

2000

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Hemisphere Volume 9 Number 2, Spring 2000



A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

# Hemisphere

Volume 9 • Number 2 • \$7

Spring 2000

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in Latin America

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Independent News  
in Mexico

A Look Back at Argentina's  
Rodolfo Walsh

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Implications of the Pinochet Case

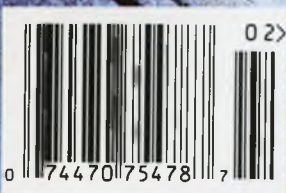
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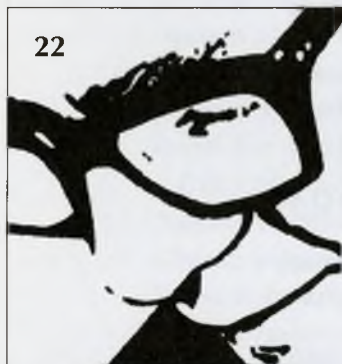
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# Hemisphere

A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

Volume 9 • Number 2  
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A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

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**I**n August 1999, Jaime Garzón, a popular political satirist, was gunned down on his way to the Bogotá radio station where he worked. The murder sparked an outpouring of protests and mourning in Colombia and received extensive coverage in the international press. Regrettably, however, the murder of a journalist is an all too common occurrence in much of Latin America. Scores of less famous reporters, photographers and editors in the region have lost their lives in the past decade as a direct result of their work, without receiving the same public attention.

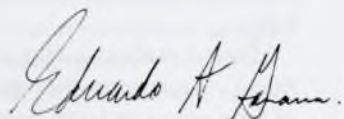
This issue of *Hemisphere* focuses on journalism in Latin America, in both its positive and negative aspects. In his article about anti-press violence in the region, Silvio Waisbord argues that such attacks are not isolated events, but rather the product of societies with legacies of human rights abuses and weak civil institutions. He uses the murder of Argentine photojournalist José Luis Cabezas as a case in point. Another journalist who died violently in Argentina, Rodolfo Walsh, is the subject of an article by José Luis Benavides. The article celebrates the lifework of a man recognized as a pioneer in the movement toward socially responsible journalism. Chappell Lawson also emphasizes a lessening of state control over the media in his article about the growth of independent journalism in Mexico. Finally, Laurie Goering, a reporter with *The Chicago Tribune*, shares her (often humorous) experiences working as a correspondent in Brazil.

Other topics covered in this issue include the ongoing legal proceedings against General Augusto Pinochet. Gregory Weeks provides a summary of the case and its implications for Chilean politics, as well as other dictators past and present. Two articles look at trade relations between the countries of the Western Hemisphere and Europe, a timely issue given the recent protests against globalization in many parts of the world. Janet Chernela's piece on the changing economic landscape of Manaus ties into this theme by studying the shifting role of the Amazonian rainforest in the global economy.

A double book review by Kathleen Martín focuses on Rigoberta Menchú, the Nobel Prize-winning indigenous activist who found herself at the center of controversy last year. Martín reviews Menchú's own book as well as a critical account of her story by anthropologist David Stoll.

Finally, the photo essay in this issue features a series of poignant images from the mining towns of Bolivia, many of which were virtually abandoned after a 1985 decree closed the state-owned tin mines. The pictures return to the theme of globalization and the impact streamlined economic policies can have on specific industries and populations. Yet, they also reveal the tenacity of the displaced mine workers and the birth of private enterprises in many towns.

As always, we welcome your comments about *Hemisphere* and look forward to bringing you our next issue, whose focus will be racial and ethnic identity in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Eduardo A. Gamarra



# Stranger Than Fiction

Laurie Goering

Often, it seems, covering Brazil comes down to a test of stamina. Take the forest fires that roared through Brazil's northern Roraima state last year, blackening rainforest and parts of the country's main Yanomami Indian reserve.

For the better part of a week I and other journalists made forays into the fire zone by rental car and small plane on the days when the smoke wasn't too thick. We interviewed firefighters, local victims and Indian agency officials. We scorched our shoes and drank warm soft drinks in the stifling heat.

Finally, it came time to leave for other stories. The problem was, we couldn't.

Thick smoke that made a joke of the capital's name—Boa Vista, or "Good View"—had downed all flights for days. With each cancellation, the lines at the airport grew.

Finally, desperate, several of us climbed aboard the only transportation out of town, a bus to Manaus arranged by the airlines. Only 13 hours, on "mostly" paved roads, the ticketing agent promised. Once there, we'd have priority status for flights out of the Amazon.

We got the last seats on the bus, next to the toilet, which quit functioning less than an hour into the "flight." During frequent rest stops the driver lurched back to visit with us, whiskey bottle in hand. At river crossings, ferries failed to appear. A live sex act took place in the seat in front of us.

Laurie Goering is the South America correspondent for *The Chicago Tribune*.

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*Writing about Brazil—and the rest of Latin America—has its own set of pitfalls, and in four years of living in Brazil I've found most of them.*

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Finally, 14 hours later and with midnight approaching, we pulled into Manaus, covered head to toe in thick red dust.

"Let me guess," joked the airline agent at the counter. "Boa Vista?"

Writing about Brazil—and the rest of Latin America—has its own set of pitfalls, and in four years of living in Brazil I've found most of them.

This country, for instance, does not have the kind of comprehensive open records laws journalists routinely depend on in the United States. Getting government documents is mostly a test of patience and charm, not a matter of submitting Freedom of Information Act requests.

I once tried to get a set of property records at a government office in the northeastern city of Fortaleza, as part of an investigative series. I was met with suspicion by the woman behind the counter.

Of course I couldn't see the documents—not that she had them anyway, she said. Why did I need them? What was my motive? The fact that I was a journalist wasn't good enough.

For a few hours I sat with her and chatted about her job, her kids, my job, Chicago, the weather and the latest soccer results. She served me a bowl of homemade candied cashew fruit.

Eventually, after a bit of looking, she found the records and let me see them. She hadn't given them to me, she emphasized, and I couldn't

photocopy them or record them in any other way.

We chatted a while longer, as I glanced nonchalantly through the documents. In time, she decided that perhaps I could copy them after all, just as long as I promised never to use her name in connection with my story. I did, and we both left satisfied.

Encounters with Brazil's notorious bureaucracy don't always go so smoothly. Last year, it took me nearly a year to renew my working visa, including a standoff with a clerk who opined that my letter of application wasn't detailed enough and insisted my visa wasn't ready, eight months after it had been granted. Along the way the customs authority threatened to deport my furniture and my cat.

Eventually I got the visa—one day after *Veja*, Brazil's leading news-magazine, ran a story about my plight. "You're famous," said the chief of the visa section, when I walked into the office. He gave me a big hug and the desk clerk gave me my visa—after insisting that I make a new photocopy of a key document, as the current one was 23% too large.

Magical realism is alive and well in Brazil. Sometimes the smaller issues of journalism in Latin America, however, are just as thorny. Take the term "Latin America" itself. Brazilians, of Portuguese rather than Spanish heritage, take offense sometimes at being termed part of "Latin"



*Covering the news in Brazil*

America. The problem is, there is no other easy way to describe the region. Calling something an issue in "Latin America and Brazil" is awkward and confusing for readers, particularly when journalists don't have room repeatedly to explain Brazil's rather different history to an audience that still thinks that Spanish is the only language spoken between the Río Grande and Antarctica.

Describing Indians is for me another vexing problem. Newspapers in the United States try to use the politically correct term "native Americans" when possible to describe Indians in this country. What then to call Brazil's natives? Surely they too are native Americans, but how do I stop readers from picturing the Sioux in Amazônia? I still haven't come up with a good alternative, despite hours of pondering.

As a non-speaker of Portuguese when I arrived in Brazil, I've had my moments with the language as well. I once referred to a source—let's call him João Oliveira Neto—as Mr. Neto in second reference. Neto actually means "the third." I also early in my tenure narrowly avoided translating the Zona de Mata, near the coast of Pernambuco state, as the Zone of Death. It is, of course, the Forest Zone.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty facing a correspondent in Latin America, however, is simply making stories from the region interesting to the readers back home.

I admit that before I moved to Rio de Janeiro, I rarely read a story from the region, except for tales from the Amazon, and I had to look at a map to find Rio. I try to keep that in mind as I write for others, many of whom share my shortcomings.

What is increasingly clear to me is that when American journalists here focus on writing straightforward news stories, about elections in Venezuela or lack of funding for environmental protection in Brazil, not many readers come along for the ride.

When we spin tales, however, we pull in readers who wouldn't otherwise pay attention. Who could put down a story, for instance, not about Venezuela's elections but about a charismatic former coup leader who thinks himself part Jesus Christ and part Simón Bolívar and rises to power democratically, quoting Walt Whitman in his inauguration speech?

Or how about the Roman Catholic priest/pop star who was voted Brazil's sexiest man—and just happens to be leading one of the most successful revivals of the Roman Catholic Church in the region?

Magic realism is alive and well in Latin America, and it is these kinds of tales that bring the region to life for readers who otherwise have little interest in this part of the world.

Brazil's recent economic crisis has pointed to another potential pitfall of reporting here—journalists' ability to influence, as well as simply cover, the news.

With investors scrutinizing Brazil, a foreign news agency in Rio de Janeiro released a photo showing Brazilians jammed in long lines outside the banks. In Brazil, everyone knows that such lines are normal, but in the United States the photo was taken as evidence of a run on the banks—and nearly produced one here as worried foreign investors fled, the currency plunged and depositors ran to switch their savings into dollars.

The Brazilian media in turn prompted their own run on the banks by repeating rumors—in large front-page headlines—that President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was planning to freeze bank accounts, despite his vehement denials.

Accounts were never frozen, and customers trooped back to redeposit their money when the scare was over.

I've seen intentional media abuses as well. I once visited a group of Guaraní Indians who had seized what they considered ancestral land from a local farmer. A Brazilian television news program a few days earlier had shown one of the Guaraní holding a gun to the television reporter's head.

I asked the Indians why they'd threatened the reporter. "Oh, he begged us to do that. He said it would make good television," one of the Indian leaders said. I winced for my profession.

I myself, however, have also been accused of plotting. While covering the fires near Boa Vista, I and other foreign reporters happened to see a news analysis segment by a religious commentator on local television.

Amazônia, he squawked with indignation, was the victim of a plot.

Spies and foreign operatives, posing as foreign journalists, were rushing to town not to write about the blazing fires but to try to lay the groundwork for a foreign takeover of the Amazon, he said.

By suggesting Brazil is incapable of caring for the world's largest rainforest, he continued, the spies were creating the justification for an invasion.

Those of us gathered around the television looked at each other in amazement. An international plot? We hadn't even been able to organize a flight out of Boa Vista yet. ■

# Autumn of the General

Gregory Weeks

**A**lthough General Augusto Pinochet handed power back to civilians in 1990 after nearly 17 years of dictatorship, he remains a polarizing force in Chile. His continued presence as commander in chief of the army proved problematic for establishing civilian supremacy over the armed forces. Once he retired from the army in March 1998, he was entitled under the military-penned 1980 constitution to become a senator for life, thus ensuring his active presence in politics until his death. When Pinochet was arrested in London on October 16, 1998 on the orders of Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón, the Chilean government was dealing not with an aged and discredited dictator, but a senator who continued to command considerable support from the Chilean right.

## DOMESTIC POLITICS

Pinochet's case presented the administration of then President Eduardo Frei with a difficult situation. Frei is a Christian Democrat (as was his predecessor, Patricio Aylwin) but part of the ruling party coalition known as the Concertación, which includes the Socialist Party and the Party for Democracy. Both are left-leaning parties that have clamored for more active efforts to bring to trial those military officers who committed human rights abuses under the military regime. The coalition was

already showing signs of strain; the Pinochet arrest made unity even more problematic and complicated Frei's policy choices.

Supporting the arrest would antagonize the military, and especially the army. Pinochet is revered within its ranks, and the new commander in chief, General Ricardo Izurieta, would have been forced to react. Throughout the 1990s, the army resorted to shows of force, veiled threats and intense media campaigns to protest government policies it believed were contrary to its interests. Consequently, the threat of a new crisis was very real. It would necessarily politicize Izurieta, whom the government considers a more "professional" officer and who refrained from the constant political pronouncements that characterized Pinochet. However, Izurieta also faced considerable pressure from the officer corps to retain a hard line and to protect the commander in chief *benemérito*, a title granted Pinochet before he retired that has no legal basis other than to demonstrate his elevated status.

