

Daniel Wattenberg

Harvard's New Interior Minister

Luis Carrión was responsible for numerous political murders in Nicaragua. Now he's studying at Harvard courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer.

In 1981, Tomás Borge brought bureaucratic order to political murder in Nicaragua. Exasperated by the "anarchical fashion" in which the regime had been dispatching opponents since the July 1979 revolution, the interior minister and ruling Sandinista junta member promulgated a secret directive governing the application of "special measures," or extrajudicial killings. Under the new order,

authority to approve "special measures" would be limited to Borge himself and his Ministry of the Interior (MINT) deputy and fellow junta member, Luis Carrión Cruz. And in the years that followed, Carrión would not flinch: after defecting in 1985, Alvaro Baldizón, who had supervised internal MINT human rights investigations for Borge, implicated Carrión directly in the executions of hundreds of political opponents.

Hundreds of bodies may lie buried in Carrión's past, but Harvard likes his future. As a result, U.S. taxpayers are helping to put Carrión through graduate school. Carrión is spending this year at Harvard's Kennedy School of Govern-



ment, earning a masters' degree in public administration in the school's Edward S. Mason program for Third World leaders in mid-career. Because Harvard offers no funding to Mason fellows, students must secure it from other sources, often foundations or their own governments. On the strength of Carrión's admission to Harvard, the Organization of American States

awarded him one of its highly competitive Special Training scholarships, which pays his tuition, travel, and books. The U.S. is the largest contributor to the OAS, providing 59 percent of its annual budget.

Carrión was one of only 400 scholarship winners from an OAS applicant pool of 5,000 last year, but an OAS fellowship specialist is quick to defend the award. "We are not ethical judges, we are judging the academic credentials only," he says. "We don't run a CIA here. . . . It doesn't say that because he's a violator of human rights he cannot be granted a scholarship in our regulations."

While it is true that the committee rendered no ethical judgment, it is doubtful that they rendered an indepen-

Daniel Wattenberg's "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock" appeared in our August issue.

dent judgment of Carrión's academic credentials. He spent his senior year at the Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, then attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, for a year before dropping out. Back in Nicaragua, he entered the University of Central America. But when questioned recently by the U.S. Delegation to the OAS, the meritocrats from the OAS evaluation committee admitted they did not know if he had graduated from there, or indeed if he had any undergraduate degree. They also tried shifting the blame to the Nicaraguan government, claiming Carrión had received the "warm endorsement" of his foreign ministry. But José Tijerino, the Nicaraguan OAS ambassador, insists Carrión received no more than a pro forma endorsement.

I have heard conflicting reports about his intellect. His cousin, Arturo Cruz, Jr. says, "He is very bright—no doubt about it." Before Exeter, he went to high school at the prestigious Christian Brothers school in Nicaragua. There, he distinguished himself as "the best student in the country," says Cruz. On the other hand, recent soundings taken by the U.S. ambassador to the OAS, Luigi Einaudi, indicated he was a "dunce."

In reality, the OAS decision was dictated by Harvard's acceptance of Carrión. Harvard refuses to discuss its criteria for admitting the Comandante,

a cum nada graduate from nowhere. Steve Singer, the Kennedy School's communications director, won't say whether Carrión was sponsored or actively recruited, but he is unmoved by arguments that indirect taxpayer support for Carrión's Harvard education implies some accountability on the university's part. "The beef," he says, "is with the OAS."

No: the beef is with Harvard. The pork is with the OAS.

Now, a review of some of the qualifications Carrión may have omitted from his applications. Under Borge and Carrión, the Cuban-trained MINT grew into a 15,000-strong internal security conglomerate. Its State Security Directorate (DGSE) operated a string of prisons and clandestine jails where political opponents were held incommunicado and tortured (Nicaragua's independent human rights-monitoring group, the CPDH, estimated the regime held 7,000 political prisoners in 1986). In its report on the Nicaraguan human rights record for the years 1986-89, Amnesty International gave a good description of the inhumane conditions and "white torture" typically suffered by detainees:

During 1986 and 1987 there were persistent reports of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and inhuman conditions of detention, particularly in rural detention centres. Many testimonies referred to detainees being held in isolation for days

and weeks at a time in stifling, cramped and unlit concrete cells.

