

piking along the county road, and a man in a vehicle stops to give her a ride, just as one did in the opening pages of *Light in August*.

"Before I could even reach out and swing open that heavy door for her she was inside the cab, talking," the man says—and that "even" is practically Faulkner's trademark. And what does Alabama say as she climbs into the Vermont logging truck? "I don't believe it. Now that I am here I still don't believe it. It's like a color postcard, I reckon, like my brother used to send us." I reckon that's Lena-talk.

But at the end of the story something happens that is symbolic in more senses than one. The brother offers the young Vermont logger a job with the show. If he took it, he would go south, and the clear implication is that he would be Alabama's man. He declines, and stays in Kingdom County. This has significance in the story, and also significance outside the story. I think it signifies Mosher's struggle to pull free from the powerful influence of Faulkner.

In the novella, if not in the stories, that struggle is successful. "Where the Rivers Flow North" is a fine strong piece of work. In a way it oughtn't to be. It is so crammed with meaning that it ought to fall of its own weight. But it doesn't. It soars in a true mythic flight.

The characters are an old Vermont logger (6' 4", with a cant hook instead of one hand) named Noël Lord, an old Indian woman named Bangor, an old hound named Red, and an old logging horse named Farting General. These four live together on the upper reaches of a wild river about to be dammed by a power company. They are surrounded by roughly nine-tenths of all the symbols ever accumulated by the American wilderness myth. On Noël's own land is the last stand of virgin pine in the state of Vermont. (Near the end of the story he cuts it, though his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had all protected it.) Hovering just north is the last panther in Kingdom County. (There is an epic panther hunt, and two epic human fights for good measure.) There is even a great boulder, known to Noël and Bangor for reasons the book makes valid, as "Jesus Saves."

All of this ought to be too much. It isn't. Partly because Bangor is an original and marvelously realized character all of the time, and Noël is most of the time. But mostly because when

Mosher turns his back on Faulkner and gives himself space enough, he is a very effective myth-maker.

Going to the novella from the stories, I had my lip already curled, ready to be patronizing. I stayed to read it in one enthralled swoop. □

HIDDEN TERRORS, by A. J. Langguth. Pantheon, 352 pp., \$10.00.

Our boy in Brazil

ROSE STYRON

"THE RIGHT PAIN IN THE right place at the right time." This was the motto of Dan Mitrione, whose kidnapping-assassination by Tupamaros in Montevideo brought him instant fame in 1970 and caused him to be the subject of two important documentaries of our time: Costa-Gavras's film, *State of Siege*, and A.J. Langguth's new book, *Hidden Terrors*.

The pain was direct and lasting—Torture with a capital T. Mitrione, as head of USAID's public safety program in Brazil and then in Uruguay, was responsible through the 1960s for instructing a network of Southern Cone security police in the most effective techniques of crowd control and prisoner interrogation. Applied to political detainees (primarily young leftists) manually or through the use of chemicals, sophisticated psychology, or U.S.-manufactured instruments, the interrogation techniques were designed specifically to humiliate and dehumanize, to create despair, above all to act as a warning (a hidden terror) for any citizen conceivably sympathetic to the victim.

They were also, of course, designed to elicit information. A Connecticut-educated Cuban double agent named Manuel Hevia told the *New York Times* (Aug. 4, 1978) he had watched Mitrione torture four beggars to death

with electric shock as part of a demonstration. Mitrione cautioned his pupils to take care, however: brief intense pain was the best kind; premature death would mean the technique had failed, since dead prisoners cannot inform. Is this tale true? According to a Uruguayan officer trained under him, Mitrione would leave the room before torture commenced. Other testimony, in the form of stories traded by surviving prisoners, placed him as a witness or participant during the ordeals. Neither Costa-Gavras, who cast slim continental Yves Montand as his protagonist, nor Langguth, who described Mitrione as a corpulent, cigar-puffing midwesterner, included any scene that tied Mitrione directly to murder. This is merely a technicality, but the detective in us remains unsatisfied.

