive space.)

The US has always been oriented toward the acquisition of a world empire but not necessarily in the old colonial context.¹⁰ In this it has been very successful. As even the highest government officials boast, the US controls some y% (large) of all the world's resources with only some x% (small) of the world's population.¹¹

An early indication of American expansionism at the expense of anybody else that happened to be occupying the coveted land comes from what might be viewed as an unlikely source: Thomas Jefferson. In a letter to President James Monroe at the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine, he wrote:

*I candidly confess that I have always seen Cuba as the most interesting addition that could ever be made to our system of states. The control that, with Florida, this island would give us over the Gulf of Mexico and the countries and the isthmus bordering on it, as well as on those whose waters flow into it, would fill up the measure of our political well being.*¹²

For those who have been suckled at the teat of the American Dream, such raw expansionism and empire building is truly staggering.

⁷Also described in Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc*, NY: Knopf, 1967 (pp 69, 131).

⁸See the well-documented account of US government perfidy vis-a-vis Indians by Richard Drinon, "Violence in the American Experience: Winning the West" in *Radical Teacher*, New University Conference, December 30, 1969. See also Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, NY: Macmillan, 1969.

⁹ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, NY: Harper & Row, 1980, p 149.

¹⁰ William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire*, Random House, 1969.

¹¹ In 1948 George Kennan, then head of the US State Department planning staff, put it this way: "We have 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population." (See footnote 1, p15.) In 1996 the figures were x = 4% and y still near 50%.

¹² Letter of Thomas Jefferson to then-President James Monroe, October 24, 1823, *Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, Columbia University Press, 1993.

Whatever else “frontier” meant, it also meant that social justice, equity, and community were of no concern in the US; the “safety valve” of the frontier was always available to *white* men who lost out in the capitalist struggle for self-enrichment. The siren call to “Go west!” and “strike it rich” could be counted on to defuse the contradictions that might otherwise build up between the dream and the reality. With the frontier gone, the “American Dream” remains a reality, the reality of unbridled greed, of looking out only for oneself and a winner-take-all, devil-take-the-hindmost attitude of unlimited personal enrichment at the expense of shared community values, with no moral limitations.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE US

All countries of Latin America are underdeveloped countries in various degrees. In all but post-Revolution Cuba there exist vast concentrations of wealth in the hands of a few, while the great majority of the people are destitute. In Brazil, for example, 10% of the people own 90% of the land. In Guatemala the (US) United Fruit Company owns more agricultural land than 50% of the population combined.¹³ Nothing differs greatly from this in Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, etc.

Large numbers of people in Latin America are jobless and hungry. Unemployment is very high everywhere, reaching 50% in Brazil’s northeast at times. People seldom get medical care. Many children die young and life expectancy is low; large numbers of people are illiterate (again excepting post-Revolution Cuba). (Country-by-country figures are available in UNESCO reports.) With few exceptions, the ruling classes are the land-owning, corporate, and military elite; the people have had little say, even under nominal democratic regimes like Mexico.

For the US, Latin America has been a source of cheap raw material and agricultural products and — more recently -- of cheap labor. In alliance with local propertied elites, US corporations have been acquiring Latin American lands and mines, and have been exploiting Latin American resources. They found it easy to deal with the corrupt rulers of these countries, obtaining huge concessions for the countries’ natural resources in return for their support in maintaining the rulers in power, backed by the US military. This military force was used time and time again, not for loftily proclaimed purposes of “freedom” and “self determination”, but for outright economic imperialism. A small part of the truth in the early years of this century can be glimpsed from former US Marine Corps General Smedley Butler:

*I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue in. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras ‘right’ for American fruit companies in 1903.*¹⁴

Who benefits from this alliance of American corporate interests and the ruling elite in Latin America? Neither the people of Latin America nor that of the US. Whenever a nationalist leader, supported by the people, has arisen and attempted to loosen the shackles binding his country to the US, the reactionary oligarchies could count on the US government to intervene. In 1954 the CIA was directly involved in

¹³ Thomas and Marjorie Melville, “Guatemala: Analogue to Vietnam”, *New Politics*, Vol 8, Winter 1969. The Melvilles, a former Catholic priest and nun, respectively, served as missionaries in Guatemala for a total of 25 years between them. They were expelled from Guatemala in December 1967 for being sympathetic to the plight of the peasants and for denouncing US interference in Guatemala.

