Israel's increasingly visible presence throughout the Third World, including such disparate places as the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Zaire, Botswana, El Salvador and Argentina, raises a number of questions about the objectives and character of Israel's foreign policy, the nature of the Israeli state, and the United States-Israeli relationship. One Third World connection—Israel's involvement in Guatemala—involves several unique aspects, but the basic structure of the tie sheds considerable light on the larger issues.

Three fundamental factors underlie Israel's involvement in Guatemala and all Israeli Third World relations. First, Israel's global involvements are directly linked to its efforts to break out of its international isolation. Because of that isolation, Israeli leaders reason that they cannot be particular about the kind of regimes they assist. As a former head of the Knesset foreign relations committee recently said, when asked about the Israeli-Guatemalan relationship:

Israel is a pariah state. When people ask us for something, we cannot afford to ask questions about ideology. The only type of regime that Israel would not aid would be one that is anti-American. Also, if we can aid a country that it may be inconvenient for the US to help, we would be cutting off our nose to spite our face not to.

As this remark suggests, a second element in Israel's Third World involvements is the significant congruence of interest between Israel and the United States in these areas. Israeli policies are not dictated by US wishes, but they frequently advance what Washington perceives to be its own interests in many Third World countries. Sometimes Israeli policies are undertaken to lessen Israel's dependence on the US. At other times Israel pursues policies with the specific objective of serving American interests. Such initiatives are primarily motivated by the desire to increase Israel's leverage over Washington's Middle East policy. Other Israeli policies are happenstance—the outcome of initiatives by individuals, corporations or institutes operating without government policy directives. But all of these situations reveal a striking convergence between the results of Israel's policies and American objectives.

A third factor in Israel's broadening international commitments is the growing militarization of Israeli society. This militarization is reflected in the increased autonomy of the military in Israel. The military and the military-industrial complex frequently make foreign policy decisions with little input or oversight from the civilian sector. Indeed, according to Israeli military analyst Ze'ev Schiff, the civilian apparatus, i.e., the Finance Ministry, does not even control the defense budget. The spiraling growth of that budget, the increasing role of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) as a power factor in the Israeli polity, and

Israel and Guatemalan
Advice and Counte
Cheryl A. Rubenberg

the growing concentration of foreign affairs and defense policy decision-making in the hands of a select group—all typically former high military officers—has resulted in foreign policies emphasizing military solutions to any and all situations.

A related consideration involves the sale of arms and military-related equipment. Analysts today rank Israel as either the seventh or twelfth largest exporter of conventional weapons globally. Israel's export interests are related to its perceived strategic need to attain self-sufficiency in arms production in order to lessen its dependence on the US while maintaining absolute regional military superiority. The small size of the country, as well as its inherent financial weakness, made the development of a military-industrial complex on the desired scale.
ment and balance-of-payments considerations are critically related to arms sales. As a result, Israel's arms export program has helped its trade position in the face of a chronic trade deficit. In Israel's calculation, these important military and economic considerations obviously transcend political "niceties" like human rights violations.

Another aspect of the growing militarization of Israeli society involves the 19 years of Israeli military occupation over the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, and, for varying periods, both the Sinai and southern Lebanon. This experience has trained an entire generation of Israelis to impose Israeli rule over subject peoples. Matti Peled, formerly a general in the Israeli army and now a leading peace activist, put it this way:

Israel has given its soldiers practical training in the art of oppression and in methods of collective punishment. It is no wonder, then, that after their release from the army, some of those officers choose to make use of their knowledge in the service of dictators and that those dictators are pleased to take in the Israeli experts.

"A Nation of Prisoners"

Since the CIA-sponsored coup in 1954, Guatemala has been ruled by a succession of rightwing regimes determined to suppress an indigenous revolutionary movement that traces its lineage back to the American intervention. Most of these were military juntas, but even under the nominally civilian regime from 1966 to 1970 military officers filled critical government posts, and during the 1960s the state waged a brutal counterinsurgency campaign against a guerrilla movement based mainly among the country's Ladino population. Although this guerrilla movement had been dealt a devastating blow by 1970, new sectors of resistance emerged in the 1970s, particularly in the Indian communities, which evoked new strategies of repression and counterinsurgency.

These were the same years that saw Israel "pacify" and consolidate its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and Golan territories seized in 1967. Ties between the two states going back to Israel's establishment were thus reinforced in the 1970s by a shared interest in counterinsurgency. These affinities, old and new, took on new force when Menachem Begin and his Likud coalition came to power in Israel in June 1977. The new Israeli leaders remembered the key role played in 1947-48 by Jorge Garcia Granados, Guatemala's representative to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. Garcia Granados, who had been serving as ambassador in Washington, was personally drawn to the Zionist cause long before taking this post and exerted strong influence on the Special Committee to recommend partition. Granados had gone out of his way to meet personally with Begin, Shamir and others in the terrorist underground in Palestine in 1947: in 1948 he urged Guatemala's president to immediately recognize Israel.