The seasoned journalist whose book we are grateful to consider here could not have chosen his protagonist because of any striking personality or individual achievement, or even notoriety. Dan Mitrione was a faceless patriot working for money. He apparently never suffered the moral or intellectual conflicts of company man Philip Agee, a minor character in the book.

Mitrione's attraction for artist and reader is rather as a symbol of America during two decades of its government's muddled war on Communism, a war that encouraged right-wing authoritarianism and contributed to the undermining of democracy and human rights in one nation after another to the south. Langguth compares police advisers to foot soldiers in Latin America; the CIA were the officer corps, the ambassadors and station chiefs the field commanders carrying out policy from Washington. Mitrione, we conclude, was a smarter, subtler, *political* William Calley.

Hidden Terrors is in some ways a historical novel. Its characters are many and vividly drawn, its narrative full of suspense. The detailed revelations of international complicity are gripping, depressing. The first chapter (disjointed and a bit tedious) opens in Dan Mitrione's home town of Richmond, Indiana, with his body lying in state in a closed coffin surmounted by a huge wreath of red, white, and blue flowers sent by President and Mrs. Nixon. It backtracks to the first news of the kidnapping. Tupamaros had seized Mitrione and the Brazilian vice-consul on their way to work in Montevideo. It was announced that their release was

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contingent on the release by the Uruguayan government of 150 political prisoners. The family waits to see if President Pacheco will bargain (he states he will never negotiate with criminals) or if President Nixon will apply pressure.

Meanwhile, Langguth sketches Mitrione's youth for us: Italian immigrant parents, Catholic elementary school, public high school (his yearbook label: "Our tall, dark and handsome football hero"), a job with International Harvester, the navy, marriage, years as a local cop and ambitious police chief and family man (nine children), FBI school, and then a quietly placed application for the new foreign aid program.

Radio reports filter in of Dan's being shot, but with no damage to vital organs—and of a new negotiation deadline. The newspapers publish a letter from Mitrione to his wife, asking her to ask the American ambassador to please liberate him. But the deadline passes, and on August 10 a phone call to Richmond confirms that Dan's body has been found. Later in the book, Langguth states that Dan Mitrione was "the first sacrifice" to the show of strength of the President whose patriotic wreath Dan's coffin bore.

WITH CHAPTER TWO the drama gains focus. Langguth interweaves Mitrione's movements with events in early Alliance for Progress days and with the actions of its prime movers. Mitrione had left Richmond in 1960 for training in Eisenhower's Washington and assignment in Brazil, where Quadros was vying with Goulart for U.S. approval. Latin America, beyond Cuba, still did not engage the interest of our public or press or top political scientists. Kissinger downgraded it. Harvard Professor McGeorge Bundy was heard to remark, "Second-rate subjects attract second-rate minds." Six months later Bundy was JFK's foreign policy adviser. Fear of Castro's influence spread through the new administration.

Byron Engle, a decade after his World War II service and a stint with the CIA, had been asked to use his experience in organizing Japanese and Turkish police to put together a task force for training police in Asia, Africa, and particularly Latin America. Now he was busy managing clandestine schools for subversion and survival,

featuring "anti-interrogation" courses that in reality prepared the students to interrogate. Its students were foreign military and police officers—some Vietnamese, many Brazilians, Chileans, and others. Its soil was American. The International Police Academy in Washington, D.C. was its home base, but the army, navy, and special forces—the Green Berets—helped out in Texas, Maine, California, Kansas, and the Panama Canal Zone. Fort Bragg, for example, taught propaganda and psychological warfare. Ten or fifteen years later, natives and refugees and U.S. citizens trapped in the detention cells of Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina listened to their savage captors boast that they had been trained in the United States.