¹⁴ Smedley Butler, *War is a Racket* republished by Crises Press, Gainesville, FL, 1995.

overthrowing the first, ever, democratic government of Guatemala, for example. The fact is no longer officially denied. Here's how it is put by a recent government document:

“In 1954, as the communist party gained increasing influence in the Guatemalan Government headed by President Jacobo Arbenz, the US assisted in the overthrow of the Arbenz government.”¹⁵

The US didn't just “assist”, it planned the operation, trained the over-throwers, supplied weapons, transported them to neighboring Honduras and Nicaragua (then ruled by our man, dictator Somoza, making Nicaragua safe for democracy), etc. It even rattled sabers by sending nuclear-bomb-loaded bombers to Nicaragua, “meant, it would appear, as a signal of American commitment.”¹⁶ The resulting illegitimate Guatemalan government ensured the continuing good fortunes of United Fruit and other US corporations. In the 1980s it again became necessary to put down peoples' aspirations in Guatemala when, most often at the hands of SoA graduates, 200,000 lives were snuffed out. Ironically, reference to the 1954 US overthrow can be found in one of the SoA manuals, *“Terrorism and the Urban Guerilla”*:

“In the middle of the 1950s, Guatemala was governed by a communist government. A coup d'etat directed by the United States replaced the government.”

This manual was classified until 1996; so trainers and trainees at SoA, but not the American people until much later, were to know that the overthrow of the Guatemalan government in 1954 was “directed by the United States”. Note the overstatement in the first sentence: “governed by a communist government”. It wasn't; even the IOB Report claims only that “the communist party gained increasing influence”. This “increasing influence” was by democratic political means. Note also the understatement in the second sentence: “coup d'etat directed by the United States”; it was a *military invasion* carried out by the United States, using mercenaries, from outside Guatemala, not an internal uprising that “coup d'etat” implies. At least the manual does not minimize the US role; it forthrightly proclaims that the US “**directed**”.

The US was also instrumental in the overthrow of the legitimate government of Joao Goulart in Brazil ten years later in 1964. US armed forces invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965 and directly intervened in preventing the return of the constitutionally elected government of Juan Bosch. In Chile in 1973, the US guided, supported, provided the weapons for, and Henry Kissinger even justified the overthrow and assassination of the democratically elected socialist, Salvador Allende. In all these cases the given reason was the charge of ‘Communism’ against the freely elected nationalist leader. The real reason was the interests of the corporate class in the US.

Very often, those in Washington or in the US embassies who are in the strongest positions to influence and shape US-Latin American policies have had strong personal interests in those American companies operating in Latin America and dominating the economies of whole countries. For example, both US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles under Eisenhower and his brother Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA when the overthrow of the Guatemalan government was engineered in 1954, were former United Fruit Company lawyers. Furthermore, Allen had previously been President of United Fruit; his predecessor as head of CIA, General Walter Bedell Smith, became a vice president of United Fruit in 1955 when Guatemala was safely back under the control of American corporate interests. Can it be doubted that policies and actions carried out by the US government with such disastrous consequences for Latin America were greatly influenced, if not controlled, by the corporate interests of such individuals?

¹⁵ INTELLIGENCE OVERSIGHT BOARD (IOB), *Report on the Guatemala Review*, June 28, 1996. (The IOB was appointed by the President.)

¹⁶ Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War* (Brookings Institution, Washington, 1978).

A particularly instructive case is that of the Rockefellers, Nelson in particular. The Rockefeller interests controlled the economy of several Latin American countries, including Peru and Venezuela. Creole Petroleum Company, for example, a subsidiary of Rockefellers' then-called Standard Oil of New Jersey, accounted for more than a third of Venezuela's oil, which made up 93% of Venezuela's export earnings. Nelson's own International Basic Economic Corporation in Peru ran a sugar mill, a chain of supermarkets, a poultry-breeding operation and an insurance brokerage business.¹⁷ When Nelson Rockefeller was named Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs by Roosevelt in 1939, and later named Assistant Secretary of State, he was already a Director of Creole Petroleum. A person with such great influence in shaping US policy in Latin America had a tremendous personal and corporate interest in this policy. For whose benefit was Rockefeller shaping these policies?

