

## POLITICA:

## THE SECRET GOVERNMENT STRATEGY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

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On September 11, 1973, a band of right-wing generals overthrew the popularly elected socialist government of Chilean president Salvador Allende and set in motion an unprecedented reign of terror. The events leading to the coup had been strange and dramatic. Upper-middle-class housewives had marched through the streets banging pots and pans in protest of Allende's economic measures, and on the eve of the coup, the country was virtually paralyzed by a strike of truck owners.

We now know that the United States government not only looked approvingly on the coup itself but that it financed the truck owners' strike and the so-called March of the Pots, as well as a host of other protests—all of which appeared, at the time, spontaneous. CIA director William E. Colby, the man whose agency did most of the financing, has characterized the U.S. contribution to Allende's downfall as a policy of "destabilization." Destabilization is twice as many syllables as it takes to say subversion, but is not different in other significant ways.

This policy—as well as plans to assassinate certain Latin leaders—had been developed in a session of a top-secret war game known to classified Washington as POLITICA. The game makes it possible for American counter-insurgency experts to think

through the moves necessary to undermine leftist parties and nationalist movements and ultimately to overthrow governments throughout the world.

"It is my belief that POLITICA was used to plan the coup in Chile," says Daniel Del Solar, the social scientist who designed the project while working for a Massachusetts think tank called Abt Associates. "I am certain of this by extension of the fact that the game was paid for [by the Defense Department]. When a war is planned, every instrument is examined and tested. The news from Chile seemed too familiar to me. These are the kinds of events that are the grist of POLITICA."

For 15 years, the United States has been secretly in the business of exporting counter-revolution to those Latin American and Asian nations where nationalists, leftists and other apparently anti-American elements have gained in strength and popularity. We have exported strikes, riots, torture, kidnaping and assassination—anything, in fact, that is likely to result in strife in the victim nation.

The strategy was formulated in the early Sixties, when John F. Kennedy brought to Washington such men as Walt W. Rostow, an MIT professor and international-affairs expert. Rostow perceived that communism was spreading around the globe by means of guerrilla wars of national liberation; these wars, said Rostow and

other Kennedy advisors, were making obsolete the old Eisenhower Administration policies of brinkmanship and massive retaliation—whereby every petty foreign crisis was seen to lead ultimately to a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union and a test of America's ability and willingness to blast Russia to ashes and vice versa. Rostow described Ho Chi Minh's and Che Guevara's work as cancer communism, and in the atmosphere of early Sixties Washington—with Castro guerrillas in charge in Cuba and insurgent movements hard at it in Laos and South Vietnam—Rostow found a receptive audience among the ambitious young intellectuals of the Kennedy Administration. What the U.S. needed, they argued, was a "flexible response"—a policy that would make it possible to fight limited wars against unruly guerrillas while at the same time holding nuclear weapons in reserve as a desperate last measure. As David Halberstam wrote in *The Best and the Brightest*, the definitive study of the Kennedy men: "Suddenly, the stopping of guerrilla warfare became a great fad."

The natural choice to make the policy of flexible response operational was Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, the former Ford Motors president who had suddenly begun describing wars of national liberation as nothing less than "insurrection, subversion and covert armed aggression." McNamara's first initiative

was to create a U.S. Army Special Forces branch—the Green Berets—that would go off to the jungle and slug it out tree to tree with peasant terrorists high on Mao. His second initiative was the refurbishing of a little-known and highly unusual Pentagon department called the Advanced Research Projects Agency. ARPA was formed in 1958 to develop defense technology, and by the time Kennedy came to power, its bright staff of civilian scientists had brought the burgeoning private think-tank complex into line with the Pentagon by heading them grants for the study of ballistic missiles, nuclear bombs and other doomsday weaponry. McNamara turned ARPA away from massive retaliation to focus on flexible response.

The first top-secret research-and-development project launched by McNamara's reoriented ARPA was code-named Agile. Its original mandate was to develop new battlefield technology for the Green Berets—such as the AR-15 rifle and radios capable of operating in a jungle climate—but soon Agile was also looking into psychological warfare, electronic intelligence gathering and other ways of transforming counter-insurgency from haphazard clandestine operations into a sophisticated social science.

One Agile contract, for example, resulted in the development of a hamlet-evaluation system that graded the allegiance of Vietnamese vil-

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