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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 Ché 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 handing 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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lages to the regime in Saigon. The lowest grade was V.C.—for allegiance to the Viet Cong; a village so graded became a free-fire zone, and U. S. air and artillery forces were encouraged to blow the village to smithereens. But Vietnam was not the only area of Agile's concern. A major thrust of the new policy was to protect the United States from getting caught in another Vietnam-style insurgency situation.

In the early Sixties, Rostow returned from a trip to Latin America and reported to a State Department planning group that certain South American nations closely resembled Vietnam. The Foggy Bottom diplomats are said to have chortled at Rostow's crude equation, but Rostow was not thinking of similarities in culture or heritage. He was thinking of similarly volatile and unstable political situations. It was not long afterward that Agile spun off yet another top-secret operation—this designed to avert future problem situations in Latin America.

The project, founded in 1963, was called Camelot, and one of its first actions was to arm researchers with questionnaires and send them to selected Latin American nations. The questions were designed to gauge the tendencies and nuances of a nation's politics, across the social spectrum. The salient question to be asked of unwary subjects was "What would be your attitude in case the Communists took over?" Responses were then to be evaluated by computer back in the United States.

Camelot was the perfect example of the new ARPA amalgam of espionage and sociology, but like the mythical kingdom and the real administration from which it took its name, it was star-crossed from the start. Two years after the project was begun, a leftist Chilean newspaper discovered a Camelot staff member roving around the countryside trying to recruit native social scientists. Camelot, the paper announced, "intended to investigate the military and political situation prevailing in Chile and to determine the possibility of an anti-democratic coup." This was quickly followed by an investigation in the Chilean senate and a request from the American ambassador in Santiago that Washington terminate Camelot. Washington hurriedly did so.

The goals of the project were not abandoned, however. "It was Project Camelot that was canceled," former Army research director General William W. Dick, Jr., explained at a 1965 Congressional hearing. "This does not mean that we have backed off in any way from the objectives that Project Camelot was designed to meet."

Among these objectives was preparation for counterinsurgency warfare in Latin America. The correct way to meet Camelot's goals, ARPA planners had learned to their chagrin, was to keep the researchers away from suspicious natives. A new program was therefore launched to replace Camelot. It was code named POLITICA and it brought the fad of counterinsurgency together with the simulation theories sweeping the think tanks in the mid Sixties.

Abt Associates was known at ARPA and in the academic community as a simulation specialist. It had been founded in Cambridge in 1965 by Clark C. Abt, an MIT graduate who, while working for the Raytheon Corporation, the largest military contractor in Massachusetts, had gained a substantial reputation for his use of computer simulations in the study of arms control.

Simulation—and simulation games—draws on the theory that says that people learn best by doing; when there's no live situation to do this learning in, the next-best thing is a simulation. Abt's idea was relatively simple: To predict the outcome of any situation of any kind, feed existing information into a computer and then see what happens as various new factors are introduced. The simulation could be used equally effectively to design a new school curriculum or to prepare a scenario for the overthrow of a government.

Abt Associates was at work on a Camelot contract when the project was scuttled. "Our firm, struggling along for every dollar, was hit hard by the demise of Camelot," says Daniel Del Solar, who has since quit Abt and today describes himself as a revolutionary socialist. "We were happy to hear that, while there was no more Camelot money, we would go ahead with work that was directly related." That work was the POLITICA contract.

One hot summer afternoon in 1966, when the air conditioning had broken down at the Abt warehouse attic offices, Del Solar and fellow employee Marty Gordon retired to Gordon's apartment with a couple of six-packs of beer. "It was there," Del Solar says, "that I designed the initial framework, the rules, the social variables of POLITICA."

POLITICA has no board, there are no pieces to be picked up, no markers to be moved and the game does not end automatically when one player amasses 18 supply centers and lands on the square of Indisputable Great Power. The game bears only the most superficial resemblance to such commercial games as Diplomacy and Blitzkrieg. Players do not even have to be in the same room—although they usually are and moves are announced by typed memorandums or by verbal communication to the referee.