In Brazil, the police officers that our "foot soldiers" had recruited and equipped acted with fresh confidence. They formed a death squad. They organized an intelligence network called OBAN. Massachusetts's Lincoln Gordon went to Rio as ambassador. He despised Goulart for his crudeness, labeled him erratic and too easily influenced by the left. The CIA spent \$20 million in the elections of 1962. By 1964 a coup had toppled Goulart and certain people in Washington hastened to take credit. In the police state that ensued, the first notorious torturers emerged. Langguth gives us a "human" glimpse of three or four—the widely feared Sergio Fleury, for example, sometimes cried at movies. Another, Alfredo Poech, trained at Fort Bragg, claimed that 85 percent of the guerrillas were psychotics, most of them the children of separated parents.

By Chapter Five, the prime movers and pain-inflictors are being upstaged by young articulate survivors of that pain—idealists, disillusioned students, philosophic rebels named Jean Marc, Fernando, Angela, Marcos, Flavio, Marlene. Jean Marc Von der Weid was a conservative, bookish student from a prominent family. He was radicalized when police clubbed him during a demonstration in which the slogans read "Americans Out of Vietnam" and "Dictatorship Out of the University." Next, a 17-year-old friend was shot to death at another demonstration, and Jean Marc kept public vigil. He became an activist in social causes; in time, with political crises, he was deemed a threat to the authorities, and suffered detention with severe bouts of unspeakable torture. At one

point we see him "trussed like a chicken," blindfolded, hung upside-down, listening to English-speaking voices.

Geology student Marcos Arruda was picked up on a date with Marlene Soccas, who was falsely suspected of something or other. He was so physically devastated by torture that when he was brought to see Marlene in her cell, the guards jeeringly referred to him as "Frankenstein." Following an Amnesty International campaign on his behalf, Marcos was released to Switzerland and obtained a visa to the United States. Although he worked hard here, he was repeatedly threatened with deportation by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. *Ultima Hora* journalist Flavio Tavares was arrested by the death squad, given shock by a gray generator with the red-white-and-blue shield of USAID on it, and examined by an army doctor to determine how much more pain he could stand and still live. The doctor's appearance raised and then dashed his hopes irretrievably. Brave Angela Camargo Seixas, who opted for stoic silence, was given the worst treatment, including wires in her vagina to induce shock.

THAT WAS BRAZIL. Mitrione left it and returned to Washington as an instructor at the International Police Academy. In the late 1960s, he moved on to Uruguay, where he confronted another cast of characters, among them the up-and-coming young (CIA-payrolled) police commissioner, Alejandro Otero. In Montevideo Mitrione tightened the routine, increased shipments of U.S. equipment and instruments for crowd control, sought more recruits for training back home (including bomb-building at Los Fresnos), and helped the CIA put Brazil's death squad in touch with Argentine, Uruguayan, and Chilean police. He was very good at his job and aroused much hatred; in the end he was killed for his efficiency.

And pain was coming full circle. Otero's girlfriend, who may have been sympathetic to the Tupamaros, was picked up by the police and brutally tortured. Released, she told Otero that Mitrione had watched and assisted in her torture. But when Otero complained to Mitrione he was "put on ice," since Mitrione knew he himself had the full support of both governments. Otero told reporters, and a process of exposure began which, five years later, shut down the IPA. The

training of foreign police officers—including those in Latin America—has continued, however, under the auspices of the Drug Enforcement Administration's International Narcotics Control program.

Thus, the damage goes on. Although military aid to some of the worst human rights defenders has stopped, it continues in many cases, and the cessation of aid to Argentina and Brazil—if indeed it has completely ceased—appears to be as much their doing as ours. Our Latin American agents and legates are still active, and not only in Latin America. When Chilean ex-ambassador Orlando Letelier was blown up in his car in Washington, an American girl, Ronni Moffitt, died with him. A three-year investigation pursued jointly by Chilean and American friends, and at last, by the Department of Justice, has placed the blame on Cuban exiles living in Miami. Hired by the DINA, the Chilean secret police, to carry out its plans, these agents were trained long ago by a CIA hoping to destroy Castro.

Attention must be paid, then, even to the testimony of double agents such as Manuel Hevia. The echoes from Uruguay, Chile, and Brazil must still be listened for. The fresh cries of pain from Argentina, Nicaragua, and Paraguay must be heeded. And books such as *Hidden Terrors* must be read carefully and considered in the light of the American people's responsibility to humanity. □

ACTING OUT: Coping with Big City Schools, by Roland W. Betts. Little, Brown, 253 pp., \$8.95.