Or take Ellsworth Bunker who was sent to the Dominican Republic as a "troubleshooter" in 1965 after the April US intervention. The Dominican Republic is a large sugar producer and the National Sugar Refining Company has major holdings there, the same company that used to be a major sugar producer in Cuba. Bunker was a Director and major stockholder in National Sugar. Is it possible that his advice and counsel regarding US policy toward Santo Domingo *was not* influenced by his personal interests in an American company whose fortunes would be vitally affected by actions of the Dominican government? These are merely samples, the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS IN CONTEXT

A lot of other things were happening in the early post-WWII years when the School of the Americas was established, including the creation of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and the NSA (National Security Agency) in 1947. Policy decisions were being made that nowhere in the world, but especially not in Europe and the Western hemisphere, would any indigenous political forces not under the influence and control of US corporate interests be allowed to prosper. Money was poured into France immediately after the war to counter the leftist unions associated with the WWII French Resistance who fought the German Nazis and their French collaborators.

In Italy, to prevent any parties of the antifascist left from gaining control, our tax money bought the first post-war elections for the Christian Democrats. In Greece, the CIA intervened in the civil war in 1947 in favor of those who had collaborated with the German Nazis and Italian Fascists, helping to defeat the Greek partisans who had struggled on the Allied side in the Greek Resistance. Other such interventions included the overthrow in 1953 of the legitimate Mossadegh government of Iran by the CIA under Kermit Roosevelt, a deed openly touted in his book.¹⁸ (Again the cause was protection of corporate interests, exploiters of Iranian oil.) The reinstatement of Shah Reza Pahlevi with his secret police, Savak, is a major factor in the present virulent antagonism of Iran toward the US. How else would one be expected to feel towards one's rapist?

From the earliest post-WWII days the US embarked on an "anticommunist" crusade. An "international communist conspiracy" was proclaimed under every bed. The "domino theory" gradually dominated all US policy. If one country "falls to Communism", the theory went, all the neighboring dominos will also do so. This theory was never so clearly enunciated as it was with respect to Vietnam. As the Pentagon Papers makes clear, and as Robert McNamara acknowledged was a "mistake" last year¹⁹, US policy planners claimed that if Vietnam were to elect (**elect!**) a Communist president, then all neighboring countries would be lost. Of course they wouldn't actually be "lost", they simply might not be available for capitalist exploitation.

¹⁷ David Horowitz, "Rocky Takes a Trip", *Ramparts*, August, 1969.

¹⁸ Kermit Roosevelt, *The Struggle for the Control of Iran*, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979 .

¹⁹ Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, NY: Vintage, 1996.

“Going Communist” would not be permitted by the US, most especially not by democratic, electoral means, as made clear in 1954 in Guatemala and, **in that same year**, in Vietnam. At a meeting of its National Security Council on Aug 3, 1954, the US laid plans to subvert the Geneva Agreements signed a few days earlier that called for free elections throughout Vietnam. Certain that elections in all Vietnam surely would have been won by Ho Chi Minh²⁰, the US unilaterally installed Ngo Dinh Diem, first as Premier, then as President of South Vietnam, an entity that did not then exist. Diem had comfortably sat out in the US the struggle for liberation from France and very few Vietnamese would have even recognized his name; but that is another story.

Language is prostituted when it is claimed that democratically electing a socialist government, as in Guatemala or Chile, or a communist government, as Eisenhower anticipated in Vietnam, is a “government takeover”. It becomes Orwellian doublethink to view overthrowing such an elected government by force, or preventing by force an election that will bring such a government to power, as being “democratic”.

It might be argued that such post-WWII actions of the US as establishing the SoA were the result of Soviet encroachments in Europe: the absorption of Czechoslovakia into the Soviet bloc in 1948, or the isolation of West Berlin within East Germany, requiring the Berlin airlift in 1949. Also the result of the 1949 victory of Mao’s Communists over the US-backed Chiang Kai Shek in the Chinese civil war in 1949. For starters, the establishment of SoA (and of the CIA) predated all of these. As for Berlin, the separation of all of Germany, and thus of Berlin, into 4 zones was done at the insistence of the US; as junior partners in 1945-46 France and Britain had to go along. The Soviet Union had initially proposed the joint administration of all of Germany, including Berlin. There would have been no East Germany – and, hence, no isolation of West Berlin – without US policy. What was the US motivation for this? Is it possible this policy meant that the USSR would be given some voice in only about ¼ of Germany, rather than in all of it, had it been administered jointly?