The army did not hesitate to make its concerns known to the government. The day after the arrest, it issued a statement expressing its "permanent support and solidarity" with Pinochet. Izurieta met several times with the commanders in chief of the other branches of the military, and all watched the government closely. There was little immediate reason for complaint: President Frei, former President Aylwin, Foreign Minister José Miguel Insulza and the Archbishop of Santiago consistently demanded Pinochet's release. Genaro

Arriagada, a prominent Christian Democrat, wrote in an editorial that a "peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy is not a judicial problem. Rather, politics must discriminate among the differing and sometimes antagonistic objectives that society demands." Even Raúl Rettig, the former head of a commission that investigated and published the details of human rights abuses, stated that the issue should be left to Chile to resolve. In other words, foreign judicial proceedings would upset the delicate political balance so carefully constructed since 1990.

The government was also acutely aware that popular support for Pinochet was far from negligible. Polls demonstrated that nearly 40% of the population considered themselves Pinochet supporters, while 31% opposed him and 29% either didn't know or didn't respond. Despite the fact that a significant minority of Chileans opposed the arrest, however, the Concertación's leftist parties criticized Frei's stance, stretching the integrity of the coalition to its limits. Yet, while fissures had always been evident, rumors of the Concertación's death were greatly exaggerated.

## THE INTERNATIONAL REACTION

Overshadowing the implications of the Pinochet case for Chile's domestic politics is the international prerogative to punish dictators who grossly violate the human rights of their citizens. International law proved amenable and Garzón was active in utilizing it. Aside from Pinochet, Garzón targeted 37 other former government officials and military officers, whom

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Gregory Weeks is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science at San Diego State University.



## *Pinochet and the search for justice in Chile*

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### *Pinochet's case highlights the long-term problems of dealing with the past, in Latin America and elsewhere.*

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the Chilean government advised not to leave the country. Garzón also gained the largely symbolic support of the European Parliament, which issued a declaration congratulating both Spain and Great Britain for detaining Pinochet.

Garzón argued that the 1948 Geneva Conventions allow any country to try cases involving serious crimes against human rights, regardless of where they took place. In addition, he pointed out that in 1985 the United Nations expanded its definition of genocide to include extermination of political opponents. Under Spanish law, furthermore, Spanish courts are justified in proceeding with cases involving genocide. Garzón had already gained notoriety by bringing charges against 110 Argentine military and police officers accused of the most serious violations against Spanish citizens during the period of military rule in Argentina. These cases led him to investigate "Operation Condor," in which the Chilean government illegally coordinated swaps of political prisoners with other South American military regimes. The culmination of these investigations was his effort to seek Pinochet's detention for genocide against victims of any nationality, not only Spaniards.

Garzón's case had been proceeding for months before Pinochet was arrested, and the Chilean government made clear that it did not recognize the legitimacy of Spanish

courts to prosecute Chileans. Even Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar stated publicly that he disapproved but could do nothing. Debate ensued as to whether Pinochet's arrest was legal. As a senator, he was traveling on a diplomatic passport, and the Chilean government argued that he was on an official mission to discuss possible arms sales. Nevertheless, the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations does not grant immunity from prosecution unless the diplomat is formally accredited with the host country. No international law or convention prohibits prosecution of visiting heads of state, weakening even further claims of immunity by a former head of state.

Since World War II, many states—particularly in Western Europe—have codified into national law the ability to try universal crimes against humanity. In the 1990s, both Rwandans and Serbs were prosecuted (and even jailed) for violating these laws. Pinochet's case is different. Despite the glaring and brutal violations of human rights during his regime, Pinochet continues to enjoy domestic and international support, and he is a senator. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher published a letter stating that Pinochet "was a good friend to this country during the Falklands War. By his actions the war was shortened and many British lives were saved." Calls for

his release came also from former US president George Bush, Henry Kissinger, Jessie Helms, and even the Vatican. With influential allies, Pinochet was in a much better position to resist prosecution.

Skeptics also began to worry about the power of national courts. As a result of Garzón's efforts, judges and citizens in eight other European countries initiated indictments against Pinochet. If he could be arrested, then did not every national leader potentially face the same threat? President Frei asked rhetorically whether a Chilean court could then initiate proceedings for crimes committed under the Spanish dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Around the world, critics warned of a dangerous precedent that would engender frivolous attempts at prosecution, while supporters clamored for prosecution of dictators and their followers. By January 1999, Portuguese lawyers had announced plans to seek the extradition of former Indonesian president Suharto for the killings he ordered in East Timor, a Portuguese colony forcibly annexed by Indonesia in 1976. Pinochet's fate will represent an important precedent for these and similar cases.

#### **BRITAIN'S DILEMMA**

Once the decision regarding extradition was in British hands, the issue was far more political than juridical. On October 30, 1998, the English High Court ruled that Pinochet should never have been arrested, since he was head of state when the crimes were committed and therefore entitled to immunity. Lawyers for the Spanish government appealed, and the case was

referred to a five-member panel from the House of Lords. In the meantime, Home Secretary Jack Straw, England's top cabinet-level judicial authority, had the authority to order Pinochet's release. He was lobbied intensely to do so by Pinochet supporters, who flew en masse to England to secure the general's freedom. Straw could have cited humanitarian reasons based on Pinochet's ill health, but the irony was obvious; as many noted, humanitarian pardons were not issued to the thousands of people tortured and killed under Pinochet's direction.

From the perspective of human rights activists and Chileans adversely affected by Pinochet's rule (including many members of the government and Congress who were exiled, beaten and/or had relatives killed), the Spanish initiative represented the most promising way to judge Pinochet. In 1978, the military regime proclaimed an amnesty that granted a blanket pardon for 1973-1978, the period when the bulk of the abuses occurred. Pinochet argued that the country had been in a state of war, and that any "excesses" should be viewed in this light. Although the democratic governments of the post-1990 period did prosecute a few officers, including former intelligence chief Manuel Contreras, these successes came only after significant concessions to the army.

The only remaining way to judge Pinochet was to enact a constitutional measure accusing him of violating the nation's honor. A group of Christian Democrats forced this measure to a vote in early 1998, when Pinochet retired from the army and entered the Senate. They were defeated by a combination of military pressure and exhortations from both current and former government officials, including President Aylwin. These officials argued that the proposal ran

counter to the decision to avoid antagonizing Pinochet in favor of democratic stability, and that it would complicate government-army relations just as Izurieta took control. Thus, although twelve separate cases against Pinochet have been launched in Chile, the amnesty law and his senatorial immunity almost certainly doom them to failure.

Straw took no action, and both in Chile and abroad there was consensus that the House of Lords would not overturn the High Court's decision. But on November 15, 1998 (Pinochet's eighty-third birthday), the panel voted 3-2 to deny immunity, ensuring that the general would remain in custody. In December, Straw decided that the extradition process should begin, opening the way to months of hearings, deliberations and appeals.

The Chilean army and navy issued official declarations in protest. Both asserted that the military government had been Chile's savior in a time of national crisis. The army went further, complaining that the Chilean government's efforts to release Pinochet had been inadequate. Pinochet himself sent a letter addressed to all Chileans in which he defended the 1973 coup and claimed that the army had acted to save the "fundamental values of our civilization" from communism. Subsequently, everything he did was rooted in "thinking of the liberty of Chileans, their well-being and national unity." He went on to assert that he was the "object of a political-judicial machination, crafty and cowardly, which has no moral value."

Meanwhile, Pinochet's lawyers succeeded in overturning the House of Lords' decision by noting a conflict of interest regarding one of the panel's members, who had close ties to Amnesty International. A new panel was charged to begin deliberations all over again. On

March 24, 1999, the Law Lords ruled that Pinochet was not immune, but could not be tried for crimes committed before December 1998, when Britain signed the International Convention on Torture. Under these terms, only three of the original 32 charges still stood. The Law Lords also asked Straw to decide whether or not Pinochet could face extradition. On April 15, Straw decided affirmatively, thus ensuring that the case would continue for months.

#### FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

In many ways, the Pinochet case helped define Chile's last presidential election, in December 1999. The two parties on the Chilean right (the conservative Independent Democratic Union and the moderate National Renovation), often at odds, united behind demands to bring Pinochet back to Chile. They even called on Frei to expel the Socialist Party from the government, blaming it for failing to secure Pinochet's release. Despite this campaign, their candidate, Joaquín Lavín (UDI), a conservative mayor of an affluent Santiago suburb, lost to the Concertación's Ricardo Lagos in a runoff vote in January 2000. Lagos, a well-known politician and former Socialist cabinet member, ran a campaign that highlighted the left's concerns but largely avoided the Pinochet issue.

Pinochet's arrest convulsed Chilean politics, underlining the dilemma of pursuing justice in difficult political contexts. There is no threat of a coup d'état in Chile, but the government must address a politically active military that has exerted considerable and consistent influence even after the transition to democracy. Regardless of the final outcome, Pinochet's case has highlighted the long-term problems of dealing with the past, in Latin America and elsewhere. ■



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# Toward a New Partnership?

Paul Sutton

In international relations, all is change and uncertainty. Yet, longstanding relations between countries and established ways of conducting international affairs bring a measure of stability and predictability. One of the more enduring of these relationships is that between Europe and the Caribbean, which marked its half millennium in 1992. In the last 500 years, Europe has left deep legacies in the region, both tangible and intangible, good and bad. To this day, the boundaries of the European Union (EU), represented by the French Départements d'Outre-Mer, the Netherlands Antilles and the British Dependent Territories (newly renamed Overseas Territories), extend to the Caribbean. Since 1975, the cornerstone of this relationship has been the Lomé Convention.

The Lomé Convention is the single most important framework for bringing the largest number of underdeveloped countries (the 71 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, collectively known as the ACP) into a close 'development' relationship with the largest bloc of developed countries (the 15 member states of the EU). The original convention was signed in 1975 and renegotiated in 1980, 1985 and 1990; in its current form, it runs until February 29, 2000. Negotiations to determine its future shape began in September 1998. At stake is the nature of the contin-

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ued European presence in the Caribbean, and in particular, the EU's role in such areas as human rights, economic development and trade.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION AS FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR

For the EU, the Lomé Convention is but one of several frameworks for dealing with the developing world. Recently, the EU has upgraded its interests in Latin America, especially the Mercosur countries, and in Asia. In engaging with these areas, the EU is seeking commercial and political advantage, with only passing reference to the provision of development assistance. This is consistent with a greater emphasis in EU external relations on political issues and a heightened vocation by many in the European Commission, the EU's executive body, to provide the EU with the power to exercise political leadership in global affairs.

The political dimension is a core feature of the Commission's proposals for a new Lomé Convention. This is perhaps most clearly stated in the preamble to the Draft Negotiating Mandate the Commission released in January 1998. This document states that the convention will contain "an essential elements clause" confirming that the policies of all parties to the convention are "informed by respect for human rights, democrat-

ic principles and the rule of law, and good governance."

This wording has touched a raw nerve with some in the ACP. The Caribbean especially is sensitive to perceived infringements of its sovereignty, but in this case, the critics may be overreacting. The EU proposals are part of a general movement toward greater conditionality in the provision of development assistance, a process driven by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's major aid donors. They also find support among the European public, particularly the major non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs). The proposals are being presented as part of an established process of political dialogue that the Libreville Declaration, which outlines the principles governing the ACP's approach to the Lomé negotiations, agreed had value.

The Commonwealth Caribbean has nothing to fear from political dialogue, and much to gain if it can add its particular concerns to those of the EU. One obvious consideration is coherence between the internal policies of the EU and their external effects. Another is relations with third parties which adversely affect ACP interests (such as the current conflict with the United States over the EU banana regime). Other concerns, as listed in the ACP negotiating mandate,



## *The future of Caribbean-European Union relations*

include treatment of ACP immigrants in the EU, extraeconomic activities of transnational companies, transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous waste, drug trafficking and money laundering. The EU proposals should therefore not be resisted as a matter of principle, but rather reworked to provide a genuine forum for regular exchanges of views with the goal of improved cooperation and a more equal partnership.