The initial POLITICA model was a prototypical Latin American nation that Del Solar called Grenadilla; there were 35 principal players in the game, each one representing an important individual or group from the country's social and political life. One player was El Presidente, for example; another was the entire middle class; another, the military; another, the land

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owners; and so on. Each player was provided with a description of his role and methods of influence in the country.

The scenario read like whimsical academic satire. Grenadilla, for instance, had a radical leader named Luis Bunuel and a military dictator who commits suicide by exposing himself to the sting of a tarantula. The country of Inertia, which was the locus of another game, had an economy dominated by the United Fish Company of Boston.

Del Solar's game turned out to be an excellent learning device, and after several test runs using university students as players, POLITICA was inducted into the Pentagon inner sanctum in late 1966 for a final rite of passage. The demonstration case was a real Latin American country where elections were soon to be held.

"We modeled an election, since every election is a crisis in Latin America," says Marty Gordon, who represented Abt at the Pentagon presentation. "We did this just before the real election." He will not name the country. "It is highly sensitive," he says, "classified." He does say, however, that there were "20 to 30 points of similarity between our test and what actually happened." The brass was impressed; POLITICA was purchased (Clark Abt walked off with $100,000) and given top-secret classification.

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Pentagon officials are not, of course, interested in fictitious countries with whimsical names such as Grenadilla and Inertia. Their POLITICA sessions involve actual countries, and the detailed profiles that players receive come from the massive files of the U. S. intelligence community (the CIA alone maintains a 60-chapter National Intelligence Survey on every country in the world). The data are made available to POLITICA players through a computer network established by ARPA in 1966. The system makes use of the most advanced computer in the world, the ILLIAC-4, and links the files of the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

As a POLITICA game proceeds in the Pentagon, players draw upon classified information to plan their reactions to the constantly changing game situations; the referee, meanwhile, introduces unexpected events, such as a ruinous drought or a newspaper's disclosure of political graft. The rules stipulate that players may "attempt to revolt (in coalitions), go on strike, engage in terrorism, lie, bribe and deceive." The military is informed that it may "revolt against the government on its own initiative or "refuse to obey the government's orders."

Pentagon players are also instructed: "If your power play fails . . . you may wish to resort to violence." One specific type of violence is mentioned in the rules this way: "Individually named players, but not, of course, players representing groups, may be assassinated."

POLITICA was conceived and designed as an aid in developing an alternative to traditional diplomacy: a secret foreign policy of conspiratorial social disruption. This was first indicated by the full title of the project when ARPA awarded the original contract for it to Abt Associates: Cocon-Counterconspiracy (POLITICA), the Development of a Simulation of Internal National Conflict Under Revolutionary Conflict Conditions.

Abt Associates apparently gave the Pentagon exactly what it was looking for. "The game is playable," say the Defense Department documents on POLITICA. "It can exercise a wide range of political crises. It is capable of operationally expressing the present list of social variables or other variables that may be of interest. It is generally balanced, so that even small changes at the onset result in different political outcomes. It can easily be made area specific. Most significant, it is possible to draw conclusions from the game play that are not obvious from the scenario alone."

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Of all the countries in South America, Chile presented both the most dismal and the most promising spectacle to the new owners of POLITICA. The slender Pacific-coast country, oldest democracy in South America, had been advancing steadily toward socialism ever since an avowed Marxist congressman named Salvador Allende Gossens had almost won the Chilean presidency in 1958. When Allende ran a second time, in 1964, the CIA spent an estimated $20,000,000 to defeat him. In the August 1970 election, the CIA again tried to block Allende, but this time, he won.