No, the anti-left stance of the US was taken very early in the post-WWII era. It had little to do with the actions of the Soviet Union, a lot to do with capitalist ideology and the corporate interests of powerful individuals with major influence on US policies. The individuals mentioned here are just a few prominent past examples in the Executive Branch. It is nowadays a major scandal how private corporate interests control both the executive **and** the legislative branches. This cannot be written off as just a recent phenomenon; it was always thus, but now more open for all to see. With the increasing dependence of office holders on the largesse of those who control capital, it may no longer be necessary for elected or appointed office holders themselves to have major personal financial interests in corporations. Ensuring one’s *political* success by way of corporate purchase will also ensure one’s personal *financial* success.²¹

WHAT NOW?

²⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, NY: Doubleday, 1963. The US could not permit elections because: “I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indo-Chinese affairs who did not agree that . . . possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh.” (p 372) What might a leader be called if he prevents an election for fear that the opponent will win?

²¹ As reported by the Associated Press, November 2, 1997, US President William Clinton said: “The party with the most money wins.” The money for both major US parties, of course, must come from those who possess it. Thus, the President of the US admits that large corporations and wealthy individuals determine the outcome of elections in this country. Yet, the US acts as instructor to the rest of the world on “democracy and human rights”! If Clinton is correct, why have an election? On the date of an election, a “bipartisan” banker can be chosen to count the money that the candidates of the major parties possess at that time; the one whose party has the most money can be declared the winner, thus saving the time and expense of conducting an election. Since parties not under the control of capitalists will never have the most money, their candidate can never win. Hence, why permit such parties to compete, or even exist?

When the SoA was established in 1946, the real purpose was, and continued to be, *counter-insurgency* – to put down any threat to US economic interests by people disaffected by their miserable conditions of life, and to protect “vital national interests”. What exactly are these *vital national interests*? Americans can’t be blamed for thinking that free speech, justice, and human rights for all, freedom to associate and to carry out political activity for everyone, the collective betterment of the totality of society are all vital national interests.

In reality, though, US “vital national interests” are what those who have always been in control consider them to be: making the world safe for capitalist exploitation; the concentration in fewer and fewer hands of more and more of the earth’s resources. The corollary to the increasing concentration of wealth and income in the hands of a few in the US is the pauperization and impoverishment of the many. That, too, has been documented over the past two decades.

Since 1992 Rep. Joseph Kennedy of MA has introduced amendments and bills in the House of Representatives to close the School of the Americas; they have been defeated. Now before the House is an amended bill to include two steps: closing SoA and opening an Academy for Democracy and Human Rights. (Academy sounds more uplifting than School; “for Democracy and Human Rights” definitely has a better cachet than “of the Americas”.) On September 4, 1997 the US House voted on an amendment to the foreign operations bill that would simply have defunded the SoA. It lost by the very narrow margin of 210 – 217.

The removal of SoA does not necessarily mean that its functions would cease, only that these functions would need to be shifted elsewhere, as circumstances demand. Furthermore, from the point of view of the power structure, closing SoA *at this time* could be part of a strategy of damage control. Opponents of SoA, their objective achieved, might pat themselves on the back and go home, leaving the authorities to carry on with business as usual, *just not at the SoA*.

Nevertheless, the elimination of SoA would have more than symbolic value for those Americans who are appalled by the inhumane actions supported and carried out by our government in our names. The greatest value would be in people coming to view it as an initial success against the repressive capitalist forces that control this country, just a start in the long struggle to achieve the ideals of justice, equality and community. For that, “eternal vigilance”, accompanied by informed action, are essential.

November 16, 1997 was the 8th anniversary of the brutal assassinations of 6 Jesuit priests and two Salvadoran women coworkers by the Salvadoran military. Of the 26 officers implicated in this atrocity, 19 were trained at the US Army School of the Americas. Over the last several years, this date has been the occasion for increasingly larger demonstrations at the SoA in Fort Benning, Georgia led by SoA Watch’s Father Roy Bourgeois, demanding that SoA be shut down. Of 350-400 demonstrators in 1996, 60 were arrested for carrying out “partisan political activity” at Fort Benning. (Bourgeois couldn’t be arrested because he was still serving a jail sentence imposed after his 1995 arrest.) This “activity” consisted of creating a mock cemetery under a clump of trees by planting white crosses, each bearing the name of a person murdered by SoA graduates and the name of the country in which the atrocity took place.