The Commission also proposes a greater engagement with civil society. The Caribbean can make its presence felt in this area, drawing on the well-established democratic tradition in the majority of its states and the wide range of interest groups active in various national debates. These need to be harnessed if there is to be a genuine political dialogue about Lomé. The parties involved must also reevaluate how such a forum should be structured. To date, governments, the private sector and NGOs have held separate discussions, a selective pursuit of interest that leaves the Caribbean open to the strategies of divide and rule it claims the metropolitan powers practice in the region.

### **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

In discussing the future of Lomé, it is important to realize what is at stake in development assistance alone (separating it for the moment from trade, which in the past has been the other core element of the Lomé package). In the period 1975-1995, the EU's own development program (as distinguished from that of individual EU states) earmarked approximately \$2.08 bil-

lion dollars for the independent states and dependent territories of the Caribbean. Proportionately, as a region of mostly small states, the Caribbean did well on a per capita basis within the ACP grouping and even better in relation to other developing countries. In some parts of the Caribbean, and especially among the smaller states of the Eastern Caribbean, such aid has been especially significant.

The key question for the Caribbean is, how much of this aid is at risk in a successor convention? The answer is not easy to determine; it depends to a considerable extent on a much wider debate on the purpose and priorities of development assistance. However, the omens are not good for the more developed, high-income countries of the region. The EU, along with other major donors, has determined that development assistance should target the poorest countries. In the Caribbean, Haiti and Guyana undoubtedly qualify, but the Bahamas, Barbados, and most likely Trinidad and Tobago do not. The other states are somewhere in between. Political and procedural considerations undoubtedly play a role in such assessments, but there is also a moral dimension to the perception of lesser need in the Caribbean which is linked to the popular image of the region as an idyllic holiday destination. Poverty and paradise do not coexist easily in the minds of most Europeans; insofar as paradise has the edge over poverty in popular perception, the Caribbean will suffer.

In any successor arrangement to Lomé, the Caribbean will have to demonstrate objective need.

Current thinking has advanced the idea of vulnerability as the key to the special needs of the region's smaller states. Small states, it is argued, are more vulnerable than larger ones to economic shocks, environmental risks and security threats. In particular, small developing states (those with a population of 1.5 million or less) exhibit greater volatility of output compared to large states as a consequence of greater exposure to external economic forces and environmental hazards. When these factors are taken into account and quantified in a composite vulnerability index, 20 small ACP states out of a sample of 100 developing states are categorized as most vulnerable. Of these, seven are in the Caribbean.

The idea of a vulnerability index has yet to win general recognition. The figures cited above are from a study commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat, which has promoted the use of such an index. Its value to the Caribbean and other small developing countries, most of which are defined as middle-income states, is to provide a case for special consideration in accessing official development assistance. The Commission appears sympathetic to such arguments; its Draft Negotiating Mandate mentions that special provision will be made for vulnerable states, including landlocked and island countries. It also proposes that the overall figure for programmable resources (those directed to specific countries and regions) "will be calculated in the light of a country's estimated needs—size, population, income, vulnerability, geographical

situation—and an assessment of its merits based on performance and sound management." If these are indeed the criteria, then many states in the Caribbean will be able to meet them in full.

#### TRADE

The same cannot be said for trade. This has always been a contentious area in ACP-EU relations and the most important element of the Lomé Convention for the Caribbean. The Commission's current proposals have run into opposition from all sides. Both the British government and the International Development Committee of the House of Commons, which released a detailed report on renegotiation of the Lomé Convention in May 1998, believe they will be unworkable in their present form. The ACP shares their concern, as do virtually all major NGOs in Europe.

As far as the Caribbean is concerned, there are two major issues: whether the region will benefit from a Free Trade Area (FTA) with the EU, and what will happen to existing trade protocols. With respect to trade frameworks, the Commission spells out three options:

- The status quo for least developed countries (LDCs) that can continue to benefit from current Lomé preferences. In the Caribbean, this option applies only to Haiti.
- Adapting non-LDCs to the EU's general system of preferences (GSP). This option is open to all Caribbean states; however, preliminary research suggests that it implies considerable loss of benefits, with the Caribbean seriously affected as a group.
- The negotiation of an FTA with the EU by 2005. The Commission believes that the Caribbean will choose this option, since it possesses the greatest cohesion and the most

advanced regional organization among the ACP states. A major Caribbean concern is that such an agreement could divert rather than create trade.

Which option is best for the Caribbean? Anthony Gonzales of Trinidad's Institute of International Relations has studied this question in depth and reached the conclusion that "an FTA would appear in the long term to be a superior instrument to most favoured nation, GSP and Lomé. It would expand market size by providing better access to FTA preferences as well as offer greater security of market access, transparency and stable rules. It could better focus the attention of the region on dynamic gains by examining other trade barriers, protective rules of origin and restrictive investment provisions that impede a better flow of efficiency-seeking investment to areas where the region exhibits competitiveness." A Caribbean-EU FTA could be made compatible with any agreements emerging from the Free Trade Area of the Americas and with WTO rules, which the EU insists are essential to all its trade agreements.

Although an FTA may eventually be best for the Caribbean, a great many issues remain to be clarified and negotiated. In general, however, the arguments against an ACP-EU free trade agreement are most valid in the African context. The Caribbean is a different matter; subject to appropriate safeguards, a Caribbean FTA tilts the balance toward the future of trade liberalization rather than the past of trade preference. It opens the prospect of a customized framework in which new instruments can be devised to improve competitiveness and develop new products and markets. Such gains may not be possible within an ACP-wide agreement. On this issue, the Caribbean must part company with Africa.

#### EUROPEAN INTERESTS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Britain, France and the Netherlands have direct interests in the Caribbean, and Spain a marginal but significant one. Their responsibilities have mounted in recent years, as drug trafficking and money laundering have joined development and good governance on the list of European concerns. The sum of these interests ensures that the region commands attention it would not otherwise receive.

New political and social dimensions have also been introduced into what was once a largely economic portfolio of concerns. The Maastricht Treaty, and more recently the Treaty of Amsterdam, have expanded the EU's competence in a number of areas, including social policy; common citizenship; cooperation on police, judicial and immigration affairs; and cooperation for a common foreign and security policy. All these rebound on the Caribbean and have particular importance for the EU's possessions and territories in the region. The EU and its member states therefore have a considerable interest in stability, security and development in the Caribbean, giving the Caribbean ACP a rarely acknowledged advantage in negotiations.

The operative factor in EU-Caribbean relations can best be described as "interest plus." National and regional interests are clearly at work for both parties. In addition, the intangibles of shared history and shared culture continue to play an influential role. It is only natural to expect some dilution of this common heritage over time, and the pace of global change has helped to speed up the process. Yet, such relationships are by nature enduring even as they admit change. It is in this spirit that Europe and the Caribbean should seek to maintain their partnership in a renewed Lomé Convention. ■





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# The Banana Wars

*Adam Levy*

**F**ew would have thought that a trade conflict involving import barriers on Latin American bananas could drag the US into a heated trade conflict with the European Union (EU). Yet, on March 3, 1999, the Clinton administration unilaterally imposed trade sanctions on European products valued at \$520 million, an amount the US claims equals the losses incurred by its commercial interests due to European banana import restrictions. The reprisal came after three favorable rulings in the World Trade Organization (WTO) condemned the EU's banana trade restriction as a violation of international trade law, although a subsequent ruling last April trimmed the amount of US sanctions authorized to \$191.4 million.

The roots of the conflict go back to 1993, when Latin America's banana-producing countries entered into a dispute with Europe and its former Afro-Caribbean-Pacific colonies (known collectively as the ACP). In what came to be known as the Declaration of Guayaquil, on February 12, 1993, eight Latin American countries pledged to fight the European banana import regime collectively using GATT's dispute resolution mechanisms. In these days before US involvement, the conflict was notable for the divergent levels of economic power among the major players: the European Economic Community (EC)—an economic powerhouse—confronted a loose coal-



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## *Might still makes right in international trade politics*



*European import regimes have clashed with the interests of banana-exporting companies and non-ACP countries.*

tion made up of Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Venezuela. Given Latin America's emphasis on outward-oriented models of development, the evolution of the conflict during this period provides important insights as to whether international trade dispute mechanisms can function effectively to defend Latin America against the unfair trading practices of more powerful developed countries.

### **DOLLAR BANANAS AND ACP BANANAS**

The 1993 EC trade legislation limited Latin American banana imports to two million metric tons beginning in 1994, subjected them to a tariff of 100 Ecus (US \$175) and created a com-

plex import licensing scheme. Europe justified the trade restrictions to protect former ACP colonies, such as Jamaica, the Philippines, St. Lucia, the Windward Islands, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast, and European domestic possessions, including Guadeloupe, Martinique and the Balearic Islands. Since 1975, the Lomé Convention had granted ACP countries trade preferences on bananas, with the rationale that many ACP producers are smaller and less competitive than their Latin American counterparts. Under the new system, ACP countries and European possessions were allocated duty-free annual quotas of 857,700 and 854,000 metric tons, respectively.

Latin Americans greeted Europe's

new banana trade policy with predictions of economic devastation. Latin American producers had increased the amount of land under banana cultivation in the 1980s, expecting increased demand from a newly unified Europe and Germany. Trade analysts estimated that the new restrictions would result in a global glut of 900,000 metric tons of surplus production.

To the US multinationals that dominate the commercialization of Latin American production, the most grievous aspect of Europe's banana trade policy was the complicated licensing scheme it introduced. These regulations required an import license for every box of bananas brought into the EU. Of the newly reduced mar-





*The banana conflict highlights the advantages of regional integration for Latin America.*

ket of two million metric tons now allocated to Latin America, the EU gave many import licenses to European primary importers, banana distributors and ripeners, even though many of these companies had not imported bananas directly from Latin America before. Once the import regime took effect, the licenses were a requirement for anyone wishing to sell in Europe. They could be sold without importing any fruit at all for an average price of between \$4 and \$8. United Fruit, the largest US exporter to the EU, bore the brunt of the licensing scheme. Its EU market share declined by about 25% from 1991 to 1994, according to EU officials.

#### EUROPE'S DIVIDE AND CONQUER STRATEGY

Negotiations between the EU and Latin America began in earnest in December 1993, as part of the closure of the GATT Uruguay Round. From the outset, the Europeans indicated their desire for a prompt resolution of the dispute, which cast an embarrassing light on the trade poli-

cies of a newly formed, borderless Europe. The talks centered on four main points: quotas for individual countries, total ceiling limits for imports from Latin America, control of import licenses and tariff reductions.

The European strategy for resolving the conflict was to exploit the cleavages within the coalition of Latin American banana-producing nations. Only Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, Venezuela and Nicaragua were GATT members in 1993, and of these countries, only two—Costa Rica and Colombia—were "substantial producers" in the European market. Hence, the best EU strategy would be to induce Costa Rica and Colombia, the pivotal players in the negotiations, to drop their GATT case.

The most divisive issue was the EU's proposal to establish quotas for individual countries. Quotas, by their very nature, penalize the most efficient producers of a given commodity by freezing their market share, while offering stability to producers with higher costs who are under threat from low-cost producers.

Ecuador, the world's largest and lowest-cost producer of bananas, strongly opposed a quota, since between 1991 and 1993 it had become the single largest exporter to the EU. Costa Rica, on the other hand, was more willing to accept a quota. Costa Rican producers had to contend with higher costs, due to higher wages and overhead. Before being displaced by Ecuador, Costa Rica had been the largest exporter of bananas to Europe and thus could argue that it deserved the largest market share.

The EU's December 1994 proposal was weighted heavily in favor of Costa Rica and Colombia. It proposed allocating the market as follows: Costa Rica, 23.4%; Colombia, 22%; Ecuador, 20.2%; Panama, 19.7%; Honduras, 6.8%; Nicaragua, 1.9%; and Guatemala, 1.5%. Venezuela and other "third party" countries jointly received a 4.5% market share. Further sweetening the deal, the Europeans recognized a Costa Rican demand that Latin America control Europe's import licenses. However, in a move that would further complicate the selling of bananas in the European market, the EU created a entire new layer of licenses called "export licenses," of which Latin America would get 70%. As a final concession, the Europeans raised the Latin America quota to 2.1 million metric tons in 1994 and 2.2 million in 1995, and lowered the Latin American tariff from 100 Ecus (\$100) to 75 Ecus (\$75).