Israel's present attention to Guatemala is not, of course, predicated entirely on history. Guatemala can still be an asset in international forums such as the UN, where Israel is often quite isolated. Israel also has significant commercial interests in Guatemala. Moreover, Guatemala's strategic importance to the United States in the context of its Central American policy, coupled with

Author's note: I would like to thank the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University for a grant which made the field work in Central America for this research possible. Also many thanks to Milton Jamal and Jane Hunter for critiques of early drafts and much valuable assistance. Joe Stark made extensive editorial changes. Any mistakes, of course, are entirely mine.
the often stormy relations between Washington and Guatemala City, have afforded Israel a special role in Guatemalan Guatemalan rulers, for their part, see Israel as the world’s foremost practitioner of counterinsurgency, and look to Israel for advice, models, expertise and arms. Israeli assistance began in 1971, but it took on increased importance after 1977, when the Guatemalan generals rejected US military aid in response to Carter administration pressures to remedy their gross human rights violations. Israel has displayed no similar reluctance to work with the country that one Guatemalan lawyer characterized as “a nation of prisoners.”

**Rural Pacification**

The broad base of rural peasant support for Guatemala’s revolutionary movement, particularly after 1970, led Guatemalan regimes to incorporate agricultural resettlement schemes into their counterinsurgency plans. One aspect of this was “civic action” programs, involving both military and agricultural functions, although the emphasis has clearly been on the military. The US advisor who directed the civic action advisory staff in Guatemala during 1966-68, Major Frederick F. Woerner, describes civic action as “a military weapon in counterinsurgency. I wish I could say that our main concern is in improving nutrition. . . . These are only by-products. The security of the country is our mission.”

In Guatemala, the fundamental strategy of the military has been to “pacify” the countryside. Between 1954 and 1984, this has meant the murder of more than 100,000 civilians; attempted destruction of the traditional Indian society and culture; and Indian resettlement in “model villages,” which include agricultural cooperatives. The objective is total control of the civilian population, without altering the oligarchic patterns of land ownership. According to Colonel Eduardo Wohlers, director of the “Plan of Assistance to Conflict Areas” (commonly known as “Beans and Bullets”) under the Rios Montt regime in 1982-83, Israel was the main source of inspiration for Guatemala’s counterinsurgency agrarian strategy. Particularly inspiring was Israel’s NaBol program. Nabal, the Hebrew acronym for Fighting Pioneer Youth, trains soldiers in agricultural techniques in order to set up and expand border settlements. “Many of our technicians are Israeli trained,” Wohlers declared. “The model of the kibbutz and the moshav is planted firmly in their minds. And personally I think it would be fascinating to turn our highlands into that kind of system.” Another Guatemalan view paints a more somber picture of Wohler’s “fascinating” system:

Agriculture holds the key to Israel’s current role. In it there is an interlocking mosaic of assistance programs—weapons to help the Guatemalan Army crush the opposition and lay waste to the countryside, security and intelligence advice to control the local population, and agrarian development models to construct on the ashes of the highlands.

Israeli involvement in Guatemala’s agricultural counterinsurgency program began in 1977, shortly after Menachem Begin was elected prime minister. Two important Guatemalans visited Israel: Colonel Fernando Castillo Ramirez, the director of the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA), the institution most concerned with agricultural resettlement in areas of conflict, and Leonel Giron, an agricultural economist in charge of settlement programs in the Franja Transversal del Norte, the vast northern area scheduled for infrastructure development and land settlement. They sought technical, military, and agricultural settlement advice, arms and joint investment schemes. Immediately after their visit, Israeli advisors arrived in Guatemala to plan “civic-action” programs in the tense Ixcan area in El Quiche, heartland of the revolutionary movement and scene of relentless military repression.

In January 1978, Israel initiated a two-year program of grants for Guatemalan officials to study agricultural cooperative schemes in Israel. Fifty scholarships were made available, and a steady stream of planners, economists, credit managers and others—a significant number of them high officials of the Guatemalan army—went to Israel. In February 1979, the Israeli Settlement Study Center at Rehovot provided additional scholarships for officials and employees of INTA, in conjunction with a rural pacification plan initiated by then-president Lucas Garcia. According to a spokesman for Yitzhak Shamir, during the 1978-79 period Israeli experts “trained about 1,000 Guatemalans.”

The pacification plan, which reportedly contained elements of the kibbutz and the moshav, was never implemented, as the Lucas Garcia regime responded indiscriminately to the growing mass movement, and army and state-organized death squads murdered peasants, labor leaders, clergy, students and moderate politicians.