Frequent use was made of cubicle-sized cells known as *chiquitas* (tiny ones). Some detainees have said that these cells were so small that they were unable to sit down, the floor space measuring little more than one square metre. The cells are described as being almost completely dark, with minimal ventilation and no provision for sanitation. Some prisoners allege that they have been held alone in such cells for periods of more than one week, being taken out for interrogation under bright lights at irregular intervals of day or night.

Some detainees report that immediately after their arrest they were deprived of food for days at a time, and sometimes of water too. Beatings have also been reported. Forms of psychological pressure clearly amounting to torture have also been alleged, such as the use of weapons to threaten prisoners and mock executions, threats of indefinite detention or that the detainee will be made to "disappear," and false reports that members of the detainee's family are also in detention or are liable to arrest.

By infiltrating political parties, unions, and business groups, the DGSE monitored and manipulated the opposition and fomented disunity within its ranks. During the 1985 national elections, its Department of Agitation and Propaganda first unleashed its "divine mobs" of paid lumpenpro-

letarians to terrorize opposition rallies with baseball bats and steel-reinforced flagpoles. The same department censored the independent media and published the FSLN party daily, *Barricada*.

In 1981, the DGSE began operations against the Catholic Church—wiretapping, surveillance, and disinformation and slander campaigns—in hopes of building up a rival "popular church" preaching liberation theology. Carrión planned, along with Borge and State Security (DGSE) chief Lenin Cerna, a notorious 1982 secret police operation to publicly humiliate Father Bismarck Carballo, the Catholic Church's spokesman and director of its Radio Católica. Maritza Castillo Mendieta, an agent in the DGSE's Department of Ideological Diversionism, sought Carballo out for "spiritual guidance," claiming she was suicidally depressed because her husband had abandoned her. After several visits by Father Carballo, she urged him to come to her home one night, saying she was distraught. After arriving at Castillo's home, Carballo was struck on the head by a DGSE agent and forced at gunpoint to strip. DGSE agents dressed as regular policemen waited outside, and when the agent inside the house fired several shots, the fake policemen stormed the house. A Sandinista television crew and a Department of Agitation and Propaganda *turba* converged on the scene, and the "police" paraded the naked Carballo into a squad car. Sandinista television and print media ran pictures of the nude priest who had seduced a distraught member of his flock. →

GUATEMALA'S MASON FELLOW

Luis Carrión Cruz is not the first Central American accused of human rights violations to be awarded a controversial Mason fellowship at Harvard. In 1990-91, Guatemalan General Héctor Gramajo attended the Kennedy School under the same program. On his way to pick up his diploma he was handed a multi-million dollar lawsuit by a process server from the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights. Filed in U.S. District Court in Boston, the suit sought damages against Gramajo for "acts of summary execution, disappearance, torture, cruel inhumane or degrading treatment, wrongful death, false imprisonment and intentional infliction of emotional distress . . . carried out under his orders against Guatemalan civilians."

Gramajo ignored the suit. He spit on the process server who handed him a second lawsuit a week after graduation. "Eventually I'm going to get a judgment for millions of dollars against him, assuming that the judge finds he has subject-matter jurisdiction," says Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Both Nina Shea of the Puebla Institute and Douglas Payne of Freedom House have been even-handedly critical of both the Gramajo and Carrión fellowships, but there are also some important distinctions between the two cases. As Defense Minister, Gramajo was a stalwart defender of Guatemala's transition to democracy, earning particularly good democratic karma by putting down two military coups against the elected civilian government of President Vinicio Cerezo.

And there is nothing resembling Baldizón's inside-the-secret-police account, which ties Carrión directly to particular executions. The case against Gramajo centers on his ultimate responsibility as Army Vice Chief of Staff for torture and killing committed by soldiers under his command and is built on evidence gathered by outside human rights groups like Americas Watch. "It's a little more than that," says Ratner. "There were seven particular provinces in Guatemala [where] he was actually the commander in terms of what they were doing from 1980 to '82, and it was a very closely run operation at a time in which they destroyed 400 villages in Guatemala. So it wasn't just like saying the police commissioner is responsible for the guy on the beat. It was a much closer nexus." But Ratner admits the plaintiffs never produced documents or witnesses implicating Gramajo personally in specific executions or acts of torture. "When he defaulted, then we didn't actually have to go to proof on it," he says.