The deal meant that Costa Rica received the largest market share, even though it had lost its status as the leading banana exporter to Europe in the early 1990s. Colombia received the second largest market share, despite the fact that Panama traditionally had exported more bananas to Europe. Costa Rica and Colombia would also benefit disproportionately from the export licenses. Both had large contingents of national producers who would gain economic leverage vis-à-vis the American



multinationals by holding the licenses. Countries such as Panama, Honduras and Guatemala, whose national producers were a smaller and less potent political force, valued the export licenses less.

Despite a GATT ruling in January 1994 condemning the EU's new trade regime as a violation of international trade law, four countries ultimately accepted quotas. In what became known as the Framework Agreement, Costa Rica received 23.4% of the market. Colombia received 21%, while Nicaragua settled for 3% and Venezuela for 2%. In addition, the EU designated 4.3% of the Latin American quota to non-traditional suppliers. Honduras, Panama, Guatemala and Ecuador, of which Guatemala was the only GATT member, rejected their quotas and vowed to continue pressuring the EU for a more acceptable solution using

GATT/WTO procedures. These countries were lumped into a "non-quota" category by the Europeans, entitling them to approximately 46.3% of the European market. Mexico, also a banana producer but not a large exporter to Europe, played a minor role in the negotiations and joined the group of hold-outs.

**CLASH OF THE TITANS**

The US finally entered the conflict in 1996, lodging a complaint in the WTO with the other protesting countries. After the WTO ruled against the EU in 1997, the Europeans modified their import regime slightly by abolishing the export licenses. Otherwise, they maintained many of the regime's major tenets. It was not until the US inflicted reciprocal economic damage under Section 301 of US trade law that the Europeans

returned to the negotiating table and pledged again to make their banana import regime WTO-compliant.

This case suggests that the threat of collateral economic damage, when applied within the framework of the WTO, is sometimes the only way to dislodge the unsavory trade practices of powerful nations. The implication for Latin America is that regional integration may be the best way to protect the area's trading rights. Regional trading blocs enhance Latin America's attractiveness as a market, along with its capacity to inflict reciprocal economic damage when developed countries violate members' trading rights. With US sanctions beginning to affect European exporters, the question remains whether the Europeans will follow through with their pledge or accept the consequences of US trade penalties. ■



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# Crisis in the Brazilian Amazon

Janet M. Chernela

In the decade between 1988 and 1998, Brazilian policy regarding the Amazon rainforest abruptly turned from "brown" to "green." This was most apparent in Amazonas, the largest state in Brazil, accounting for one-third of the 1.9 million square miles designated as Legal Amazonia. The shift to preservationist policies is best explained not by growing environmental awareness, but rather by political and economic processes occurring at the international level. This article traces the reversal in political positioning, suggesting contributing factors that may explain changing policies toward the Amazonian forest and its preservation.

## THE BOOM OF BLACK GOLD

The Brazilian Amazon has long been characterized by a continuum of slow economic growth, interrupted at intervals by peaks of economic prosperity. For four hundred years—from the sixteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries—wealth was derived principally from the export of forest products. The most economically significant of these products was rubber, latex extracted from the Amazonian tree *Hevea brasiliensis*. Demand for this commodity surged in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when first vulcanization, and then the nascent automotive industry, catapulted world demand for rubber to unprecedented levels.

Rubber was a minor export in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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In the mid 1800s, however, advances in vulcanization processes increased the strength and resilience of rubber and broadened its application to a wide range of commodities. Rubber became Brazil's principal export in 1871, and by 1909 Amazonia was the source of 94.4% of the world's rubber supply.

Brazil's rubber boom came to an end in 1913, when managed plantations in Malaysia outperformed Brazilian forest extractors. Previously, Asia had contributed only minimal amounts of rubber to the world market (four tons in 1900, compared to Brazil's 27,650). By 1913, however, Asia had overtaken Brazil as the world's largest rubber producer. By 1918, Amazonia's share of the world rubber supply had fallen to 10.9%. Just before World War II, when Brazilian rubber came into temporary demand by Allied nations, its contribution to the world market had diminished to 1.4%.

With no export commodity to replace rubber, the economy of the central Amazon entered a period of stagnation. The region's wealth was concentrated in the city of Manaus, strategically situated near the confluence of the Negro and Amazon Rivers. As the rubber boom dissipated, Manaus contracted to a fraction of its former size, its revenue sources limited to the export of a few raw forest products.

## A BOOM OF A DIFFERENT KIND: THE ZONA FRANCA OF MANAUS

Manaus was lifted out of its stagnation in 1967, when the Brazilian government decreed a portion of the city to be duty free. The decree outlined fiscal incentives from federal, state and municipal governments to

attract industry to the north by allowing exemptions on steep import duties. The plan was designed to attract industrial development, particularly electronic assembly plants, that relied on imported components. The duty-free area was designated the Zona Franca de Manaus, or Manaus Free Trade Zone.

The decree came in the context of a Brazilian economy that was rigorously protected by trade barriers. In the 1960s, approximately 3000 products were prohibited from import, while many others were subject to hefty import taxes of 80%. Firms within the federally designated free trade zone could sell imported items at prices that were not available elsewhere in Brazil, providing them with strong competitive advantages.

Given these conditions, it was cost effective for Brazilians from the south to travel to Manaus to purchase imported goods. Despite the city's distance from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, thousands of Brazilians from the metropolitan south traveled there annually to purchase tax-free luxury and electronic goods. A passenger leaving Manaus was permitted to carry up to \$2,000 in tax-free imported items.

Investors reacted quickly to the new fiscal incentives. Having languished for five decades, the economy of Amazonas state and its principal city, Manaus, was spurred forward by new industrial and commercial development. Between 1970 and 1990, the zone attracted over 600 firms, including Honda, Kodak, Olivetti, Philco/Ford, Philips, Sanyo, Seiko, Sharp, Sony, Telefunken, 3M, Toshiba and Xerox. This growth, in turn, carried with it other parts of the tertiary sector, particularly tourism.



## *Global integration, the Zona Franca of Manaus and ecotourism*



*This monument was built in 1899 across from the Manaus Opera House—itsself a testament to the rubber boom—to commemorate the opening of Amazonian ports and rivers to foreign navigation. The figure at the top is an allegory of commerce.*

Domestic tourism to Manaus fueled \$150 million in hotel construction.

Employment rose correspondingly. By 1989, virtually all the state's revenue came from the tariff-free industrial sector, which produced \$7 billion in products and employed 137,000 people. Once a sleepy riverfront town, by 1990 Manaus ranked as Brazil's largest manufacturing center after São Paulo. The lure of jobs caused the city's population to surge from 173,000 in 1960 to 1.5 million in 1990. Two-thirds of the population of Amazonas was now concentrated in Manaus.

### **THE POLITICS OF FOREST DEVELOPMENT**

During the period of growth of the Zona Franca, the prevailing rhetoric among national policy makers and local Amazonas elites emphasized development without regard for forest preservation. Throughout the 1970s and '80s, Brazil's federal government spent \$7.5 billion to subsidize deforestation, including programs that subsidized the clearing of large tracts of forest for pasturage. In less than two decades, at least 300 large-scale ranching operations replaced formerly forested lands. Three-time Governor of Amazonas Gilberto Mestrinho pursued a policy of distributing free chain saws to any colonist who would "develop" the forest. The policy remained in place through the early 1990s.

The ideology of the times was expressed in the 1985 speech, "Nossa Natureza" ("Our Nature"), in which President José Sarney stressed the threat to Brazilian national sovereignty posed by international environmentalists whose preservationist language, Sarney claimed, obscured





*Political and economic elites once eager to cut down the Amazonian rainforest now see it as an environmentally correct source of cash.*

their own intentions to exploit the riches of the forest. Preservation became synonymous with foreign appropriation.

The anti-environmentalist lobby reflected the views of prominent commercial interests as well as those of impoverished rural residents, for whom the industrialized duty-free zone provided employment. Preservation was regarded as a frivolity of the wealthy. Former Governor Mestrinho was quoted as saying that foreign ecologists "want the Amazon to be kept like a circus, with us as the monkeys."

Opposition to forest preservation also emerged from the military, which favored rapid development along the northern frontiers to ensure Brazil's sovereignty over its hinterland. In 1985, vast tracts of Amazônia were placed under national security in a program known as Calha Norte, combining coloniza-

tion, agriculture and security along the northern borders.

**THE GROWING ECONOMIC ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF FOREST PRESERVATION; OR HOW BUSINESS AND POLITICAL ELITES IN AMAZONAS LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE NATURE**

Four concurrent processes contributed to change the attitudes of Amazonian business and political elites toward environmental preservation: 1) the failure of large-scale colonization and ranching initiatives; 2) the loosening of trade restrictions to open the Brazilian economy; 3) the recognition of international ecotourism as a potential source of income; and 4) new fiscal incentives from international sources targeting development projects that could be judged both economically and ecologically "sustainable."

By the latter half of the 1980s, the policy of subsidizing large ranching

ventures, intended to bring prosperity to the north, had clearly failed. By this time, more than 80% of the large landholders receiving benefits had abandoned their lands or sold them to speculators.

At the same time, Brazil's government began to phase out trade protections. In 1990, prices for imported electronic goods and household appliances were 50% to 275% higher in Brazil than overseas. Brazil came under increasing pressure from international entities, including multilateral lending institutions, to remove barriers to free trade. In 1991, President Fernando Collor de Melo removed import bans on more than 1,000 products and reduced import tariffs from 80% to 20%. Currently, Brazil's tax on imported goods is approximately 12%.

New global integration posed a threat to the economy of Manaus. The success of a free-trade zone in



the north depended upon protections granted by the federal government. Removal of trade barriers would eliminate much of the zone's competitive advantage. In Amazonas, the removal of trade barriers was regarded as an indication of oscillating federal commitment to the region. Retail trade and domestic tourism in Manaus's Zona Franca began to decline as those protections were threatened.

Travel to Manaus from the densely populated south is limited by distance and the remoteness of the location. Access by air from Brazil's largest cities is time consuming and expensive. Between 1980 and 1990, a domestic flight from Rio de Janeiro to Manaus (2,862 kms) took four hours and cost more than an international flight to Miami. Travel to Manaus for retail purchases, therefore, was cost effective only if the price of imported goods within Brazil remained at artificially high levels.

Removal of Brazil's protections on foreign goods eroded Manaus's price advantage and sent shoppers elsewhere. Between 1986 and 1991, Brazilian visitors to the city's Zona Franca had averaged 175,000 annually. With the removal of trade protections, domestic tourism to Amazônia plummeted, dropping from 150,000 in 1989 to 96,973 in 1990—a decline of 60% in one year. Correspondingly, income and employment in the Zona Franca also dropped. Revenues from national sales in the zone dropped from \$6.5 billion in 1990 to \$3.6 billion in 1992, and remain below 1991 levels.

Among the goals of the Zona Franca were job creation and income for the northern populations and the consolidation of liaisons between the local economy and the overseas market. Manaus had become the fastest-growing urban center and source of employment in the north of Brazil. Between 1990 and 1992, however, employment in the Zona Franca dropped dramatically, from 76,798

workers to 36,537. Salary expenditures in 1999 were the lowest since the duty-free zone's implementation. Indeed, the draw away from the rural sector into the urban may have served to deter deforestation by concentrating an otherwise dispersed population.

#### THE GREENING OF COMMERCE

The decline in domestic tourism to the Zona Franca coincided with rising expectations for a surge in international ecotourism, with rainforests among the favored destinations. A 1991 poll of international travelers showed that 47% considered natural features to be major criteria in vacation planning, and an OAS study the same year predicted that the number of foreigners participating in nature tours in the Amazon would triple from 123,000 in 1988 to at least 375,000 by 1999.

Hoping that "green" tourism would pick up where consumer tourism left off, the Amazonas business community reversed its position on rainforest preservation. Before 1990, environmental protections had been considered a luxury of wealthy nations; now, these same protections came to be regarded as economically advantageous. With tourism infrastructure already in place, a rapidly expanding world market in ecotourism, and a commodity in the form of "the largest rainforest on earth," Amazonian policy makers came to view ecotourism as a source of economic return for nature preservation.