General Efraín Rios Montt seized power from Lucas Garcia in March 1982 and instituted the “Beans and Bullets” rural pacification program. It was conceived by two Guatemalan military officers, Colonel Wohlers and General Fuentes Corado, allegedly

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*National Palace in Guatemala City during a demonstration.*

Julia Canova
in conjunction with Israeli advisors. The new program rewarded
with food and housing any peasant who cooperated with the
government, and used force or the threat of force against those
who did not. The army unleashed a violent crusade against the
peasants in which at least 10,000 Indian civilians were killed.23
There followed dozens of projects in rural areas, many of them
implemented by Israelis, including housing in the model villages,
roads, and new water systems. Analyst Nancy Peckenham has
succinctly described the meaning of the “beans” side of the
program:

These projects, most of which provided emergency relief to people
who had been displaced from their homes by the army offensive
and then rounded up by the military from their mountain hiding
places, are intrinsic to the national counterinsurgency program.
On a secondary level that incorporates long-term goals, the paci-

cification program is promoting a new social and economic order
that Wohlers expects will undermine the ability of opposition
forces to organize the rural population against the government and
military.22

One other part of Rios Montt’s “Plan Victoria,” implemented
with Israeli assistance, is the recruitment of peasants themselves
in civil defense patrols. These patrols effectively set peasant
against peasant, and are integral to the counterinsurgency cam-
paign. Membership in patrols, which are organized and controlled
by the army, is compulsory. Those who refuse to join are branded
as subversives. Peasant recruits are given weapons and instructed
to watch others for signs of revolutionary inclinations. Approxi-
mately one million civilians have been forced to join the patrols.23

After the overthrow of Rios Montt in 1983, the new govern-
ment of General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores adopted a more
selective approach towards executions and forced disappearances.
His regime attempted to consolidate the rural pacification pro-
gram, focusing on resettlement of Indians in model villages,
and strengthened civil defense patrols, a more extensive “food for
work” program, and various development schemes initiated by
the oligarchy. Available evidence suggests that Israel’s role in
Guatemala certainly did not decline during the Mejia Victores
administration.

Arms Sales and Military Aid

Israeli-Guatemalan military cooperation began in 1971, during
the presidency of Colonel Carlos Arana Osario. Then the Guate-
malan chief of staff, Kjell Laugerud Garcia, visited Israel and met
with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and other Israeli military
officials. Laugerud Garcia expressed Guatemala’s interest in pro-
curing armaments and military communications equipment. Later
that year, the two countries signed their first cooperation
agreement, though specifics were not made public.24

In 1974, Laugerud Garcia became president in what was gener-
ally considered to be a fraudulent election. Just prior to taking
office in April, he made a private visit to Israel, announcing his
wish to widen cooperation with that nation.23 The first Israeli-
Guatemalan arms agreement was signed within months.26

Soldier with Galil in refugee camp, Ixil Triangle, Guatemala.

Marcelle Montecinos

Middle East Report • May-June 1986
1975, Israeli-made Arava aircraft (adaptable for counterinsurgency tasks) arrived in Guatemala, followed by deliveries of armored cars, artillery and small arms, including Uzi submachine guns and the Galil assault rifle, which became standard issue for the Guatemalan army. Israeli technicians and military advisors accompanied the Aravas.27

Guatemala’s interest in purchasing Israeli arms and seeking Israeli advisors was heightened by its increasingly difficult relations with the United States. Guatemalans resented the various pressures Washington exerted, as well as the patronizing attitudes of its advisors sent with the American weapons. In 1977, a series of events resulted in Israeli becoming Guatemala’s principal arms supplier and primary source of counterinsurgency advice.28

Three months after Jimmy Carter became president in January 1977, the State Department issued a report condemning human rights violations in Guatemala. The Guatemalan regime retorted that it would reject in advance any military aid from a government which dared to impose conditions or interfere in its internal affairs.29 At Carter’s request, Congress suspended military aid to Guatemala, and the administration included Guatemala on a list of “gross and consistent violators of human rights.” This directed US officials not to support multilateral loans to Guatemala from the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank, unless the loans demonstrably financed “basic human needs.”30

The Israeli government immediately stepped in to fill the vacuum and a flourish of activity ensued. Israel did not put “strings” on its arms or advice and was indifferent to the repressive practices of the Guatemalan regime. The flow of arms and “agricultural development” advisors picked up considerably. In June 1977, Barbados customs agents discovered a shipment of 26 tons of arms and ammunition destined for Guatemala from Israel in an Argentinian cargo plane, portending the expanding role of Israel as Guatemala’s main arms supplier.31 Soon Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), owned and controlled by the Ministry of Defense, installed an Elta radar air traffic control system at the airport near Guatemala City. The system is still operated by Israeli technicians.32

In December 1977, Israeli President Ephraim Katzir made a seven-day trip to Guatemala, where he signed an agreement on military assistance. President Laugerud Garcia also announced that Guatemala would purchase five Dabar-class missile patrol boats from Israel. His defense minister visited Israel soon afterward to finalize the purchase and to seek other Israeli military equipment.33 A meeting between the defense ministers of the two countries, as well as between Guatemalan officials from other ministries and their Israeli counterparts, took place early in 1978, in Israel. The defense ministers discussed the supply of weapons, munitions, military communications equipment (including a computer system), tanks and armored cars, field kitchens, other security items and even the possible supply of the advanced fighter aircraft, the Kfir. They also talked about sending Israeli personnel to install computer and radar systems, to assist in training and equipment maintenance, to establish an electronics school, and to train and advise the Guatemalan army and the internal security police (known as G-2) in counterinsurgency tactics. Guatemala soon received all the desired equipment and assistance, except the Kfir,34 which Israel was prohibited by the US from selling because it contained an American-made engine. By 1980, the Guatemalan army was fully equipped with Galil rifles at a cost of $6 million.35

