

getting under way.” The lawmakers, all members of the PPS party, said in a letter that “the position that Mexico adopts at the [OAS] meeting is of extreme importance in order to prevent the U.S. Government from concretizing its interventionist plans and objectives.”

Even more remarkable, the Mexican lawmakers defended General Noriega by name as “the legitimate heir and most firm defender of Torrijismo,” a reference to the political doctrine established by Panama’s late leader Gen. Omar Torrijos. In a published statement, they noted, “the escalation of aggressive actions is under way: first, the slander campaign against General Noriega; second, the economic blockade; third, the attempt to divide the PDF; fourth, the open support for the candidate of the anti-patriotic forces Guillermo Endara and the discrediting of the electoral process; fifth, the attempt to use the OAS as an instrument of its policy against Panama; and sixth, the announcement by sectors of the U.S. Congress that they don’t want to appoint a Panamanian administrator in 1990 as specified in the Treaties.”

In Argentina, veterans of the War of the Malvinas staged protest demonstrations. Demonstrations were also held in the Dominican Republic, and advertisements condemning the attacks on Panama appeared in the local press. In Uruguay, the foreign minister was hauled before Congress to explain the vote against Panama.

While the crisis has been postponed, it is by no means over. The Panamanian government has given no indication that it is willing to surrender. In fact, right after the OAS meeting June 6, Panama’s Foreign Minister Jorge Ritter said that no improvement in relations is possible until the U.S. lifts the economic embargo against Panama and stops threatening the use of force. Panamanian delegations fanned out across the continent, to rally defense for Panama’s sovereignty. General Noriega himself placed advertisements in several Central and South American newspapers, warning that if the United States succeeds in its war against Panama, who will come to the defense of their own nations when their sovereignty were attacked?

In an interview with Mexico’s *La Jornada* published May 25, Noriega reminded people that Panama’s mobilization to head off U.S. military action against Panama, is also in the best interests of the United States itself. “I would say that the U.S. has much to lose and will gain little” from a military intervention in Panama, said Noriega. “We know, and they know, that if there is an invasion of Panama’s civilian areas, it could have incalculable consequences,” turning all of Ibero-America against the United States.

If people “want to fool themselves with the disinformation that the aim of this war is Noriega, that’s their problem,” he said. But what is at stake, is Panama’s geographical position “in the center of North and South America. A nation as small as ours can be torn up,” he said, “but he who plays with fire inevitably gets burned. We hope that reason prevails, that solutions are found, but we know that the future of Latin America is being decided right now in Panama.”

Investigative Leads

Buendía case: a Mexican Irangate?

by Isaias Amezcua

Last May 30 was the fifth anniversary of the murder of leftist Mexican journalist Manuel Buendía, by a professional hit carried out in the middle of Mexico City. Behind the assassination hides a powerful political apparatus linked to the drug trade and to intelligence activities, which has the nation in its grip. There lies the real source of corruption in Mexico, but it is a corruption that will not come under attack from President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Manuel Buendía enjoyed enormous influence in all strata of the country. He specialized in matters relating to the drug trade and to international espionage. On several occasions he was instrumental, in collaboration with various Mexican intelligence officials, in dismantling dirty CIA operations on Mexican soil. His denunciation of Lawrence Starnfield, the former CIA clandestine operations chief in Europe who, in 1978, became The Company’s station chief in Mexico, was notorious. It was Buendía who forced the U.S. Embassy to withdraw Starnfield, once Buendía’s revelations made Starnfield *persona non grata* in Mexico. Buendía was also a declared enemy of George Bush, when Bush was CIA chief.

When Buendía was shot in the back on May 30, 1984, political circles in the country were shaken, since it had been widely assumed that Buendía had government protection. That protective umbrella, however, had ceased to exist the moment then-President Miguel de la Madrid removed Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios from his position as chief of the government’s security service.

Within days of the assassination, President De la Madrid ordered an exhaustive investigation of the crime, which was never carried out. Just the opposite occurred. The various police agencies that intervened in the supposed investigation succeeded in destroying whatever evidence might have led them to the authors of the crime. One of the principal figures responsible for this was Antonio Zorrilla Pérez, who was director of the Federal Security Service (DFS), a body that included the political and anti-terrorist police forces.

Private investigations, some of them carried out by a group of Buendía’s friends, have established that Zorrilla

was the first police chief to arrive at the scene of the crime, within minutes after it occurred. It was his agents who seized the documents the murdered journalist had been carrying, and took control of Buendía's private office, containing his files and notes. Zorrilla appropriated the journalist's clothes and the bullet fragments that were found. Zorrilla also detained all witnesses to the crime. None of Zorrilla's actions was authorized by or reported to his superiors.