The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio (UNCED) helped draw international attention to the Amazon and served as a lever to promote international investment in Brazil. In 1993, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank approved credits exceeding one billion dollars for projects in the Amazon. Credits targeted environmental preservation and economic development. IDB funding in 1996 and 1997 con-

tributed to the development of a Tourism Development Program (Prodetur) and provided \$200 million to Brazil's Ministry of Environment. Half of the money financed private sector investments in Amazonian ecotourism, and the other half was set aside for efforts to improve and expand conditions for ecotourism projects. The funding included the production of educational materials aimed at making local Amazonian communities aware that, in the words of Aldemir Paraguassu, Secretary of Amazonian Affairs, "nature sells." Local Amazonian institutions, including those geared toward industrialization of the Zona Franca, also were influenced by incentives from multilateral banking agencies to promote ecotourism. The result was the greening of the duty-free zone itself.

The 1990s marked a dramatic shift in Brazilian government and business attitudes toward the rainforest, influenced mostly by international political and economic pressures. Prior to 1990, business and political leaders in Amazonas consistently opposed measures to preserve the rainforest. Both the private and public sectors actively supported efforts to clear the forest for ranching. In the last decade, however, the same sectors came to regard the forest itself as a source of revenue. According to the Brazilian news magazine *Veja*, the federal government spent \$7.5 billion to subsidize deforestation activities in the 1970s. "Now," the magazine reported in late 1997, "if the government is considering any program to subsidize Amazônia, it is considering an aggressive program to stimulate tourism." ■

*Data published here were derived from the Superintendência da Zona Franca de Manaus (SUFRAMA) and the Empresa Amazonense de Turismo (EMAMTUR), now the Secretary for Tourism and Culture, among other sources.*

# The Other Journalism

José Luis Benavides

**O**n the morning of November 16, 1959, Truman Capote was flipping through the pages of *The New York Times* when he stopped on page 39 to read a UPI news story from Holcomb, Kansas, headlined “Wealthy Farmer, 3 of Family Slain.” Capote had been looking for ideas to turn journalism into a “serious” literary art form, the “nonfiction novel,” and this crime in Holcomb seemed to him to be a perfect opportunity to accomplish his objective. The result was his celebrated book *In Cold Blood*.

Three years earlier, on the night of June 9, 1956, Rodolfo Walsh, a young writer in La Plata, Argentina, was playing chess in the Club Capablanca when the sounds of explosions and shotguns interrupted his game. The noise came from the Plaza San Martín, the site of the heaviest fighting of a doomed army insurrection in support of Juan Domingo Perón against the military regime of General Pedro Enrique Aramburo. That night, Walsh later learned, the police executed a group of civilians in a garbage dump—five were killed, one was seriously wounded, and five more managed to escape. The police had arrested the 11 men as they listened

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*“I researched and narrated the tremendous facts to give them the widest possible publicity, to make them inspire fear, to never let them happen again.”*

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—Rodolfo Walsh

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to a boxing match on the radio in the house of a man allegedly involved in the uprising.

For a while, Walsh thought he could forget the episode and continue writing detective stories. But six months later, on December 18, a friend told him the story of Juan Carlos Livraga, a victim of the clandestine execution, who had been shot in the face but survived. Soon after, Walsh began publishing stories in the opposition press about Livraga’s case. He tracked down other survivors, changed his name, bought a gun and went into hiding. His nonfiction novel based on the case, *Operación masacre*, was first published in December 1957, eight years before *In Cold Blood*.

## ENDING THE SILENCE

Today, both Capote and Walsh are considered, in their respective countries, pioneers of the nonfiction novel. In truth, neither writer invented this art form, although both influenced its development. Unlike Capote, however, Walsh was not trying consciously to create a new literary genre when he wrote *Operación masacre*. He wrote the book out of indignation—to denounce a crime unrecorded in the mainstream press and to serve the cause of justice. “I researched and narrated the tremendous facts,” Walsh wrote, “to give them the

widest possible publicity, to make them inspire fear, to never let them happen again.”

While Capote remained only sporadically interested in journalism, Walsh was a journalist throughout his life and turned his reporting and writing into politically explicit tasks. His work has had a growing influence on contemporary journalism in Latin America because it exemplifies a key challenge faced by independent journalists: the need to overcome the silence of the mainstream press—the result of fear or collusion—about crimes committed by the state apparatus.

“During many months I have seen the voluntary silence of the whole ‘serious press’ about this heinous massacre, and I have felt ashamed,” Walsh wrote in the introduction to the first edition of *Operación masacre*. In 1964, in the preface to the second edition, he expressed even greater disillusionment: “One believes that a story like this one—with a dead body that speaks—is going to be disputed in the newsrooms; one believes that this is a race against time, that at any time a big daily will send a dozen reporters and photographers like in the movies...It is like a joke because, seven years later, one can review the newspaper archives, and this story did not exist then, nor does it exist now.”



*Rodolfo Walsh's legacy of socially responsible reporting*



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*It is precisely their departure from the notion of objectivity and their insistence on presenting alternative, counterhegemonic accounts of events that has made these journalists' work so meaningful.*

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Walsh's book became one of the first major contemporary examples of what one might call Latin American "new" journalism. This informal literary and journalistic movement denounced state crimes that went unreported by the region's mainstream press and influenced the development of independent journalism in Latin America. Gabriel García Márquez's *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (1955), for instance, denounced the Colombian navy for the deaths of a group of sailors who were washed overboard with ill-secured contraband from a navy destroyer. Other examples of this genre include Elena Poniatowska's *Massacre in Mexico* (1971), which chronicled the 1968 army massacre of hundreds of student demonstrators in Mexico City; Carlos Alberto Luppi's *Araceli* (1979), which exposed the coverup of the kidnapping and assassination of a teenager by local magnates in the Brazilian city of Vitória; and Miguel Bonasso's *Recuerdo de la muerte* (1984), which narrated in a spy thriller format the activities of the Argentine military's international operatives during the so-called dirty war.

Although the literary importance of these and other works has been widely studied, their journalistic significance has been ignored or underestimated. Unlike its counterpart in the US, Latin America's new journalism is not identified formally as a specific movement. Two factors contribute to this oversight. First, some Latin American literary critics and journalists exhibit a colonialist mentality. A Spanish-language guide

to *Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*, for example, cites Tom Wolfe as one of García Márquez's main influences, despite the fact that the reportage was first published in 1955—seven years before Wolfe got his first newspaper job. Second, those who maintain that journalists must be objective, impartial observers of events believe that most Latin American new journalists practice "advocate journalism." Instead of being impartial, critics charge, these journalists promote social justice and social change. But it is precisely their departure from the notion of objectivity and their insistence on presenting alternative, counterhegemonic accounts of events that has made these individuals' work so meaningful for Latin American journalism.

For instance, Poniatowska's writings about the 1968 massacre of students in Mexico City might be considered biased because her own brother was among those killed. Yet, since most of the mainstream Mexican press only recorded the official, manicured version of events, *Massacre in Mexico* quickly became a standard college textbook that serves as a good example of reportage for journalism students.

Rodolfo Walsh advocated this other kind of journalism, one that refuses to be an accomplice of injustice. He and other Latin American new journalists helped to establish and sustain independent news media outlets and spaces within the mainstream press for the practice of independent, investigative journalism, particularly in periods of extreme institutional repression. They practiced what some call "socially com-

mitted" journalism, opposing the notion of objectivity valued in mainstream US journalism and embracing instead a style closer in spirit to that practiced by muckraking, investigative and socially responsible journalists. Their work has directly and indirectly influenced the training of young journalists and has helped to strengthen freedom of speech in the region.

#### A LIFE'S WORK CUT SHORT

By the time Capote's *In Cold Blood* was published in 1965, Walsh had already published two editions of *Operación masacre*. Also, together with a group of famous journalists and writers—including García Márquez and fellow Colombian Plinio Mendoza, the Uruguayan Juan Carlos Onetti, and the Argentines Jorge Masetti and Rogelio García Lupo—he helped to establish the Latin American news agency Prensa Latina. Working for that agency in the early 1960s, Walsh became known among his colleagues as "the man who outdid the CIA" after he deciphered a secret telegram from Guatemala detailing the plans of CIA-sponsored Cuban exiles to invade Cuba.

In 1968, Walsh established the Peronista newsweekly *CGT* in collaboration with Horacio Verbitsky, today the most respected independent journalist in Argentina. *CGT* circulated legally until mid-1969 and clandestinely until February 1970, when the government forced it to close. Walsh's work with the weekly gave him material for a second nonfiction book, *¿Quién mató a Rosendo?*, published in 1969. This reportage described the murder of a union leader at the hands of corrupt labor union bosses who served the interests of the Argentine government and foreign corporations.

Between 1972 and 1973, Walsh worked in a community project in the *villas miseria* (shantytowns) of Buenos Aires, teaching journalism



and helping students publish the *Semanario Villero*. By 1973, when his last nonfiction book was published, he had become a member of the Montoneros—a leftist, nationalist faction within Peronismo that turned into an urban guerrilla movement. He served as the crime editor of *Noticias*, a Montonero daily closed by the government the following year.

After the military coup in Argentina on March 24, 1976, Walsh and Verbitsky organized the clandestine news agency ANCLA and denounced the military's human rights abuses. On September 29 of that year, Walsh's daughter Victoria—also a member of the Montoneros—killed herself to avoid capture during a military assault on a guerrilla hideout. Six months later, on March 25, 1977, Walsh himself was murdered by a military squad sent to kidnap him. Just before the attack, he mailed his famous "Open Letter to the Military Junta" to Argentine newspapers. He had finished writing it the day before, on the first anniversary of the coup. At the time, no Argentine newspaper dared publish this letter, described by García Márquez as "a masterpiece of universal journalism." It circulated clandestinely in Argentina, found its way to some Latin American independent media, and was later published by the French magazine *Esprit* and the US magazine *Dissent*.

Emile Zola's "J'Accuse" and the entire Dreyfus affair pale in comparison to Walsh's fate. After Zola accused the French military of falsely convicting Captain Alfred Dreyfus and then covering up the affair, he was charged with libel and forced to leave France. But justice eventually prevailed, and Zola's letter became a powerful symbol of the fight for freedom of expression. Walsh accused the military junta of genocide and provided the most detailed, critical and documented appraisal of the

military regime inside and outside Argentina. He was murdered, the junta banned his writing, and his contribution to the fight for freedom of expression went unrecognized.

#### WALSH'S LEGACY

Despite the totalitarian nature of the military junta, Walsh's voice could not be silenced completely. Neither military surveillance nor the risk of being killed or arrested stopped journalism students from learning about him and reading his books.

"Walsh suddenly became our journalistic model," writes Gabriela Cerruti, editor-in-chief of the news-magazine *Trespuntos*. Her book, *Los herederos del silencio*, recounts her years as a journalism student at the University of La Plata during the military dictatorship. Before the 1976 military coup, the journalism program at this university was the most prestigious in the country. Its professors included such respected names as Gregorio Selser, Silvio Frondizi and Eduardo Galeano. In the first few years following the coup, 36 students and professors out of a total of approximately 220 "disappeared." The school closed for a year and a half; it reopened under heavy military surveillance in 1978. Librarians were required to fill out a form for each book checked out of the library, making the information available to the military to identify "subversives." Even in this repressive environment, Cerruti remembers that some librarians managed to smuggle Walsh's books to journalism students.

Walsh influenced many of the reporters who worked with him, some of whom went on to become well-known independent journalists. In *Recuerdo de la muerte*, Miguel Bonasso, who worked with Walsh at the Montonero daily, referred to him as "my mentor." Horacio Verbitsky, a colleague at *CGT* and

ANCLA, edited a book in the mid-1980s about Walsh's clandestine years. He described those times to the Mexican journalist Alma Guillermoprieto as "the militant, rancorous, aggressive, unforgiving tradition of the nineteen seventies."

In a book published in 1997 about Argentina's greatest journalists and publications, Walsh ranked third—behind Verbitsky and Jacobo Timmerman—in the number of entries to his name. That same year, his surviving partner, Lilia Ferreyra, and his daughter, Patricia Walsh, convinced the Argentine Congress to reopen his case, find his body and determine how he was killed.