Computerized Counterinsurgency

In March 1978, General Romeo Lucas Garcia became president of Guatemala in another fraudulent election. During 1979, Israeli technicians from Tadiran Israel Electronics Industries began installing a computer center in Guatemala City which became operational in late 1979 or early 1980. The computer’s data banks are believed to contain the names of at least 80 percent of the country’s population. According to Israeli journalist Yosef Prifl, the system was established to monitor and “follow up the guerrillas movements in the capital.”35 Part of the Regional Telecommunications Center (RTC), the system is located behind the National Palace and is connected to a complex of intelligence gathering and storage facilities. One report charges that the Center is linked to the US Army’s Southern Command at Fort Gulick in the Panama Canal Zone.36 Besides storing information on guerrilla groups, the computer reportedly can also measure sudden large increases in water or power use, which might, for instance, indicate the use of a printing press in the middle of the night. George Black reports that “in the summer of 1981, sophisticated Argentine computer analysis methods (using Israeli hardware) had been crucial in detecting and breaking 27 guerrilla safehouses in Guatemala City.”37 According to one Guatemalan opposition group, Israel is responsible for the whole complex and Israeli work as advisors and instructors there.38 Amnesty International has charged that the computer system is an integral part of the state’s apparatus for terrorizing its own citizens.39

On November 3, 1981, the Guatemalan army opened an electronics school that was built, funded and staffed by Israelis. According to President Lucas Garcia, the school would train specialists in important counterinsurgency technologies: electronic codification and decodification, monitoring and jamming radio transmissions, and ciphering.40 The colonel who heads the school says that “teaching methods, the teaching teams, the technical instruments, books, and even the custom furniture were designed and built by the Israeli company DEGEM Systems.”41

Experts for Export

The most controversial aspect of the Israeli-Guatemalan relationship is the role Israeli advisors have played in the formulation and implementation of Guatemala’s counterinsurgency strategy. In 1980, the head of Guatemala’s internal security forces, Interior Minister Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz, made a second trip to Israel. Subsequently, The Guardian (London) and other sources reported that Israeli, as well as Chilean, Argentinian and other foreign advisors were working with Guatemala’s G-2 national police to develop counterinsurgency capabilities.42

There were a large number of retired Israeli officers and military men seeking employment with foreign governments in the early 1980s, a situation reflected in the Israeli presence in Guatemala. Guatemala needed precisely those skills the Israelis were most qualified to offer. Arieh Egozi noted in Yediot Aharonot that such individuals have become a major Israeli “export article.”43

By early 1982 there were at least 300 Israeli advisors in Guatemala.44 The New York Times reported that “Israel is known to have intelligence teams, security and communications specialists, and military training personnel in Guatemala.”45

Israel officially denies providing advisors to Guatemala. The Israeli ambassador in Guatemala City commented: “Maybe there
are Israeli persons here, but they are not with the Israeli Army and not with the embassy. We do not even have a military attaché and we do not have advisors here." 47 Nevertheless, Israeli advisors are known to have trained the Guatemalan air force and army special forces, as well as the intelligence services. The Washington Post reported that, "Israeli advisors—some official, others private—helped Guatemalan internal security agents hunt underground rebel groups." 48 Undoubtedly there are both official advisors and “independents”—former IDF officers who offer their personal services as mercenary “anti-terrorist consultants,” advisors, trainers, and even simple bodyguards. 49 (In addition, dozens of independent Israeli arms merchants, usually retired IDF officers, promote weapons sales for personal profit in Guatemala and elsewhere in Latin America.) 50 Much of the work of official Israeli advisors has been done under the guise of “civic action” programs, “cooperative agricultural development,” “literacy campaigns,” and other seemingly innocuous labels. Israeli advisors—either sent by the government or freelancing—reportedly trained elite troops known as “Kaibiles” for the Indian pacification program undertaken by President Lucas Garcia in the fall of 1981, and carried out more extensively by Rios Montt. 51 By the early months of 1982, the Kaibiles had killed hundreds of Indian civilians. 52

When General Efrain Rios Montt staged his coup on March 23, 1982, the Israeli newspaper Ha’olam Hazeh reported he had the help of 300 Israeli military advisors who assisted in training, planning and executing the coup. Yedioth Aharonot referred to the coup as “the Israeli connection.” 53 Rios Montt himself acknowledged to an ABC reporter that things had gone very smoothly because many of our soldiers were trained by Israelis. 54 During the 17 months of Rios Montt’s rule, Israel’s intensified military involvement in Guatemala was supplemented by assistance on other levels. Shortly after Rios Montt seized power, the two countries signed a wide-ranging Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement. Guatemala’s tourist board reportedly targeted US Jewish communities in its promotion campaign, and Guatemalan radio regularly aired Israeli programs. 55 Magen David Adom, Israel’s Red Cross, solicited contributions from American Jews so that Israel could dispatch relief supplies to Guatemala. During this period, a Guatemalan business leader told the Los Angeles Times: “We’re isolated internationally. The only friend we have left in the world is Israel.” 56