In March 1988, Zorrilla Pérez was questioned by the special prosecutor in charge of investigating the assassination, Miguel Angel García, and claimed that he had not surrendered Buendía's clothes or the bullet fragments because he had not been asked to. However, the judicial probe indicated that in June 1984, Trinidad Gutiérrez, chief of the Mexico City Judicial Police, did receive the clothes and bullets from Zorrilla, but he, too, failed to hand them over to the authorities in charge of the case. Gutiérrez's illegal act incriminates his political protector, Victoria Adato de Ibarra, who served as Mexico City chief prosecutor, and thus is properly held responsible for Gutiérrez's actions.

Like Zorrilla, Mrs. Adato owed her position not only to a personal friendship with President De la Madrid, but also to her links with Manuel Bartlett, former Interior Minister. Mrs. Adato was also a close relative of then chief of the Federal Judicial Police Jorge Ibarra, and of the chief of the narcotics division of the Judicial Police, Miguel Aldana Ibarra.

Despite the evidence, Zorrilla was never arrested for his participation in the coverup. Various press media and political observers have suggested that Zorrilla was only carrying out orders for the purpose of protecting the higher-ups who were the true masterminds of the hit.

The 'time bomb' explodes

In recent weeks the Buendía case was revived in nearly all the national press. Although the unsolved crime reached its five-year statute of limitations on May 30, a fact which will make punishment of those responsible more difficult, new revelations surfaced on April 18 like a time bomb going off.

Journalist Rogelio Hernández, a close friend of Buendía's and one of those who has been most insistent on finding and punishing the culprits, revealed in the daily *Excelsior* that the prosecutor's office investigating the Buendía case has turned up new information confirming the thesis that the journalist was murdered because he was preparing to reveal the names of police and political officials associated with the drug trade.

That information in turn surfaced in confessions by chief of the Sinaloa state police Eduardo Moreno Espinoza, who was arrested for his participation in the protection and information network run by drug kingpin Miguel Angel Félix Gallardo, himself arrested in early April. Moreno confessed to having been a partner of Zorrilla in the drug trade. He also

confessed to having close relations with one Victor Gómez, who was chief of a "special brigade" of the Federal Security Police and who—according to Hernández—"could have been the one who helped the journalist's assassin escape on a motorcycle."

On May 17, nearly one month after his first revelations, Hernández set off a new "bombshell" with the unofficial report that judicial authorities are preparing a "vast operation" to arrest the person responsible for Buendía's assassination, who is "linked to public positions and to police agencies." According to Hernández's report, preparations for the operation were being blocked by several officials of the current government, whom he described only as "government circles linked to the previous administration" and as "authorities in charge of security dependencies," also linked to the previous government. People are asking, what individual could Hernández's description fit?

The tie-in of Félix Gallardo's name to Zorrilla Pérez's once again confirms the latter's association with the international drug mafia. That association first came into evidence when it was discovered that behind the 1985 assassination of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena was a drug mob that relied on the cooperation of Zorrilla Pérez and various of his underlings, such as Daniel Acuna Figueroa, Federico Castelli del Oro, and many others. Drug traffickers such as Rafael Caro Quintero and Ernesto Fonseca even carried credentials issued by Zorrilla and the Interior Ministry, identifying them as agents of the Federal Security Service.

The discovery of these criminal associations proves that the "eyes and ears" of then President Miguel de la Madrid were controlled and directed by the international drug cartels. The most serious of all is that Zorrilla was never arrested. Following the scandal, Zorrilla resigned from the DFS, but only to be run as a federal congressional candidate by the ruling PRI party. Fortunately, PRI party leaders at the time forced Zorrilla to abandon his candidacy as well.

The effort to make Zorrilla a congressman was the desperate action of then-Interior Minister Manuel Bartlett to prevent the investigations from reaching his door. Among political circles, it was known that Zorrilla first got his post at the DFS thanks to Bartlett. Today, Bartlett serves as Education Minister in the Salinas de Gortari cabinet. Zorrilla was named director of the DFS at the end of 1982, after the FBI, the U.S. Justice Department, and the CIA had carried out an operation to discredit his predecessor, Miguel Nazzar Haro, who was forced to resign.

From then on Zorrilla served as the official liaison with U.S. intelligence services, and especially with the Central Intelligence Agency. On the one hand he worked for the drug-trafficking Medellín Cartel, and on the other for the CIA. Political observers say that Zorrilla played an important role in the clandestine supply operations to the Nicaraguan Contras.