On that day in 1997, 2000 demonstrators from all over the country gathered at the Fort Benning gate. After a very moving ceremony, a solemn funeral procession entered Fort Benning heading toward SoA with 8 black coffins in the vanguard. The coffins contained petitions bearing over 1 million signatures demanding that SoA be closed. The number of those in the procession, led again by Roy Bourgeois, who “crossed the line” onto the base and were arrested was 601, the largest number to be so detained at a protest demonstration of any kind in many years! By early the next day, all were released, only 28 of them being charged with a crime, those who were repeat offenders. And the beat goes on. **Shut it down!**

Appendix 1. RELEVANT DATES

September 4, 1997: House vote to defund SoA lost: 210 – 217.

February 21, 1997: DoD Inspector General's report admits "mistakes".

January 24, 1997: Declassification of two CIA training manuals in response to an FoI Act request in 1994 by the *Baltimore Sun*.

September 20, 1996: Release of the seven SoA training manuals and issuance by the Pentagon of a minimizing "Fact Sheet" about them.

March 15, 1993: Report of UN Truth Commission implicating large numbers of SoA graduates in atrocities.

1991-1992. Bush administration review of training manuals.

November 16, 1989: Massacre in El Salvador of 6 Jesuit priests & 2 Salvadorans. 19 of the 26 individuals implicated by the UN Truth Commission were SoA graduates. That day in 1997 was the 8th anniversary.

Appendix 2. TITLES OF 6 OF THE 7 RELEASED SoA MANUALS

- **Handling of Sources**
- **Counterintelligence**
- **Revolutionary War, Guerillas and Communist Ideology ("Guerillas" added in 1989)**
- **Terrorism and the Urban Guerrilla**
- **Interrogation**
- **Combat Intelligence**

The 7th one is a brief 60 pager compared to 1109 pages in the rest.

Appendix 3. SELECTED QUOTES FROM THE SoA MANUALS

(Interspersed comments in boldface are not part of the manuals)

From **Counterintelligence**:

"**CIVILIAN SECURITY**: In all cases the mission of the military forces has priority over the well being of the civilians in the area. Examples of the civilian security measures are: . . .

Surveillance of suspect political groups: one should find out whether other groups are sympathetic to the enemy cause. Such groups must always be considered potential agents." (pp10-11)

Spying on political groups reminds one of the COINTELPRO program of the FBI during the 1960s and 70s against the Black Panthers and other groups.²² Who is “the enemy” in countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, all dictatorships at the time? As priest Roy Bourgeois says, the enemy is the poor, peasants, unions and workers, student and other youth groups; in short, the people.

“Figure #2 Black Lists

THESE CONTAIN THE IDENTITY AND LOCATIONS OF PERSONS WHOSE CAPTURE AND DETENTION ARE OF FOREMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE ARMED FORCES: EXAMPLES

- a. Enemy agents known or suspects, persons involved in espionage, sabotage, politics, and subversive persons . . .
- c. Political leaders known or suspected as hostile toward the Armed Forces or the political interests of the National Government . . .
- I. Collaborators and sympathizers of the enemy, known or suspects, whose presence in the area of operations represents a threat to the national security . . .
- g. Other personalities identified by the G2 as of immediate detention. This could include local political personalities, chiefs of police, and municipal leaders or leaders of the enemy’s government departments.” (p 225)

Those on the black list include people engaged in politics, political leaders suspected to be hostile to the political interests of the National Government (which came into being by overthrowing an elected government), (e) anyone with a socialist thought, local political personalities, political leaders, even chiefs of police. Thus, people placed on a blacklist by an illegitimate, undemocratic government are those who, in a democratic society, would be legitimately carrying out democratic activities!

“FIGURE #6

ORGANIZATIONS AND TEAMS [Refers to targets to be detected and neutralized]

Local or national political party teams, or parties that have goals, beliefs or ideologies contrary or in opposition to the National Government . . .” (p 228)

(There are 5 others on the list.)