Rios Montt’s minister of defense, General Mejia Victores, overthrew the president on August 8, 1983. The change in presidential palace personnel did not appear to signal any change in Israeli-Guatemalan relations. The 11th Convention of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Central America and Panama met in Guatemala City in April 1984, attended by Israeli diplomats and high Guatemalan government officials, though Guatemala’s Jewish community is estimated at no more than 1,500. 57 Rodolfo Lobos Zamora, the Guatemalan army chief of staff, visited Israel in early 1985, reportedly to “negotiate for Israeli aid, particularly military aid.” 58 Mejia Victores himself was scheduled to make a state visit to Israel on April 14, 1985, but the threat of a coup forced him to cancel. 59

**Intensified Involvement**

In January 1983, at the height of Rios Montt’s carnage, then-chef of staff General Hector Lopez Fuentes summed up the relationship this way, “Israel is our principal supplier of arms and the number one friend of Guatemala in the world.” 60 What accounts for the pervasive Israeli involvement in Guatemala? The convergence of two factors in the fall of 1981 provides part of the answer. First, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon felt strongly, as did Prime Minister Begin, that Israel could increase its leverage over Washington by performing indispensable functions for the US in third countries. Second, the Reagan Administration was obsessively concerned about events in Central America, and Guatemala’s significance in US regional strategy was considered crucial at a time when Congressional restrictions on direct US aid were still in force. Lt. Gen. Wallace Nutting, then head of the US Southern Command, noted in 1982 that “the situation in Guatemala is potentially more serious than in El Salvador because the population is larger, the economy is stronger, and the geographical position is more critically located in a strategic sense.” 61

These two elements converged in the Memorandum of Understanding between Israel and the US in November 1981. The Memorandum specifically provided that the US would grant third countries permission to spend part of their US military credits in Israel. Israel did not feel that the accord went far enough in meeting its needs for expanded markets, nevertheless the Jerusalem Post stated that the Memorandum “laid the groundwork for using Israel’s defense needs and the American aid that nourishes them, to create a broader base for Israel’s industrial development.” 62 The strategic agreement was suspended a month later, when the Begin government annexed the Golan Heights, although Sharon contended that it remained secretly in effect. In discussions prior to the agreement’s formal reinstatement in November 1983, Israel proposed that it serve as a conduit for American aid to “anti-communist” forces in Central America—primarily the Nicaraguan contras and Guatemala—through a fund the administration would establish independent of the government budget to finance projects implemented by Israeli “experts.” 63 The Reagan administration’s commitment to these provisions was apparent when Congress tried to block US aid recipients from channeling such aid to the contras in the FY 1986 foreign aid bill; the Reagan team pressed successfully for wording that would not “take away from the sovereign decision” of other countries to assist the contras. 64

**Markets for Israel**

Corporate enterprise is another significant aspect of Israeli-Guatemalan relations. Several Israeli firms have established manufacturing subsidiaries in Guatemala; others have confined themselves to commercial distribution of Israeli products. By some accounts Guatemala is the regional distribution center for Israeli military material. 65 Israeli firms are also active in construction projects. Interviews with several American businessmen who have commercial ties there confirmed these Israeli involvements:
1. Eagle Military Gear Overseas, based in the Hotel Cortijo Reforma in Guatemala City, is in charge of the sale of military equipment outside that country.
2. Tahal Consulting Engineers, Ltd. was registered in 1980 for temporary operations in planning, organizing and supervising water development projects in Guatemala. According to the commercial registry of Guatemala, its initial capital investment was $5,000, a miniscule sum given the considerable work it purportedly engaged in. In 1983, Tahal was granted permission to operate indefinitely in Guatemala. (Several American firms that have traditionally engaged in such projects in Guatemala have recently complained bitterly about losing...
lucrative contracts to Israeli firms including Tahal.) 3) Tadiran Israel Electronics Ltd. was given permission to operate in Guatemala for two years beginning in September 1983. It manufactures and sells electronic equipment and was initially capitalized at nearly $12 million. Tadiran installed the computer system in Guatemala City. 4) Israel Aircraft Industries, Israel's largest military-industrial producer, installed the radar control system at the airport and is reportedly producing specialized equipment in Guatemala.67

By 1983, reports from a variety of sources in Guatemala confirmed the existence of a munitions factory, in the department of Alta Verapaz. According to Gen. Lopez Fuentes the factory was functional in May of 1983.68 Eagle Military Gear Overseas, the firm which constructed it, is reported to be the major investor in the factory.69 There is also an annex where armored vehicles are assembled. According to Mejia Victores’ foreign minister, Andrade Diz-Duran, the plant was built “to save foreign exchange that would otherwise have to spend on the international market.”70 It is not clear, however, exactly what the profit sharing arrangements are between the Israeli investors and the Guatemalan generals who established a Military Industry and Services Secretariat in early August 1983 to “officially” handle the new arms business. Some analysts have argued that the strategic objective behind developing a munitions industry (allegedly to be followed by armaments production) in Guatemala is related to the goals of CONDECA to standardize all weapons and ammunition throughout Central America (except Nicaragua). According to this argument, Israel undertook the venture at the behest of the US in the context of Washington’s regional objectives.