While not acquainted with the Carrión case, Ratner says he'll insist on a single standard. "I don't have any political ax on that one way or another. If there's real facts on somebody, I go after him. Torture doesn't have any political boundaries."
—DW

Alarmed by eroding popular support for the Sandinistas, MINT began conducting secret opinion polls in the mid-eighties for internal use. A story has it that one showed popular support for the government had plunged to around 20 percent. Upon hearing this, Borge observed icily, "No problem. We can keep power with 5 percent." And that was Commander of the Revolution Carrión's job description at MINT during the Sandinista reign: Building the party's capacity to maintain control no matter how unpopular it became.

But the case against Carrión goes far beyond his ultimate responsibility for the crimes of secret police officers acting under his direction. Until defecting in 1985, Alvaro Baldizón was Chief Investigator of MINT's Special Investigations Commission. Beginning in 1982, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IACHR), the human rights arm of the OAS, began sending detailed allegations-cum-information-requests to the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry regarding the fate of missing Nicaraguans. These were passed on to MINT, the institution implicated in the allegations, for responses.

Before he could throw sand in the eyes of international human rights monitors, Borge needed an internal mechanism for uncovering the truth. Trained in criminology in the Soviet Union, Baldizón "was assigned by Borge to track down all accusations made by the IACHR," says Douglas Payne, Central American analyst at Freedom House. "Tomás Borge said, 'I want to know the truth, I want to know it privately, secretly.' And he assigned [Baldizón] to do it, so then Borge would be able to concoct his response."

Americas Watch spent much time pecking at Baldizón's story. But this is the same group that based its Nicaraguan political prisoner estimates on Red Cross figures—which did not include those held in State Security prisons, because its people weren't allowed to visit them. "While Americas Watch tried to poke holes in some of the hazier parts," says Payne, "I found quite astounding the picture he did paint in detail of an entire operation, with names. It really did not overturn his credibility as to the overall picture, and [Baldizón] himself admitted that 'I am going on memory, and there is a lot of material I'm giving you.'" Baldizón has since died, of food poisoning in a Los Angeles restaurant. The L.A. coroner's "determination that there hadn't been any hanky panky involved was probably correct," says Payne. "But that doesn't mean there wasn't any, because the Sandinista people who performed 'wet' operations were trained by the best in the world—the East Germans and the Soviets."

According to Baldizón, in late 1981, Borge signed an order called "The Standardization of the Application of Special Measures Against Elements of the Enemy Potential and Criminal Potential Throughout the National Territory." Under the order, "special measures," or assassinations, were to be undertaken only against people whose detention was not public knowledge, and the authority to request the use of

“special measures” was restricted to a handful of trusted, high-ranking MINT officers. And “special measures” were to be applied only after obtaining the approval of Borge or Carrión.

A 1986 State Department report on the Baldizón revelations cited Carrión’s complicity in the following assassinations:

• In early December 1982, DGSE officers imprisoned 20-year old Ramón Heberto Torrente Molina, suspected of recruiting and serving as a courier for the armed resistance. After Carrión approved the “special measures” requested by the MINT Delegate for Region II, Comandante Guerrillero David Blanco Núñez, the youth was executed by DGSE officers in a dry stream bed off the road between Chinandega and León. Borge ordered Baldizón to investigate following an IACHR complaint, and after receiving his report, said he had forgotten that Carrión had approved the killing. “Killed attempting to escape,” went the official story.

• In November 1983, Baldizón investigated the case of a Nicaraguan farmer, Paster Cruz Herrera, another case pressed by the IACHR. After his arrest by state security near the town of Pantasma in Jinotega in February 1983, Cruz was transferred to Las Tejas, a DGSE prison in Matagalpa. Sub-Comandante Javier López Lowerli requested “special measures” because he had no legal

case against Cruz. Carrión approved, and Cruz was executed in April 1983 along with three other prisoners. Baldizón submitted his report on the case in December 1983.

• In 1983, the CPDH and IACHR published lists of more than 300 farmers who had been reported missing following MINT/Sandinista army counter-insurgency operations in the areas around Cua, Pantasma, Waslala, and Río Blanco. In response to sustained pressure from area residents and the human rights groups, Baldizón’s office was ordered to investigate. More than 300 farmers had been executed, they reported in June 1984. In 80 percent of the executions, Sub-Comandante López had received Carrión’s approval to apply “special measures.” Borge named a special prosecutor to take legal action against those responsible. Three high-ranking MINT and party officials implicated in the murders were transferred, while lower-level security personnel were charged and soon released.