From **Handling of Sources**

“We have already seen how a relatively small number of individuals can come to control an organization by infiltration and fixed elections. The government can inform itself in a timely way of insurgents’ activity in these organizations by placing its agents in all organizations that it suspects could interest the insurgent group. Among the main organizations of this type can be mentioned political parties, unions and youth and student groups.” P 7. **COINTELPRO again!**

“The CI [Counter Intelligence] agent should consider all organizations as possible guerilla sympathizers. He ought to train and locate informants inside these organizations to inform him about activities and discover any indication of a latent insurrection. . . . By infiltrating informants in the diverse youth, workers, political, business, social and charitable organizations we can identify the organizations that include guerillas among their members . . .” (p 75)

²² Comments in boldface are not part of the manuals.

“The CI agent could cause the arrest of the employee’s parents, imprison the employee or give him a beating as part of the placement plan of said employee in the guerilla organization.” (p 79)

“The employee’s value can be increased . . . by means of arrests, executions, or pacification.” (p 80)

From **Terrorism and the Urban Guerilla**

“Another function of the CI agents is to recommend CI targets for neutralization . . . Examples of hostile organizations are paramilitary groups, labor unions and dissident groups.” (p 112)

“Measures of controlling the Population and Resources

1. Surveillance. To control the movement of supplies, equipment and people, it will be necessary to monitor and control the population’s activities . . .” (p 118)

From **Revolutionary War, Guerillas and Communist Ideology (1989)**

“It is essential that domestic defense intelligence agencies obtain information about . . . the presence of the insurgent movement in the nonviolent public attacks against the government.” (p 49)

“Nonviolent public attacks”? E.g. speaking in public against government actions of murder and disappearances; conducting a silent vigil against disappearances; attending a rally in the town square seeking the installation of a water system?

“The subversive actions are directed towards achieving changes in the political, economic and social structure of society, frequently through psychological means. In this way, the insurgent tries to influence the opinions, attitudes, feelings, and desires of friendly, hostile and neutral people . . .” (p 50)

“The insurgents try to influence the direction, control and authority that is exercised over the nation in general and in the administration of the political system. The insurgents are active in the areas of political nominations, political organizations, political education, and judicial laws. They can resort to subverting the government by means of elections in which the insurgents cause the replacement of an unfriendly government official to one favorable to their cause. The insurgent activity can include disbursing campaign funds to gain members and organizing political meetings for their candidates. They can attempt to use bribes or place informants in key areas to counteract government action. They can launch propaganda attacks to discredit and ridicule political leaders and government officials. Also, insurgent leaders can participate in political races as candidates for political posts.” (p 51)

Is it not generally true that everyone in a democratic society tries to influence the direction of the nation, in general, and the administration of the political system? Isn’t it the aim of all in a democratic society to replace the government by one favorable to their cause? This manual, too, gives the lie to the claim that US policy carried out by SoA is to foster democratic ideals.

From **Combat Intelligence**

(After sections that list “Indications of an Imminent Guerilla attack” and “Indicators of Control [of the Population] by the Guerilla Forces” comes the following section.):

“II Are the insurgents carrying out psychological operations?

- a. Propaganda (indicator)
 1. Accusations of government corruption.”

- (1) **In the US (said to be a democratic country) Republicans accuse Democrats of corruption in the raising of money; and Democrats accuse Republicans of similar corruption! Is this “psychological propaganda” or what passes here as normal politics?**
- (2) “Circulation of petitions that embrace the insurgents’ demands.
- (3) Attempts to discredit or ridicule government or military officials.
- (4) Characterization of government and political leaders as U.S. puppets.
- (5) Promotion of a popular front government.

There are 9 more similar items on the list. All of these are normal processes in a democratic society but the authors of the manuals call them indications of propaganda!

b. Promotion of popular discontent (indicator)

- (1) Labor discontent
- (a) Energetic campaigns of union organizing or recruiting.
- (b) Extremist propaganda in favor of the interests of workers . . .

This list extends for another 10 similar items.

- (1) Rural discontent
- (a) Demonstrations to demand agrarian reform. . . .

The list goes on with similar items.

- (2) Economic discontent.
- (a) Peasants refuse to pay taxes or rents.
- (b) Protests against high unemployment, low salaries, or against the national economic plan.
- (3) Religious discontent
- (a) Clergy embracing liberation theology.
- (b) Clergy involved in activities concerning political, rural, or labor discontent.” (pp 167-169)

Liberation theology subversive?!