Whatever the case, clearly the plant is a major new development for Guatemala and possibly for the entire region.71 Several joint US-Israeli projects for long-term developmental cooperation in Guatemala may offer expanded opportunities for Israeli commercial interests. In April 1982, Israeli and US officials prepared a proposal to assemble US industrial products in Guatemalan urban centers, and to encourage the planting of non-traditional export-oriented agricultural products—asparagus, raspberries, broccoli, cabbage, watermelon—in the highlands. Israeli agricultural experts would assist in the development of these commercial farming ventures.72 Israel, Guatemala and the US prepared a more detailed plan in late 1983 (during the Mejia-Victores/Reagan administration “honeymoon” and immediately after the November 1983 US-Israeli strategic cooperation agreement). At least two trilateral meetings were held in December 1983 in Guatemala City, attended by army chief-of-staff Lopez Fuentes, Vice-President Rodolfo Lobos Zamoro, a delegate from the military bases’ commanders’ council, US Col. Jean Gorovit, the Israeli ambassador and other Israeli officials. The agreements hammered out at the meetings, unofficially known as the San Marcos Plan, were apparently aimed at completing the pacification of the Indian highlands and constructing the infrastructure for the development of military-industrial facilities.73

Israel agreed to send more experts to train Guatemalan special forces at the Santa Cruz base in El Quiche, as well as to continue training the special forces of the national security police. The Guatemalan government promised to relocate some of the “model villages” in which Indians are presently being held to provide a labor force for industrial development. To date, though, there is little evidence that these schemes have been implemented.

Strains between Washington and Guatemala resurfaced with Mejia Victores’ public denunciation in April 1984 of the US-backed regional military force (CONDECA) and Guatemala’s subsequent refusal to participate in joint maneuvers with the US. Nevertheless, the basic objectives of the US and Guatemala in opposing leftist movements in the area remain as strong as ever.

Guatemala’s new civilian government under President Vinicio Cerezo, despite its good intentions, does not have the autonomy and power to undertake critical domestic reforms or alter key alliances. In particular, because of the various structural ties that have developed between Israel and Guatemala over the last two decades, Israeli involvement in that country is unlikely to diminish as a result of government changes either in Guatemala City or in Jerusalem. Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, during a May 1986 visit to Guatemala, promised to increase technical and agricultural aid.74

Likud strategy, to support the anti-communist political objectives of the United States in order to further cement the US-Israeli relationship and increase Israeli influence over Washington’s policy in the Middle East, seems to have enjoyed remarkable success with the Reagan administration. The New York Times reported in mid-1983 that “American officials, in confirming Israel’s cooperation in Central America, said that it was a factor in the recent improvement of US-Israel relations.”75 Israeli support for Reagan policies in Congress, via the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), has also been appreciated at the Reagan White House.76

Of course, past US support for Israel originates from Washington’s perception that Israeli policy in the Middle East serves US interests there. This remains the core of the US-Israeli strategic relationship. But Israeli cooperation outside the region, especially in Central America, has certainly enhanced that partnership. In particular, it seems to have been a factor in the readiness of the Central Intelligence Agency, under William Casey, to provide reconnaissance satellite data on Arab states to Israel. According to Maj. Gen. Yehoshua Saguy, head of Israeli military intelligence from 1979-1983, the US supplied “not only the information but the photos themselves…. Casey now says ‘yes’ all the time.” According to an American official, because of the value of this CIA support (“Casey’s gift”) “the Israelis would have every reason to do what Casey wanted [in Central America].”77 The backscratching is mutual, as the Reagan administration’s eagerness to play down the recent case of Israeli espionage in US intelligence circles indicates.

Israel’s objective of decreasing its international isolation and winning friends in the global community appears to have been validated in its relationship with Guatemala as well. Israeli diplomat Nathaniel Lorch reports a positive correlation between Israeli assistance and Guatemalan political support.78 Guatemala has provided Israel consistent ideological backing, particularly on important United Nations resolutions. (Although following the 1981 Reunification of Jerusalem Law, Guatemala moved its embassy to Tel Aviv; Israeli officials are hopeful that Guatemala’s return to Jerusalem will be forthcoming.)

More important, Israel’s failure to move towards any political resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli question and the continued state of de facto war in the Middle East only serves to increase the power of the military in Israeli society. This in turn ensures the continuation of policies in the Third World which serve the interests of Israel’s military establishment and military-industrial complex.

