



Maryknoll World Productions

Discussion and Study Guide

School of Assassins

Introduction

The purpose of the 18-minute video is to throw light on an institution (the U.S. Army School of the Americas) that trains Latin American military officers. Few, if any, Americans have heard of this school on U.S. shores or are aware of the mayhem its graduates cause in their home countries.

The video contrasts the avowed purposes of the School of the Americas (SOA) as described in its mission statement with the activities of a number of its graduates.

Many graduates have destabilized democratic institutions. Others have overthrown governments, such as the dictators:

• **Manuel Noriega** of Panama, **Hugo Banzer** of Bolivia, **Leopoldo Galtieri** and **Roberto Viola** of Argentina, **Juan Melgar Castro** and **Policarpo Paz Garcia** of Honduras, **Juan Velasco Alvarado** of Peru.

Graduates include:

• **Colonel Roberto d'Aubisson** of El Salvador and three officers responsible for the 1980 brutal assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero while celebrating mass in El Salvador.

• Three officers responsible for the rape and murder of four U.S. Churchwomen in El Salvador in 1980. Ten officers of the U.S. trained Atlacatl Battalion responsible for the murders of 1,000 non-combatants of El Mozote, El Salvador.

Also featured in the video are SOA graduates of Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Argentina, all violators of human rights in their countries. Some like **General Leopoldo Galtieri** of Argentina and **General Hector Gramajo** of Guatemala have authorized a policy of massacre of tens of thousands of their own citizens.

School of Assassins (SOA) is an advocacy documentary that invites viewers to write to members of Congress urging them to cut off funding for the SOA, effectively closing it down.

Questions before viewing

1. Ask the viewers what they know about the history of United States' relations with in Latin America, especially in the last 30 years. What is the Monroe Doctrine?
2. Ask the viewers if they recall instances of U.S. military "invasions" in Latin America, specifically, Grenada, Panama, Dominican Republic, Haiti. What do they remember?
3. Discuss what is meant by "human rights". What is a violation of "human rights"? It might be helpful to acquire a copy of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.
4. What can be done when a government violates the rights of its own citizens? What role does the United States have in promoting human rights throughout the world?
5. What is the role of the military in a democratic society? What is the relationship of the military to a civilian government in a democratic society?

After viewing the video

1. Ask the viewers what is the purpose of the SOA, according to the Pentagon? How do Representative Joseph Kennedy and Father Roy Bourgeois see the purpose of the school?
2. What are your views on the use of tax money for the training of foreign military? What responsibility do U.S. citizens have regarding the SOA?
3. What do you think of Representative Kennedy's statement: "We do not want to be associated with the kinds of individuals that are torturing, killing and maiming innocent people throughout Latin America." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. Archbishop Oscar Romero said: "We who have a voice must speak for the voiceless". As a people based in human values or religious faith, what are the ways we can respond?

Bibliography

Guatemala, Tom Barry, Resource Center, Box 4506, Albuquerque, NM 87196. Also from the same address **Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama and Nicaragua**.

Central America Inside Out, Tom Barry, Resource Center

Refugees Of A Hidden War, Beatriz Manz, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988

Bitter Fruit, Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer Doubleday, 1982. A well-documented account of the CIA's overthrow of the Guatemalan government in 1954.

Massacres In The Jungle, Ricardo Falla, SJ. Westview Press, 1994. A Guatemalan anthropologist documents massacres in the Ixcán jungle from eye witnesses; includes lists of victims; also in Spanish from Editorial Universitaria, Guatemala.

The Massacre At El Mozote, Mark Danner. Vintage books. An incredible account of savagery; the reporting of correspondents from the NY Times and the Washington Post and the U.S. government cover up.

Promised Land, Scott Wright. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 10545

Stubborn Hope, Philip Berryman. Orbis Books.

War Against The Poor, Nelson-Pallmeyer, Orbis Books.

I, Rigoberta, Rigoberta Menchú, Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 29 W. 35th St. New York, 10001 TEL. 212/244-3336.

Banana Diplomacy, Roy Gutman, Simon and Schuster. On Nicaragua.

Paying the Price, Teresa Whitfield, Temple University Press, the killing of the 6 Jesuits, their cook and her daughter in El Salvador.

Videos

School Of Americas: At War With Democracy? Produced by the Center Of Defense Information, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. N.W. Washington, DC 20005. TEL 202/862-0700. 28 Min. \$25.00. The CDI is an excellent source of videos and printed information on the military.

Roses In December, Moving documentary on the four U.S. Churchwomen murdered in El Salvador, especially the life of lay missionary, Jean Donovan. Palisades Home Video, PO Box 2794, Virginia Beach, VA 23450 TEL. 800/989-8576. \$29.95

Choices of the Heart, A 1983 NBC-TV docu-drama on the killing of the four Churchwomen; features lay missionary, Jean Donovan. Mr. Raymond Katz, RK Enterprises, 9255 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 90069. TEL 213/273-4211.

Question Of Conscience, By Ilan Ziv, the killing of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter. Palisades Home Video. 43 Min. \$29.95

Witness To War, U.S. Doctor Charlie Clements, witness behind the lines in El Salvador. First Run Features, 153 Waverly Pl. NY 10014. TEL. 800/876-1710.

Under The Gun, Army rule in Guatemala. From First Run.

Fire In The Andes, The Peruvian army and the Shining Path movement in the highlands. From First Run

Romero, A feature film on the life and death of the archbishop. Staring Raul Julia. From video rental outlets; also Palisades Home Video, 105 min. \$34.95

Panama Deception, An academy award-winning documentary on dictator Manuel Noriega, the CIA and the U.S. invasion of Panama. Empowerment Project, 3403 Highway 54 West, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. (919)967-1963.

When The Mountains Tremble, The Guatemalan army and the war against its own people. Narrated by Nobel Peace prize winner, Rigoberta Menchú. Skylight Pictures Productions, 330 W. 42 St., New York, NY 10036

We Are Guatemalans, Refugees narrate their experiences of massacre during the army's scorched earth policy of the early 1980's. Maryknoll World Productions, Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545 TEL. 800-227-8523. \$14.95 + 3.00 P&H

Transcript of ***School Of Assassins*** is available for \$5.00.

Send check to:
Maryknoll World Productions
SOA Transcript,
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For further information please consult:
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