In 1981 Carrión assumed control of Sandinista relations with the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua’s Atlantic Coast, a portfolio he held until 1985. Carrión was instrumental in the Sandinista campaign to break down traditional patterns of Miskito life and absorb the community into a nationwide system marked by Marxist-Leninist forms of political organization, property ownership, and



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ideology. Sandinista troops and Cuban teachers and doctors poured into the region's 225 villages. The Sandinistas marched tens of thousands of Miskitos off to relocation camps (dubbed Tasba Pri, "Promised Land" in Miskito, by the Sandinistas) and destroyed their evacuated villages.

"This was the most tragic time of Miskito Indian history," says Armstrong Wiggins, head of the Indian Law Resource Center. And Managua's Viceroy for the Atlantic Coast was Carrión. "He is directly responsible, not just for the destruction of Miskito Indian villages, the burning of the Miskito Indian churches, the relocation of the Miskito Indian people, but he was in charge of planning of the destruction of the Miskito organization called MISURASATA," says Wiggins.

While Sandinista control of food distribution provided leverage over the nation's non-Indian populations, the Indians were largely self-sufficient. "There were no ways for Sandinista or Marxist-Leninist ideas to get in there," Wiggins explains. "So what Luis Carrión and his cronies—[DGSE chief] Lenin Cerna and the East Germans and the Cuban agents—organized was how to infiltrate their people into the community structure. And the only mistake we made was that we wanted education so much that we failed in a way by letting these Cuban teachers come into these communities as teachers. . . . So they brought them in en masse, and they were all security forces from Cuba trained to deal with the Indian issue."

The Indians organized armed resistance, crossed the border into Honduras, and rebelled. After sustaining heavy losses during a July 1982 Miskito military offensive, Sandinista military and internal security forces retaliated against Miskito civilians around the towns of Puerto Cabezas and Seven-Bank. Many Miskitos were captured by security forces and summarily executed. When foreign governments and international organizations pressed the government in December for information about hundreds of missing Miskitos, Borge ordered an investigation by Baldizón's office. The investigators found a copy of an October 1982 report from the ranking MINT officer in Puerto Cabezas, Sub-Comandante Jose González, to Carrión. González reported to Carrión that in addition to forty Miskitos killed in combat, 200 had been imprisoned and 150 had been executed in accordance with decisions reached by a joint commission from the Defense and Interior ministries that had been formed to decide the fate of the captured Indians.

How, then, to defend Carrión's Harvard fellowship? One could argue that, for better or worse, the Sandinistas will remain a force in Nicaraguan politics for the foreseeable future. While the party's leadership remains in anti-democratic hands, calls for internal party democracy and the renunciation of violence have made some soft ripples among the rank and file, and Carrión himself has gone public with some second thoughts. It could be argued that a Harvard scholarship is a reasonable price to pay to cultivate Carrión as a potential leader of the Sandinista democratizers against the unregenerate Leninism of Tomás Borge and the out-of-the-closet *caudillismo* of the Ortegas.

In the summer of 1990, while the Sandinistas emerged from post-electoral trauma, Carrión made a veiled attack on the regime's agricultural policies and religious persecution. His admission that, in effect, the contras weren't "mercenaries" after all was a stunner. "In the end, the contra was a campesino movement with its own leaders," he said. He explained that agricultural policies "such as the establishment of checkpoints on the highways to guarantee, coercively, that the campesinos would deliver their production to the state at the official price" had driven an important sector of the rural population, landowners and landless alike, into rebellion:

"We are not ethical judges," says one OAS fellowship specialist. "We don't run a CIA here. . . . It doesn't say that because he's a violator of human rights he cannot be granted a scholarship in our regulations."

Some campesino sectors felt that their claims were fulfilled by the agrarian reform, but others—even those who had no land, especially in the remote agricultural zones, in the best cattle-producing areas—they felt threatened for fundamentally ideological reasons. The hope of many of them was to become like the landowners affected by the agrarian reform, and in some way, these sectors interpreted this as a denial of their own chance one day to become large landowners themselves. I think another factor . . . was the confrontation between the revolutionary government and leaders of the Catholic Church and some Protestant churches. They did a great deal of work in the countryside where religion has much greater weight than in urban areas and in the Pacific region in general.

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But while there might be an argument that it's worth biting the bullet to educate a Sandinista leader in democratic politics, nobody involved in the Carrión fellowship has yet made it. When asked whether he intends to return to politics in Nicaragua, Carrión says only, "Yeah, maybe." He declines to say whether he is still a Marxist-Leninist.