The new situation in Chile could not but inspire a new strategy in Washington. "I don't see why we should allow a country to go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people," Henry Kissinger told a White House meeting at which clandestine U. S. activity in Chile was discussed. An internal memorandum of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, the American multinational firm with vast holdings in Chile, outlined, on September 30, 1970, what was eventually to be known as the policy of destabilization. The memo declared that ballot-box campaigns had not proved effective and that "a more realistic hope among those who want to block Allende is that a swiftly deteriorating economy will touch off a wave of violence resulting in a military coup."

U. S. interest in toppling Allende was increased when prominent leftists from Argentina and Brazil, persecuted and exiled by militarist regimes at home, took sanctuary in Allende's Chile. Washington reasoned that a quick rightist coup in Chile would trap these radical leaders against the Pacific wall and make them easy targets for arrest and execution.

POLITICA, as previously stated, can easily be made area specific. If the area were to be Chile, preparation of a scenario would be especially easy, inasmuch as POLITICA's predecessor, Project Camelot, had already gathered sensitive data on Chilean politics and society. Moreover, between 1970 and 1973, the Rand Corporation, another Government-funded think tank, had sponsored in-depth studies of two Chilean social groups: women and farmers. These two elements were later identified by a CIA Clandestine Services director, William Broe, as the key anti-Allende factions.

POLITICA is classified top secret, and it is therefore impossible to know the precise details of any simulations conducted in the Pentagon. It can be concluded from our knowledge of other POLITICA games, however, that a scenario to determine the consequences of an economic blockade of Chile might have progressed along these general lines: The referee begins by announcing that lending institutions in the United States and Europe have decided to deny credits to the Allende government. The player representing middle-class women examines the group's profile and decides that the women would be alarmed at the threat of food shortages and that they would blame Allende for poor economic management; the player then announces to other POLITICA participants that the women will hold a street demonstration. The player representing the country's largest newspaper, which is receiving funds from the CIA, intensifies a headline campaign against Allende's inefficiency. The player representing the truck owners announces that his group is striking to protest curtailment of imports; this move creates further economic headaches for Allende, more blaring headlines and a second women's street demonstration. Finally, players representing various rightist military leaders begin to spot opportunities for exploiting the economic crisis; they launch elaborate plans to oust Allende.

Of course, all of these developments actually did

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occur in Chile; they are what Daniel Del Solar describes as "the kinds of events that are the grist of POLITICA." The economic blockade of Chile—led by the World Bank and its director, former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara—began in the fall of 1972; truckers' strikes and women's demonstrations followed; the headlines of *El Mercurio* (a CIA propaganda outlet) denounced Allende; and within the year, General Pinochet and his fellow conspirators had overthrown Allende.

Whether or not American officials took an active hand in the coup itself is unimportant. POLITICA helped U. S. counterinsurgency planners to lay the groundwork of social disruption that made a coup virtually unavoidable.

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The Pentagon has also used POLITICA to educate Third World police officials at the Army's Military Police Training School, a secluded and highly sensitive facility at Fort Gordon, Georgia. The training is in the latest counterinsurgency tactics. "We wiped out the Latin context," Marty Gordon says, in speaking of the Fort Gordon program, "and focused instead on a single urban enclave."

The U. S. Government has, in fact, for years worked with friendly foreign police forces in suppressing leftist movements overseas. During the Sixties, this policy was carried out principally by the CIA, under cover of the State Department's Agency for International Development; key foreign police officers were trained at the International Police Academy, a CIA front operated by AID in Washington, D.C. Approximately 60 percent of the academy's students came from Latin nations and their instruction frequently resulted in the use of sophisticated torture techniques against political dissidents back home.

Congress thought it had abolished the International Police Academy with a foreign-aid bill amendment in 1973, but the training responsibility was simply shifted to the Defense Department and the International Police Academy spirit, if not the precise curriculum, is still at large at Fort Gordon. "The purpose of this training exercise," says Gordon, "was to give foreign police exposure to situations in which they might find themselves—say, dealing with a political kidnaping. These personnel came from societies where revolutionary violence was taking place and we were sending people to deal with it."