The growing recognition of Walsh's journalistic legacy culminated on March 25, 1998, when the University of La Plata's School of Journalism announced its first Rodolfo Walsh Journalism Awards. The occasion was timed to commemorate the twenty-first anniversary of his assassination. It served as an implicit rebuke to those who do not count Walsh among the 91 journalists killed in Argentina between 1976 and 1983, on the grounds that he was not an impartial reporter. This group includes the two most widely available books about Latin American journalism published in the US during Argentina's military dictatorship, Robert Pierce's *Keeping the Flame* (1979) and Marvin Alisky's *Latin American Media* (1981), both of which fail to mention Walsh at all.

The Rodolfo Walsh Journalism Awards promise to inspire another kind of journalist: one who strives to be as innovative in literary terms as Capote, as investigative as Ida Tarbell and George Seldes, and as dangerous to those who abuse power as the German journalist Günter Wallraff. The awards may also trigger a renewed interest in the dissemination of the work of Latin America's new journalists, promoting both freedom of expression and an independent and responsible press. ■

# Building the Fourth Estate

Chappell Lawson

In June 1995, President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico held a press conference in the town of Cuauhtitlán. The president was seeking to reassure his fellow citizens that their country, then in the midst of deep economic crisis and political turmoil, was back on the right track. In the course of his remarks, Zedillo made reference to a group of “bad guys” (*malosos*) within the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). These naughty officials, Zedillo implied, were responsible for many of Mexico’s recent troubles, including the 1994 assassinations of the PRI’s leader, José Francisco Ruíz Massieu, and the party’s presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio.

Mexican journalists responded vigorously to Zedillo’s comments. Did he mean that ruling party officials were responsible for Colosio’s murder? Who, exactly, were the officials in question? Could the country’s problems really be blamed on a small group of individuals, however nefarious? And was “bad guys” really an appropriate term to describe such people, given that their extracurricular activities apparently included drug trafficking and political assassination?

The vehemence of the journalists’ reaction surprised many observers. Traditionally, interactions between the president and the press in Mexico were carefully scripted affairs. Questions were often planted by government officials; independent newspapers were underrepre-

sented, if at all; and the entire performance was carefully edited before being rebroadcast by the country’s reliably pro-government media conglomerate, Televisa. Aggressive or hostile inquiries were simply not part of the regularly scheduled programming.

Reporters’ reactions to the *malosos* incident exemplified the changes that have occurred in Mexico’s media. Over the past two decades, independent publications have emerged and flourished, supplanting their more staid and traditional counterparts. Feisty talk-radio shows have come to dominate the airwaves in Mexico’s largest cities. Even broadcast television, long viewed as a sort of private Ministry of Information, has begun to devote more coverage to opposition and civic groups. These changes have brought increased media attention to civil society and its viewpoints, more even-handed coverage of electoral campaigns, more incisive criticism of the political system, and—perhaps most dramatically—more aggressive investigation of potential scandals.

## THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA: SOME THEORIES

What caused the remarkable transformation of Mexico’s media? One familiar explanation for the success of Mexico’s emerging fourth estate is the general mellowing of the country’s political climate over the last decade. In theory, without this political thaw, the government could have squashed any independent publications—as it did when it helped eject an independent-minded team of editors from *Excelsior* newspaper in 1976. In this

sense, a modicum of political liberalization was probably necessary for Mexico’s independent media to survive and establish themselves.

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to portray political reform as the principal driver of media opening. Mexican journalists insist that any autonomous space the media now enjoy is due to changes within civil society and the media themselves, which gradually pried control out of the government’s hands. As José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of the popular independent radio show “Monitor,” put it in 1996, “The media did not get opened from above. We opened it. We broke the limits.” Journalists are especially adamant about the limited influence of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-94), sometimes credited in the United States with encouraging media openness. Salinas initiated a number of modest reforms in press-government relations and ended the practice of paying bribes (known as *embutes* or *chayotes*) to journalists at the presidential palace itself. In general, however, his administration was never sympathetic to Mexico’s independent press, and it became increasingly abusive toward the end of his term. This impression was shared by virtually all of the independent journalists interviewed in Mexico in 1995-1997, regardless of their opinions of Salinas’s program of market-oriented reform. According to Gutiérrez-Vivó, “Salinas was the president who was hardest on the media. He was the one who sought most control over the media.”

The Zedillo administration (1994-present) has been substantially more tolerant of Mexico’s independent

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## Mexico's independent media



press, but Mexican journalists still regard its policies as partial and contradictory at best. Among other incidents, Zedillo's tenure has witnessed a number of physical assaults against journalists and at least a few well-documented cases of official harassment (such as the arrest on tax evasion charges of the publisher of *El Universal* newspaper). Furthermore, fundamental reform of the legal architecture governing Mexico's media was blocked by the PRI's legislative majority during the first half of Zedillo's administration. Rather than promote media freedom, the Mexican government has simply failed to repress an independent press that emerged for different reasons.

A second explanation for the changes in Mexico's media is the impact of economic development. During the 1960s and 1970s, Mexico enjoyed steady economic expansion, the spread of mass edu-

cation, improvements in living standards, rapid urbanization and the growth of a substantial middle class. This theory holds that the process of modernization created the social raw material for independent journalism. In 1950, Mexico probably did not have the kind of demographic profile that would have supported a diverse and independent print media. By 1990, proponents of this hypothesis argue, it did.

The timing of media opening, however, provides only limited and conditional support for this explanation. Mexicans did not become richer, more educated or more literate during the 1980s and 1990s, and it was during this period that independent publications and broadcast programs emerged. Like political liberalization, economic development may have been a necessary background condition for media opening, but it did not lead automatically or immediately to changes in the Mexican press.

A third potential explanation for the rise of independent media in Mexico is the development and spread of new communication technologies. Ever since the printing press curtailed the power of the pulpit in medieval Europe, technophiles have emphasized the liberating impact of innovation on mass communications. Today, direct broadcasting from satellites, the Internet and a host of equally remarkable inventions threatens to undermine government attempts at censorship. In theory, these innovations in communication might have allowed independent media to emerge and flourish. Yet, while technological change has undoubtedly had a powerful effect in certain settings, it has played only a limited role in Mexico. The penetration of advanced communication technologies remains quite small, according to surveys by Nielsen and IBOPE of Mexico. As late as 1995, for instance, just 2% of Mexican households had a personal computer and only 10% were connected to a pay-television system. Moreover, some of the allegedly liberating technologies—cable television, for example—have long been controlled by Televisa and other enterprises aligned with the PRI. Changes in the Mexican media were more likely to be the result of increased competition from traditional outlets, such as broadcasting and print media.

This brings us to a fourth possible explanation for increased independence in the Mexican media: economic liberalization and market competition. This theory argues that market-friendly reforms in tightly controlled economies can



undermine government control and allow independent media to flourish. As Mexican journalist Raymundo Riva Palacio told *Business Week* in 1993, "Economic reform in an authoritarian state like Mexico weakens the system and opens up opportunities for other sources of power." In other words, recent Mexican presidents may not have promoted media freedom directly, but they supported it indirectly by implementing market-oriented reforms.

A substantial amount of evidence supports this argument as it applies to the Mexican media. Independent newspapers proved they could successfully compete for readers and advertisers. Their financial autonomy in turn gave them the ability to resist official pressures and blandishments. In radio, the tremendous success of feisty talk shows in the early 1990s encouraged other stations hungry for advertising revenues to experiment with more independent coverage. Finally, commercial competition following the privatization of government-owned television channels in 1992-1993 put pressure on the country's dominant network, Televisa, to introduce a measure of independence in news reporting. The effects of commercial competition were reinforced by economic crisis, which spurred Televisa to search out novel strategies to protect its ratings.

We thus have the makings of a tidy explanation for the transformation of Mexico's media. Political liberalization—while partial and tentative—ruled out the sustained systematic assault on Mexico's press. Meanwhile, changes in Mexican audiences brought on by economic development helped create a market for independent journalism. Finally, the introduction of market-oriented reforms rewarded independent-minded media and encouraged others to adopt new styles of coverage.

While compelling as far as it goes, this story is unnervingly agent-less.

It explains why independent-minded journalists who experimented with new styles of reporting were more likely to be successful in the 1980s and 1990s than in earlier eras. It also explains why their experiments tended to be contagious. But it does not explain why they were motivated to experiment in the first place, nor why many of them persisted in doing so despite impressive obstacles (including occasional episodes of official repression).

The answer to this question lies in the development of a new journalistic culture in segments of the Mexican press. Mexico's emerging fourth estate was not simply the product of structural opportunities; it was the product of imagination, learning and struggle by particular journalists and clusters of journalists whose vision led them to reject the old ways of doing business in favor of a new style of reporting. Collectively, they converted the opportunities provided by political liberalization, socioeconomic development and market-oriented reform into practical realities.

The role of journalistic professionalism was especially crucial for Mexico's independent publications, including such titles as *Proceso*, *La Jornada*, *El Financiero*, *Reforma*, *Zeta* and *Público*. Each of these periodicals was created with the conscious goal of avoiding the traditional foibles of Mexican journalism, including corruption and collusion with the political establishment. Many were founded or invigorated by individuals whose previous encounters with officialdom had reinforced their own self-image as independent journalists. Without reference to this broad process of professionalization, it is simply impossible to explain where and when independent media emerged.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF AGENCY

These findings suggest that the emergence of a fourth estate is not

the mechanical result of political or economic changes. Rather, it depends on the efforts of a new cadre of journalists, their own internal process of identity formation, and the contagion effect they ultimately have on other media. It is this change inside the press, as much as changes in the external environment, that explains media opening in Mexico.

Interestingly, recent studies of the media in other countries seem to point in the same direction. One example comes from Silvio Waisbord's research on the press and political scandal in Argentina. Waisbord argues that journalists' own sense of mission was a decisive factor in determining which media remained independent in the face of mounting pressure from the government of President Carlos Menem. Of particular importance was the emergence of *Página 12* newspaper, whose staff retained a unique professional self-image and ideology that fortified the paper's independent stance. Although factors like market competition may have encouraged larger media consortia to cover touchy stories after they broke, it was often *Página 12* that made sure they were reported in the first place.

If these arguments are correct, they suggest a new approach to the study of press freedom. This approach would not deny the importance of certain background conditions, including the political and economic realities of each country. It would, however, focus on the motivations, decisions and actions of journalists themselves, as well as on the training and experiences that shaped their behavior. In other words, it would assume that a free press does not appear automatically in the wake of political liberalization, economic development, technological innovation or market-oriented reform. It must be built by committed journalists willing to risk censure or repression. ■



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# La Política del Palo

Silvio Waisbord

**O**n January 25, 1997, the charred body of news photographer José Luis Cabezas was found inside a burnt car in Pinamar, a fashionable Argentine resort town. The murder sent a chill down the spine of Argentines, for it resembled the infamous methods of the death squads that roamed the country when the juntas ruled and rekindled memories of the "dirty war" waged by the last military dictatorship. Cabezas had been kidnapped, handcuffed, tortured, shot point-blank and set afire inside the vehicle. The corpse was unrecognizable; investigators used Cabezas's car keys, watch and dental records to identify it.

The event became a symbol of violence against the press and a rallying cry for journalists in Latin America. Demonstrations were organized to petition the government to investigate and prosecute the individuals responsible for the murder. Cabezas's picture and the slogan "Don't Forget Cabezas" became ubiquitous on billboards and signs in public buildings and newsrooms. Although almost 900 physical or verbal attacks against journalists were recorded in Argentina between 1989 and 1997, this case crossed the line of the limits of expected violence. The savagery of Cabezas's executioners not only was a reminder of the worst years of state-sponsored violence, but also jettisoned the conviction that the killing of journalists

*Silvio Waisbord is assistant professor of communication at Rutgers University. He is completing a book about investigative journalism in South America.*

## NO SE OLVIDEN DE CABEZAS



**JOSÉ LUIS CABEZAS  
REPORTERO GRAFICO**

**ASESINADO EN PINAMAR  
EL 25 DE ENERO 1997**

ASOCIACION DE REPORTEROS GRAFICOS DE LA REPUBLICA ARGENTINA  
**A R G R A**



## *Violence against the press in Latin America*

ended with the collapse of the authoritarian regime in Argentina, under whose rule nearly 100 journalists were reported murdered or disappeared.