Rotten kids

DIANE DIVOKY

A LOT OF BOOKS HAVE been written over the years about the New York City schools, ranging from the sensational and sentimental (*Blackboard Jungle*, *Up the Down Staircase*) to the political (110

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Livingston Street, Confrontation at Ocean Hill-Brownsville). A number of them have a lasting place in the literature of education; *Our Children Are Dying*, *36 Children*, and *Being with Children* come to mind. But given the number of writers who live cheek by jowl with the phenomenon that that school system is, the wonder is that there haven't been more.

The reason may have something to do with the subject's capacity to overwhelm those who would capture it in print—as it overwhelms those who would run it or change it. First of all, it is vast, with more than a million children and close to 100,000 adults housed in 1200 facilities. More important, all those people are members of a self-contained and bizarre society with its own arcane rites and cultural cues—one that, unlike other large school systems, as Roland Betts notes, "names its buildings after famous numbers."

Those who have been successful in the past in conveying some sense of this intractable world have focused on one or another microcosm to exemplify the whole: a particular classroom or school, a specific confrontation between school and community, or the top-level bureaucracy. In *Acting Out*, Betts tries a different technique—piling example on example, anecdote on anecdote—to explain the dynamics of the city schools. The catalogue is an old literary device, and it works nicely for him, providing a feel for the richness and absurdity of life in the schools while allowing the author to draw from his mass of material certain conclusions that follow organically.

For 10 years Betts worked in the schools about which he writes, as a teacher, a trainer of teachers, and an administrator. That's a very long time, particularly for someone with good antennae. One of two things usually happens early on to the aware or idealistic in that environment: they rapidly succumb to the system, becoming just like the callous, numb, or crazy veterans around them, or they get out. To stay in for any amount of time and to continue to see the children not as enemies but as persons, and the schools not as a chaotic battleground but as a potential context for learning—even to stay humane, neither crazy nor denatured—is a significant accomplishment. Betts seems to have managed it by becoming a scrupulous collector and cataloguer of people, events, and moments he knew

in the schools. Out of these sketches and vignettes—recorded with wonder and good humor—he has created his book, a kind of informal and entertaining, superior textbook of the sociology of the New York City schools.

He knows his stuff. There's the heated fascination the youngsters feel for "No Drawers," the substitute without underpants; the rhythmic showiness of a word game of insults called the "dozens"; the arrogant "contract strut" of teachers who know they are beyond being called to account; the halls as stalking grounds and measured turf; the myriad of ways people learn to protect themselves from each other in that world, whether it's biting off one joint of an opponent's index finger, playing dumb (literally), or jumping from a second story window when cornered by an enraged teacher.

What is most troubling from Betts's account, however, is not the hostility that permeates the environment, always ready to erupt into raw violence, but the uses to which the energy and abilities of the students are turned by the system. Betts makes it clear that, contrary to achievement test scores and the complaints of the teachers union, the children of the city display enormous intelligence and vitality in their dealings with the schools. They perceive the system as so alien, so bankrupt, and so threatening that a good part of their smarts and psychic strength go into subverting it, making a mockery of it in ways that testify to human creativity. The tragedy of the New York public schools, Betts seems to say, is not that they dampen the talents of the young, but that they've forced them to such nihilistic ends.

THE SINGLE MOST powerful person in each building, "the lord of the manor," Betts knows, is not the principal, but the head custodian, who can bring mere administrators to their knees. The single most important piece of paper is not the diploma or the test scores but the UFT contract, the gift of Albert Shanker to his minions. The staff members with the authentic skills are not the school psychiatrists or top-level administrators but the school secretaries, who, as "public relations anti-agents," can work hold buttons on a telephone with amazing dexterity, revert to "selective deafness," feign perfect ignorance, and—when pressed to it—insult with a viciousness un-