As Carrión crams for his mid-terms, human rights groups in Nicaragua are still discovering mass graves filled with victims of the Sandinistas. But don't expect Harvard or the OAS to fund their excavation of the Sandinistas' legacy of terror with a research grant—they're betting on the future. □

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The Queer Fellows

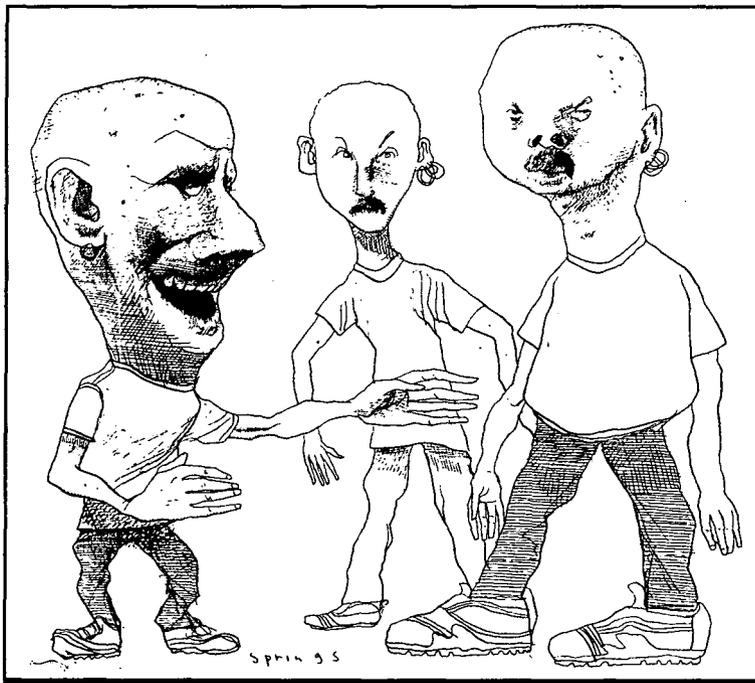
"Queer theorists" on American campuses are resurrecting the Marxist project—with sex, not class, as its target. For the new academic radicals, the enemy is not just heterosexuality but the idea of gender itself.

A specter is haunting the American academy, the last refuge of the political left. It is the specter of "queer theory." Amidst the din and clatter of utopias crashing messily to earth, the true believers are once again burnishing the agendas of social revolution. From Berkeley to Cambridge, lesbian and gay activists busily work to unveil the latest weapon in the intellectual armory of the tenured left. "Queer politics is no longer content to carve out a buffer zone for a minoritized and protected subculture," an academic manifesto proclaims. Its goal is "to challenge the pervasive and often invisible heteronormativity of modern societies." Says the *Village Voice*: "It isn't enough to become parallel to straights. We want to obliterate such dichotomies altogether."

The "dichotomies" are already being obliterated in liberated zones of the popular culture. A *San Francisco Chronicle* reviewer describing Michael Jackson's international video *Black and White*, which was seen by half a billion youngsters across the globe, waxes messianic:

The refrain in the *Black and White* video is "It doesn't matter if you're black or white." Most riveting is a computer-enhanced

David Horowitz is co-editor of Heterodoxy, published by the Center for the Study of Popular Culture in Studio City, California.



segment where a person changes ethnicity and sex in rapid succession. . . . In a world threatened by racial tensions and overpopulation, the survival instinct could summon a new human, one who has no single race and who, by being . . . androgynous, is less subject to the procreative urge.

The task (in the words of the previously cited manifesto) is "to confront . . . modern culture with its worst nightmare, a queer planet."

As novelist Saul Bellow observes, "The idea is to clobber everything that used to be accepted as given, fixed, irremediable." For the new radical theorists, the enemy is no longer a ruling class, a hegemonic race, or even a dominant gender. Instead it is the sexual order of nature itself. Oppression lies in the very idea of the "normal," the order that divides humanity into two sexes. Instead of a classless society as the redemptive future, queer theorists envisage a gender-free world.

Queer revolution is thus the ultimate subversive project: it proclaims the death not only of Society's God, but also of Nature's Law—the very idea of a reality beyond human will. For these revolutionaries, not even biology grounds possibility or can limit human hope. Theirs is the consummate Nietzschean fantasy: a world in which humanity is God. On this brave new horizon, humanity will realize its potential as a self-creating species able to defy its own sexual gravity. The future will give birth to a