The Cabezas murder is one of the latest examples of the persistence of anti-press violence in Latin America. The shift from authoritarianism to democracy has neither put an end to violence against journalists nor brought justice for its victims. Out of 27 reporters killed worldwide in 1997, 10 were in Latin America, including four in Colombia, three in Mexico, and one each in Argentina, Brazil and Guatemala. During the last decade, scores of journalists have been intimidated and assaulted, and 122 have been murdered or "disappeared." Domestic and international organizations have mobilized to petition full investigations, and the Organization of American States (OAS) created the office of the press rapporteur to report abuses. Yet, the perpetrators of anti-press violence have rarely been prosecuted. As in the Cabezas case, judicial investigations lag and become trapped in a web of political interests.

What drives anti-press violence in Latin America, and what does it say about the current state of freedom of expression in the region? Is the problem related to the difficulty of guaranteeing respect for human rights? Or is it a manifestation of larger dynamics of political violence that underlie the region's political history?

### **ANTI-PRESS VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Anti-press violence is, arguably, merely another manifestation of the widespread violence that has long

plagued Latin America. In a region dominated by violent politics, it would be surprising if the press were not a target of attacks. It is no coincidence, then, that there have been more lethal attacks against journalists in countries where historical levels of violence continue unabated. According to the records of international and domestic organizations, the situation in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru is significantly worse than anywhere else in the region. A death toll of 133 journalists between 1978 and 1997 has made Colombia in particular one of the most dangerous countries for journalists in the world, although the situation has improved somewhat in the 1990s: 18 journalists were killed in 1986 during the heyday of the Medellín cartel-related violence, compared to five in 1997. Also in the 1990s, 15 murders of journalists have been documented in Mexico and 20 in Peru.

In these countries, anti-press violence does not seem to be isolated from broader political conditions. Violence has characterized Colombian politics for much of the country's modern history. Guatemala, too, is still reeling in the aftermath of 36 years of civil war. In Mexico, drug-related violence has become commonplace, especially in the northern states. Peru is grappling with the remnants of violent guerrilla movements and the legacy of the 1992 coup, which gave carte blanche to military and intelligence services.

Anti-press violence is linked to the crisis of the state; that is, the inability to monopolize the legitimate means of violence and monitor respect for the rule of law. The existence of

areas subjected to the rule of drug barons, paramilitary squads and guerrilla movements attests to the breakdown of state authority. Although any generalization would miss the nuances of each case, attacks against journalists need to be understood as an expression of a situation of "uncivil" war: localized, dispersed and unstructured violence that lacks the characteristics of formal civil wars. This type of crisis varies across and within countries, but it is glaringly evident in countries where anti-press violence is recurrent.

The weight of the drug economy has exacerbated the situation. Often in complicity with local and national authorities, druglords hold absolute control over determined geographical zones in Latin America. Any journalist reporting on drug issues faces not only the prospect of angering *narcotraficantes* with no patience for democratic debate, but also the passivity of official authorities. The problem is complicated further by the military and paramilitary squads created to combat drug trafficking or guerrilla insurrection. Such groups enjoy a great deal of autonomy and, if accountable at all, answer only to military authorities. The combination of powerful druglords and corrupt official forces, especially in regions dominated by guerrilla movements in the last decade, has been lethal for journalists. A complex web of interests, including druglords, local bosses, police, military forces and guerrillas, is confirmed or suspected behind dozens of attacks against reporters.

These problems characterize the interior of countries especially. Although urban areas are certainly

not exempt, the provincial press has been more prone to fatal attacks than the metropolitan press in Latin America. In the last decade, 75% of the murders and disappearances of journalists in the region occurred in provincial areas. Between 1986 and 1996, one out of a total of 10 journalists killed in Mexico was murdered in the country's capital. Similarly, journalists reporting for news organizations in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have rarely been the targets of violence; most attacks have been directed against their colleagues in the Brazilian interior. In Paraguay, too, journalists working in border towns have suffered more intimidation and physical attacks than their counterparts in Asunción.

When the state fails to exercise full sovereignty and the rule of law is weak, journalists, like other citizens, confront a dangerous situation. Unlike regular citizens, however, journalists—especially those affiliated with major news organizations in metropolitan areas—are in a position to attract wide publicity. Large media organizations as well as national and international organizations offer "deterrence by publicity," although this does not guarantee invulnerability—the frequent harassment of journalists in metropolitan areas, including assassinations in broad daylight, is evidence enough. Journalists removed from the limelight of the big media are even less protected. Lacking the visibility and prominence of metropolitan news media or effective checks on local powers, regional reporters are vulnerable to police brutality or paramilitary repression.

The ineffectiveness of the judicial system exacerbates the situation of lawlessness in much of Latin America. Perpetrators are rarely captured, and when they are, cases are often shelved and forgotten; for example, perpetrators were identified and apprehended in only six out

of 108 murders of Colombian journalists between 1977 and 1995. The problem is not so much an absence of legislation, but a lack of enforcement. This shortcoming is not unique to violence against the press; it represents the larger difficulties of institutionalizing the rule of law and eliminating impunity in the region.

#### VIOLENCE AND A NEW JOURNALISTIC SPIRIT

Anti-press violence is not indiscriminate. It is not "the press" as a whole that suffers violence, but individual reporters and news organizations. In the past, harassment of reporters was linked to partisan and ideological confrontations. Today's attacks show a different pattern, reflecting the rise of news organizations that dare to take jabs at government officials and examine the activities of paramilitary organizations and drug-trafficking organizations. The majority of the victims are reporters who cover controversial and sensitive issues, such as corruption, narcotics trafficking and human rights abuses. In Mexico, the targets include publications that investigate the linkages between drug barons and local police and judges, such as Tijuana-based *Zeta*. Reporters who write about police corruption, including journalists from TV Azteca, *Reforma* and *El Universal*, are also attacked. In Peru, the newsweekly *Caretas* and the daily *La República*, as well as print and broadcast investigative reporters, are intimidated by military and intelligence services. In an episode that had national and international repercussions, the staff and owner of the television station Frecuencia Latina had to leave the country in the aftermath of reports that denounced military abuses, corruption and illegal government wiretapping.

In countries that lack a legacy of respect for basic democratic rights, the belief persists among some powerful actors that critical reporting is a

nuisance that can and must be eliminated. Despite the evident improvement of general press freedoms since the return of democratic rule to Latin America, the ambiguous attitude of governments in the region toward the press implicitly sends the message that violence against journalists will not be punished. Legal attempts to muffle press criticism reinforce the sense that an adversarial press cannot be tolerated.

In Argentina, the government's tirades against journalists run counter to the official rhetoric that a critical press is a welcome development for a democratic order. When a reporter investigating connections between political mafias and prominent politicians was beaten recently, President Carlos Saúl Menem matter-of-factly observed that such attacks were "occupational hazards." After an exposé about the construction of a new airport runway in his hometown, Menem lashed back, stating that the report was produced by "stupid, lying and despicable [journalists] paid by the opposition." During a press briefing for foreign correspondents in June 1997, he described Horacio Verbitsky, an influential columnist for the daily *Página/12*, as "one of the biggest terrorists in Argentina." Later the same year, Menem endorsed the *ley del palo*, paraphrasing Benjamin Franklin on making "the liberty of the cudgel" a condition of freedom of the press. Franklin joked that this law would make it permissible for writers who attacked individual reputations to be waylaid and beaten, and for reporters who affronted the public to be tarred and feathered. The ironic tone of Franklin's comments did not translate well in a country still reeling from the brutal assassination of Cabezas. Finally, in the aftermath of press revelations about government corruption, the Menem administration submitted a proposal to Congress that included prison sentences and hefty fines for "insults"



and libel. The recommended punishments were harsher than those prescribed for torture. Menem rescinded the "gag law" proposal only after domestic and international observers protested.

Elsewhere in Latin America, the legal situation is not much better. The Peruvian press continues to be subjected to antiterrorist laws enacted after the 1992 coup. In Mexico, the Zedillo administration presented an official proposal to Congress that included fines of up to \$100,000 for defamation and unlimited amounts in damages against media owners. Seventy-four cases have been filed so far.

#### WHY DOES ANTI-PRESS VIOLENCE MATTER?

A democratic press is contingent on the strengthening of civil society and the observance of fundamental constitutional liberties. In Latin America, the difficulty is not only the establishment of a press autonomous from the state but also the existence of societies decimated by uncivil, violent practices. Anti-press violence magnifies the fragility of democratic institutions in countries still experiencing internal wars and whose governments are incapable of protecting basic rights. Latin America bears a legacy of violence inherited from dictatorial periods. The region continues to suffer from the discretionary use of state force and criminal organizations that escape any means of democratic control. The equivocal attitude of elected officials toward the protection of press rights contributes further to create an atmosphere of violence. Prospects for affirming a democratic press are seriously constrained when civil society, ideally a realm of pluralism and tolerance of dissent, is shredded into islands of civility. Beyond those islands the press, if critical of local and national powers, faces the violence of decidedly uncivil wars. ■



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# Gone to Rust

Photos by *Patricio Crooker* Text by *Alisa Newman*

Since Bolivia first entered the global economy during the period of Spanish colonial rule, its role has been that of mineral exporter. The legendary mines of Potosí and other rich silver veins in Alto Perú, as Bolivia was then known, financed the Spanish empire throughout much of the colonial period. In the twentieth century, Bolivia's mines again pulled the country into the world economy, this time with exports of tin. Bolivia became the world's leading tin producer, feeding industrial demand for canning and other uses.

Eventually, however, the tin mines were depleted or rendered obsolete by new metal alloys and synthetic materials. By 1980, Bolivia's export commodities had diversified to include natural gas and agricultural products, with tin representing only about one-quarter of the value of total exports. The price of tin was \$5.72 per pound in 1978; by 1985, it had fallen by more than half, to \$2.50. Miners who already suffered notorious working conditions and poor health clung to the jobs that were the only source of their survival.

In 1985, President Víctor Paz Estenssoro, who had nationalized the country's mines after the 1952 Bolivian Revolution, enacted a decree that shut many of them down. Instead of acknowledging the dismissals, the government claimed that workers were merely being "relocat-

ed" to more productive sectors. More than 20,000 miners lost their jobs, and once-thriving mining centers became ghost towns. Tent cities sprang up on the outskirts of La Paz and Cochabamba as unemployed miners migrated to urban centers in search of work.

Today, the mines and the towns built around them languish in desolation. Theaters that once premiered new shows are boarded up. Carts that carried ore out of the mines rust in their tracks. Incongruous remnants of the good life, like the golf club in the deserted mining town of Catavi, are painful reminders that the wealth of the past is the poverty of the present.

Little by little, some of the former mining towns have begun to revive. Taking advantage of good transportation routes, necessary at one time to get the minerals to market, the city of Oruro has reinvented itself as a thriving center of contraband. In Llallagua, former miners have

become taxi drivers, bricklayers and locksmiths. Young people fill the main plaza, and four separate bus companies serve neighboring cities. A university and television station are proof that the town is beginning to recover culturally and psychologically, as well. In other areas, zinc and ore have replaced silver and tin as profitable minerals to mine. Many former mining centers, however—Corocoro and Catavi among them—appear to be slipping irretrievably into oblivion.