The man who would be likely to know exactly what societies these foreign nationals came from, training school educational director Dr. Neil B. Andregg, has little to say on the subject. Dr. Andregg played the role of POLITICA referee in the Fort Gordon simulations, but he says he cannot recall who the participants were, and he maintains that no records exist.

The Defense Department's Security Assistance Agency, however, lists three Latin countries—Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela—as having sent police trainees to the school at Fort Gordon. The first two of these border Chile and have cooperated with the Chilean military regime in rounding up pro-Allende exiles and sending them back to Santiago. Other nations whose police officials have participated in the Fort Gordon training are Iran, Zaïre, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and the Philippines.

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The Third World is not the only area of concern for American counterinsurgency experts. Events in Portugal over the past few months suggest that second- or third-generation POLITICA games are already playing a part in that nation's politics, and Portuguese leaders have publicly suggested that the country has been marked for destabilization.

The arrival in Lisbon of CIA Deputy Director Vernon Walters—said by the Agency to be on holiday—increased Portuguese anxieties, and so do the West's blatant threats of another economic blockade. America and Europe deny that there is any plan afoot to discourage investment in Portugal, but the records show that during the first four months of 1975, the country lost $440,000,000 in foreign reserves; moreover, this past September, I.T.T. announced it was withdrawing financial support of its Portuguese subsidiaries.

Whether the flight of capital has resulted from external pressure or from real fear on the part of Western industrialists, such a development is of the kind that POLITICA is geared to deal with. U. S. destabilization experts can use the game to come to an understanding of what figures and forces in Portuguese society would support a *coup d'état*.

POLITICA administrators can also play out scenarios for other European nations in such a way as to predict the impact of the Portuguese crisis abroad. Consider, for example, the rivalry between the Communist and Socialist parties of Portugal. Leftist groups across Europe have chosen sides in this dispute; in France, for example, the French Communist Party has lined up behind the Portuguese Communists, while French Socialists are backing Portuguese Socialists. This endangers the French Socialist-Communist alliance that came within a percentage point of electing a president in 1974.

POLITICA's whole purpose is to forecast this sort of broad implication of a local political conflict, and the possible ramifications are endless. With the aid of advanced simulation games, however, the unexpected can be revealed as a logical progression of events.

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Ownership of the latest counterinsurgency technology does not, of course, guarantee universal success. The Vietnam village simulations did not apparently alter the course of the Asian war and, despite the care and watchfulness of Washington's revolution spotters, the U. S. *was* caught off-guard in Portugal.

Still, the destabilizers did score a kind of success in Chile, where, according to Amnesty International, 40,000 men and women have died by torture or execution, 200,000 have been jailed for political crimes and 300,000 have lost jobs for ideological reasons. Together with the military rulers in Brazil and Uruguay and the army-backed leadership in Argentina, the Chilean generals have helped the U. S. forge the southern cone of South America into something very like a rightist federation.

POLITICA provided the backdrop against which these developments were made plausible. Its simulations allowed American officials to foresee that an economic blockade of Chile and mounting pressure from Chilean social groups would ultimately lead to a coup and the deaths of thousands.

As a result of the American decision to export counterrevolution, made in the early Sixties by the Kennedy Administration and adhered to ever since, the tactics of *coup d'état*, mass execution and assassination are among those routinely considered by policy planners. Do these officials do more than simply consider such tactics? We now know that American officials took part in plots against the lives of Fidel Castro and Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo; we know also that American actions led directly to the deaths, in Chile, of pro-Allende general René Schneider and of president Allende himself.

Official American foreign policy may be to merely counter political movements that threaten American interests abroad; the simulation games—like POLITICA—played to devise ways of achieving this end, however, provide a variety of specific strategies, and assassination is one of them. The genius of POLITICA rests in its capacity to permit Washington's scholarly destabilizers to pursue subversive and violent political goals behind the guise of objective social science. ▣