See Footnotes, page 43
A lot of activists, while supporting liberation struggles in process become skeptical fault-finders after they are achieved. We can criticize Azerbaijan, surely, but first let's lay a foundation of solidarity and support for the tremendous accomplishments of national and socialist liberation in one important piece of the Middle East/Southwest Asia.

Jerry Silverman
Philadelphia

Zone of Peace Conference

Fremantle is one of the more important US R&R ports of call in the Indian Ocean. Our main aim is to campaign against these visits. Your publication has been very useful in helping us understand the role of the US here and in the region.

From the back page of our newsletter you will see a table of US port calls in the region in 1984. You may find it interesting.

The development of the local and Australian peace movement has been quite dramatic over the past six years, and particularly so here in Fremantle...

We and other groups locally have successfully fought government funds to hold an "Indian Ocean Zone of Peace Peoples Conference" in Fremantle later this year. We will be looking to invite representatives from as many of the Indian Ocean countries as possible—and also from the US, probably also the USSR, New Zealand and the Philippines. We will discuss historical and economic aspects alongside the military and UN declaration.

If you are in contact with likely interested people within the region you can please advise us of their names, addresses and particular interests or have them contact us.

Mark Delmege
Fremantle People for Peace
& Nuclear Disarmament
POB 107, Fremantle WA 6160
Australia

From Rubenich, page 22

1 Statement in a public lecture by Yohanan Ramati, former editor of the Israeli journal The Economist and member of the Foreign Relations Committee during the Likud government (1977-1984), Florida International University, Bay Vista campus, March 6, 1985.

2 Ze'ev Schiff, "The Show in the Hole," Ha-Aretz, April 29, 1985, translated by Israel Shahak.


5 Klieman, pp. 21-25.


8 Granados insisted that a UNSCOP subcommittee visit Nazi concentration camps, and argued forcefully that the "Jewish question" and Zionism were organically linked. Shortly after they arrived in Palestine to begin their investigation, Granados convinced UNSCOP to issue a callout on the British to lift a death sentence imposed on three Jewish terrorists, arguing that "no matter how we viewed such activities, the terrorists were inhabitants of the country playing a definite role in the drama and were entitled to express their views to UNSCOP." Granados held several secret meetings (alone and with Enrique Fabregat of Uruguay) with various members, including an important lengthy encounter with Begin himself. When the UNSCOP subcommittee on boundaries (of which Granados was not originally a member) was unable to reach agreement on a plan, Granados drew a map extending the Jewish state's coastal strip to the Lebanese border, then running it parallel to that border until it joined Eastern Golan. Granados drew the border in the south to include the Nagy, then tied the areas together with special corridors. Granados' own subcommittee assignment was with the group designated to develop the final partition plan, where he was placed after introducing the concept of partition into the UNSCOP deliberations and forcefully defending it over all other possible solutions. Jorge Garcia Granados, The Birth of Israel: The Drama of I. S. Ben David (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), passim. A revealing analysis of the extensiveness of Zionist diplomacy in the pre-state period in Latin America is in Bly Kaufman, Israel's Foreign Policy Implementation in Latin America, in Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson, eds., Israel in the Third World (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1976), pp. 150-146.


13 Black, p. 45.

14 Ibid., pp. 44-45.

15 The Franja's 5,300 square miles, rich in oil and nickel, are owned by an alliance of generals. At the apex are Gen. Romeo Lucas Garcia (president of Guatemala 1978-1982), in partnership with his nephew Raul Garcia Granados (of the Jorge Garcia Granados family). Raul was also a principal in the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF), the umbrella body for Guatemalan business federations, which from 1963 until very recently has given unserving support to military rule and has customarily provided each regime with its minister of economy. See Rene Poiteven, El proceso de industriaclizacion en Guatemala, Costa Rica, EDUCA, 1979, p. 136, cited in NACLAR Report on the Americas (January-February 1985), p. 23. Since 1960 Israel has been involved in the development of this area. CACIF has been accused, together with the Guatemalan Association of Agriculturalists, of organizing the rural death squads. Other major Franja associates include Col. Carlos Amos Osorio (president of Guatemala, 1973-74), General Otto Spiegel Noreiga (Minister of Defense in the Kaif Leonrari Garcia government, 1974-78), and General Hans Laugerud, brother of President Kaif. See NACLAR Report on the Americas (January-February 1983), pp. 11-15, especially the extensive sources noted on p. 15.