In her 1979 study of workers in Bolivia's tin mines, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*, anthropologist June Nash quoted one miner as saying to another, "You are like a piece of ore; you are a part of the mine." This statement reflects the degree to which the lives of Bolivia's miners were linked to the mines they worked, and the trauma posed by "relocation." At the same time, it captures the miners' resiliency and ability to endure seemingly unending hardship. ■



*Patricio Crooker is a photojournalist based in Bolivia. Some of the following images appeared in the Bolivian newspaper La Razón in June 1999 as part of a special feature on former mining towns.*



*The decline of Bolivia's mining towns*

*A miner pushes a cart at the opening of the Siglo XX mine. Some miners continue to hang on, working under extremely poor conditions to salvage leftover minerals.*

*Opposite: Siglo XX, near the town of Llallagua in the northern part of Potosí, is one of the oldest mines in Bolivia. This photo shows what used to be an important facility in a state of near collapse. After the government of Victor Paz Estenssoro issued decree 21060 in 1985, thousands of miners lost their jobs and moved to the cities in search of work.*



*A building serving as headquarters for a cooperativa, or labor cooperative. After the economic reforms of the mid 1980s, many miners who lost their jobs organized into such cooperatives to work the mines' leavings. Many work 12 hours a day, squeezing what they can from the rubble. Lacking in technology and capital, they resort to grinding the rocks by hand.*





*The hands of this palliri—a worker who tries to salvage the last bits of mineral from rocks extracted from the mine—reflect the long hours she has toiled for meager reward. This picture was taken near the river in the town of Huamuni, once an important mine owned by tin baron Simón I. Patiño. Now it is owned by Comibol, the state mining company, and employs only 300 miners. This woman and others like her earn approximately \$4 for a 12-hour day.*



*This miner, in charge of draining water from the mine, is one of the 300 workers who kept their jobs in Huamuni. Without proper drainage, the tunnels could flood, trapping the miners inside.*





*Two kilometers in and 200 meters down, breathing becomes difficult. A miner fortifies himself against the darkness with coca leaves and a cigarette.*



*Two Bolivian soldiers nod off during their 12-hour shift inside the Huanuni mine. Comibol pays the Army to guard the remaining minerals from pilferers. The soldiers share the same miserable working conditions as the miners themselves.*





*An elderly woman walks down the main street of Corocoro, Bolivia's most important copper mine at the beginning of the century. Today the mayor's pickup truck and one military vehicle are the only cars on the town's empty streets. Corocoro's young people leave for the cities as soon as they can; only the elderly stay behind. Many homes that were boarded up during the mining exodus of the mid-1980s remain abandoned.*



*Statues honoring miners in Llallagua. The statue on the left represents Federico Escobar Zapata, who died fighting for a better life for miners. The one on the right is dedicated to all those who gave their lives in the mines.*





*The abandoned club house of the Catavi Golf Club near Llallagua in northern Potosi. During the mining boom years, the mining towns were the center of Bolivia's economic and cultural life. New plays and films premiered there, and the best soccer teams visited for tournaments. The Catavi golf course is now a wheat field.*



*The Teatro 31 de Octubre in Llallagua used to be one of the first stops on the touring schedules of new plays. The town no longer has enough people to keep it open, and the theater's façade has fallen into disrepair. Catavi's theater has met the same fate.*





*A dilapidated Comibol station wagon parked in front of an abandoned building in the mining town of Catavi. The scene captures the desolation of most mining towns in Bolivia today.*

# Desperate Measures, Layered Truths

Kathleen Martin

**A**utobiographical accounts such as Rigoberta Menchú's *Crossing Borders* have a wide readership, whether because of the fame of the subject, the compelling nature of the story or the eloquence with which the protagonist's account is told. The very best autobiographical literature, of course, embodies all of these elements. Rigoberta Menchú's first book, *I, ... Rigoberta Menchú*, written before the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner became an internationally known figure, achieved its fame based on its stunning first-person account of the poverty, violence and racism experienced by the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. Her second book is unlikely to stir the controversy generated by her first and is, unfortunately, disappointing. *Crossing Borders* is not a compelling story, nor is it compellingly told. Only the fact that a Nobel laureate is telling it provokes interest.

*Crossing Borders*, published in 1998, is a continuance of Rigoberta Menchú's life story, covering the 15 years intervening since *I, ... Rigoberta Menchú* was first published in 1983. During this period, the author went into exile in Mexico and reached the high point of her career as an activist by winning the Nobel Peace Prize. She got married and adopted

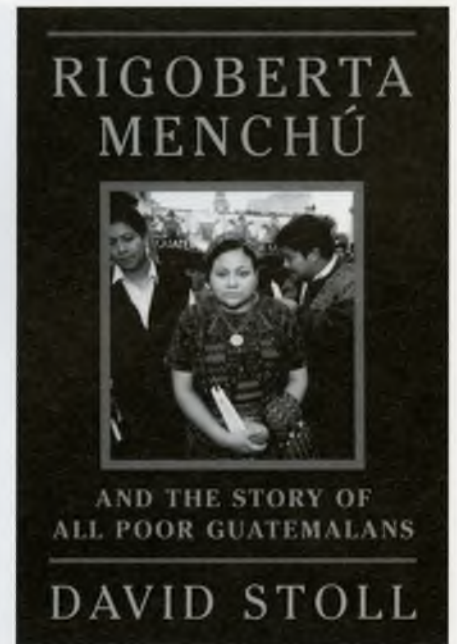
*Kathleen R. Martin is a professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Florida International University. Her research includes a book about the Yucatec Maya poet and politician Araceli Cab Cumi, including a translation of her works.*



**Crossing Borders**  
by Rigoberta Menchú  
Translated and edited by Ann Wright  
London and New York: Verso, 1998.  
242 pages.

a child. Political harassment continued to plague her, reaching into her innermost family life. Yet, despite these significant events, *Crossing Borders* has none of the immediacy of *I, ... Rigoberta Menchú*. It fails to provide the sort of personal reflection that would allow readers to understand the thinking of this century's most important indigenous leader.

Menchú writes straightforwardly, but without the depth one would expect from someone with her accomplishments and life experiences. She is most insightful when describing the complexities of fame, but less so when discussing other, more abstract issues. For example, the concept of "crossing borders"—



**Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans**  
by David Stoll  
Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999.  
336 pages.

moving across cultural, political and national frontiers—promises to be a useful framework for Menchú's discussion of her life as an international activist. Yet, in *Crossing Borders* the concept seems to be taken quite literally, as the author describes several incidents in which she experienced difficulties crossing international boundaries. In these passages, as in others, Menchú presents herself as a victim—an inappropriate stance for someone of her international stature and political importance.

*Crossing Borders* is a potentially significant book, because it gives the author a chance to tell her story directly. In contrast, *I, ... Rigoberta Menchú* was an "as-told-to" testimony



al in which Venezuelan anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos interviewed Menchú and edited the resulting text. *Crossing Borders* may be more authentic, but it is not necessarily a more analytical, accessible or contextually richer account. While the author's own limitations as a self-reflective writer restrict the book's usefulness, the life story of the world's leading spokeswoman for indigenous peoples deserves a much more careful presentation than it gets here. Perhaps Menchú's advisors, and certainly her editors, are at fault for doing her a disservice in the production of this book.

*Crossing Borders* was first published in Spanish as *Rigoberta: La nieta de los mayas*. The English and the Spanish versions are quite different; the latter is more than 100 pages longer, and is undeniably better. Absent from *Crossing Borders* are prefaces by the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano (who recently won the Lannan Foundation's Cultural Freedom Award) and the head of the Spanish section of Amnesty International, Esteban Beltrán. Also omitted are a prologue by Italian writer Gianni Mina and an especially lyrical introduction by Maya Quiché poet Humberto Ak'abal. The essays by these writers provide a rich context for Menchú's story. The Spanish version includes the author's own acknowledgments and the text of the Guatemalan peace accords—both important in understanding her story—as well as 16 pages of photographs that visually enrich the text. A random line-by-line comparison between the two versions revealed other sections that appear

in the Spanish edition but not in the English one. The Spanish version gives proper credit to Dante Liano and Gianni Mina for their assistance in producing the book, while the English version does not. *Crossing Borders*, however, contains a glossary, an index, a not very useful map and a list of Menchú's family not present in the Spanish edition.

*Crossing Borders* could have used some careful editing to make it more accessible to readers or simply to improve the text. Since the book was intended to chronicle Menchú's life over the past 15 years, presenting her story in chronological order would seem to be an obvious decision. Unfortunately, the account skips back and forth through time, making it difficult for anyone unfamiliar with Menchú's history to keep track of events.

Thoughtful editing could have improved *Crossing Borders* in other ways as well. A sensitive editor could perhaps have persuaded the author to delete some of her more peevish comments, unworthy of a Nobel laureate. Menchú is prone to blame others for failings that she herself shares. She criticizes the personal appearance of groups and individuals—Latinas, fellow Guatemalans, even some of her Native American supporters—yet bristles at comments about her own looks. Likewise, she condemns fellow Guatemalans for leaving their country to mobilize from abroad, although she herself spent years living in exile in Mexico. Menchú also takes anthropologists to task for their parasitic relationship with indigenous peoples, but ignores examples of anthropologists who act on behalf of the communities they

study—to take but one example, Myrna Mack Chang, who was stabbed to death because of her reports about the state-sponsored violence in Guatemala.

The editors of *Crossing Borders* have produced a substandard account of Menchú's story and should be held answerable for their omissions and inattentive editing. Those interested in the Nobel laureate's story would do better to read the Spanish-language original.

Despite the flaws of *Crossing Borders*, it is Menchú's first book that lies at the center of the current controversy surrounding her. This controversy erupted as the result of the 1999 book *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*, by North American anthropologist David Stoll. Through long and careful research, Stoll refutes significant portions of the Nobel laureate's story as reported in *I, ... Rigoberta Menchú*. The resulting uproar has stirred debate in the press, especially in Guatemala and the United States.

Fifteen years ago a young (23-year-old), politically committed Rigoberta Menchú told an allegedly first-person account of her sufferings as an indigenous woman in an oppressive Guatemalan society. Elizabeth Burgos, the anthropologist who recorded Menchú's story, originally intended it as a magazine article; she later decided that she had enough material for a book. First published in Spanish, *I, ... Rigoberta Menchú* went on to become an international bestseller. It has been translated into a dozen languages and added to required reading lists in many universities. It is unlikely that anyone involved in

the first interview with Menchú thought that either she or the book would go on to achieve such fame, or that at some later time the accuracy of her account would be subject to the close scrutiny it has received. The goal of recording her story was to draw public attention to the genocidal war being waged against the indigenous peoples of Guatemala.

Stoll suggests that this explains why Menchú's account neglects to mention aspects of the Guatemalan reality, such as intra-Maya land ownership disputes, that would cloud the construct of the Guatemalan tragedy as an indigenous versus ladino conflict. He also discovered that some of the book's wrenching eyewitness testimony was not in fact part of Menchú's personal experience. As one Guatemalan expressed it, "The book may not be true about her, but it is true about Guatemala." In sum, the human rights agenda in Guatemala called for desperate measures and ended with layered truths.

Stoll did not start out with the idea of writing a book to refute Menchú's story. But in the process of interviewing survivors of the political violence in Guatemala in the late 1980s, he began to hear accounts that differed, in some instances greatly, from Menchú's original narrative. This led him to conduct detailed, fact-checking research into Menchú's life story. The result is a carefully crafted piece of scholarly investigative work, clearly written and accessible to readers. The bulk of the book is in the form of a counternarrative to Menchú's account in *I... Rigoberta Menchú*. Yet, this is not Stoll's most significant contribution. The most interesting part of his book is the final four chapters, in which he interprets the meaning of Rigoberta Menchú as an iconic figure.

Stoll maintains that through the construction of her narrative in

*I... Rigoberta Menchú*, the author became a symbol used to prolong a guerrilla war that the Guatemalan left was losing and which from the start had found questionable support among the indigenous peasantry. Furthermore, he makes the case that the North American and European scholarly and human rights communities used Menchú's account of her life to idealize indigenous peoples, ultimately to serve their own moral needs. Uncritical acceptance of her narrative was virtually required as proof of one's commitment to the oppressed and, for scholars especially, to ease the troubling nature of working as observers of the lives of the poor. For such readers, the discourse of unequal power relations was enough to excuse accounts such as Menchú's from the need for any sort of validation.

The elaboration of these themes is the lasting, thought-provoking contribution of Stoll's book. Some of his ideas remain undeveloped, but his provocative account has spurred debate on several issues, in particular the construction of

indigenous identities in the service of intellectual and activist communities. Stoll's work is proof that when scholars go against the accepted wisdom (or political correctness) of the day, they may inadvertently reconstruct the paths of intellectual inquiry.

The sad consequence of the controversy surrounding Rigoberta Menchú is that she and the cause of the indigenous peoples she represents have been tainted in the public eye and perhaps lost credibility. An uninformed reading of Stoll's book could lead to the simplistic conclusion that Menchú was deliberately untruthful in telling her life story, albeit in the service of a desperately immediate human rights cause. Hers appears to be a case of the ends justifying the means—a morally debatable proposition for most readers.

Stoll has thoroughly checked every aspect of Menchú's story. One can only hope that those responsible for the genocide of Guatemala's indigenous peoples will be held to the same exacting standard of accountability. ■



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