16 Black, p. 40.


18 Miami Herald, May 10, 1986. See also CERT-GUA, p. 4.

19 Black, p. 45.
21 The figure of 10,000 numbered civilians under the Rio Mott regime is a commonly accepted statistic: NCLA Report on the New York Times, 1980, p. 11, estimated that from 1981-1984 between 36,000 and 72,000 Guatemalans had died. And that was only the adults; murdered children remain uncounted.
22 Peckham, “Bullets and Beams.” See also Peckham, “Campos de reeducacion para los indigenas,” Uno Mas Uno (Mexico City), February 12, 1984.
23 Frank and Westnug, pp. 84-88. See also the Guatemalan Information and Analysis Service, “A Troubled Democracy,” (Managua, July 5, 1984.) (Hereafter SIAG.)
26 El Dia (Mexico City), August 12, 1977.
28 Kliean (p. 6) argues that Israel is not the principal military supplier to any single country. The overwhelming evidence on Guatemala suggests that Kliean is incorrect: Israel is indeed Guatemala’s principal arms supplier and has been since 1977. See “Israel’s Part in Central America (II),” Central America Report, December 14, 1984, p. 386; “Israel’s Arms.”
29 Latin American Regional Reports: Mexico and Central America, January 13, 1984, p. 8; “Guatemala: Weapons Supplier,” Foreign Broadcast Information Service, January 21, 1984, p. 15; Houston Chronicle, January 17, 1984; Israel is not the only country advising the Guatemalan army, so it is not always possible to be sure of the source of advising regarding a specific policy. However, the prominence of Israeli advisors in Guatemala, the praise that government leaders have heaped on the Israelis, and the parallels with Israeli occupation policies lends credence to the argument. See for example Alexander Cockburn, “Sharing Responsibility for Guatemalan Horrors,” Wall Street Journal, September 24, 1983. Argentina, Taiwan, South Korea and South Africa as well as the US have also played important roles in Guatemala.
32 An incident was reported by Yossi Karni in Yedioth Aharonot, November 3, 1984.
34 Central America Report, December 13, 1977; Uno Mas Uno, December 4 and 9, 1977.
35 CERI-GUA, passim; ORPH Denuncia, passim. Cynthia Armstrong, “Israel and Central America,” New Outlook, March 1984, p. 20, provides information on some of the military matériel Guatemala received. See also Israel Shahak, Israel’s Global Role: Weapons for Repression (Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1982). A variety of other sources, as well as my own field research, have confirmed Guatemala’s receipt of such equipment and personnel.
36 Black, et al., pp. 154-5.
37 Yosef Privil, Darom, August 13, 1982.
40 ORPH Denuncia, p. 3.
42 CERI-GUA, p. 5; Jane Hunter in Israeli Foreign Affairs (GA); Black, p. 44.
43 “Modern escuela de transmisiones y electronica del ejercito inaparato,” Diario de Centro America (Guatemala City), November 5, 1981. Armoson (“Israel and Central America,” p. 20) confirms the Israeli role in designing, staffing and funding the school.
46 The figure is cited in a variety of sources. See CERI-GUA, and Excorce (Mexico City), October 11, 1983.
49 WP, August 17, 1983.
52 According to one report, Israeli social psychologists discovered the great interest of Guatemalan Indians for the ancient Maya Quiche gods, including Ixchel, the God of Gods and of War. Naming the elite troops Kaibiles was intended to invoke fear and respect. SIAG, Los Kaibiles (special report), January 1983.
53 Frank and Westnug, p. 70.
56 Cynthia Armstrong, “Israel and Central America,” New Outlook (March 1984), p. 49. While Israeli arms sales to Nicaragua did not attract international attention in the 1990s, there was criticism of the sales within Israel. The general editor of the Israeli Foreign Ministry wrote to Shimon Peres, the person who orchestrated the Nicaraguan deal: “We really put our foot in it with the Nicaraguan arms deal. All the countries of Latin America shun [Nicaragua] because of its foreign policy and domestic regime. We failed to consult the Foreign Ministry before going through with this deal. You know as well as I do that we are very dependent on the Latin American bloc in the United Nations, which includes twenty countries. We cannot disregard their feelings. Therefore, I am asking you immediately to order that any new deal with Nicaragua be canceled and that shipments which have not yet gone out be held up.” (Walter Byatt, Director General of the Foreign Ministry to Shimon Peres, July 5, 1987, quoted in Gelb, op. cit., p. 81.)
57 Newsweek, November 29, 1978, p. 68.
58 Miami Herald, November 18, 1978. The same official said that applying pressure on Israel to stop the shipments remained an option for the US that might be used in the future. The official also commented that although there is no legal means of stopping Israel from shipping Israeli-manufactured weapons, “the United States has sufficient influence with Israel to stop the shipments if it chooses.” In fact the US did pressure Israel to stop arming Somua, but it only was two weeks before he was topped in July 1979.
59 Edelman, p. 37. Juan Tamayo reported in the Miami Herald (March 5, 1983) that the FLO trained “at least 156 Sandinistas in Lebanon during the 1960s and 1970s.” Tamayo’s source was a former Israeli intelligence agent who used to live in Nicaragua. This figure seems unlikely, since the FSLN was quite a small organization during this period. Edelman doubts that there were even 50 Sandinistas in the late 1960s.
60 New Jewish Agenda, Report of the Jewish Human Rights Delegation to Nicaragua (New York: New Jewish Agenda, 1993). For exaggerated reports of the FLO’s relationship see Chronicle Houston, July 11, 1985; David J.

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