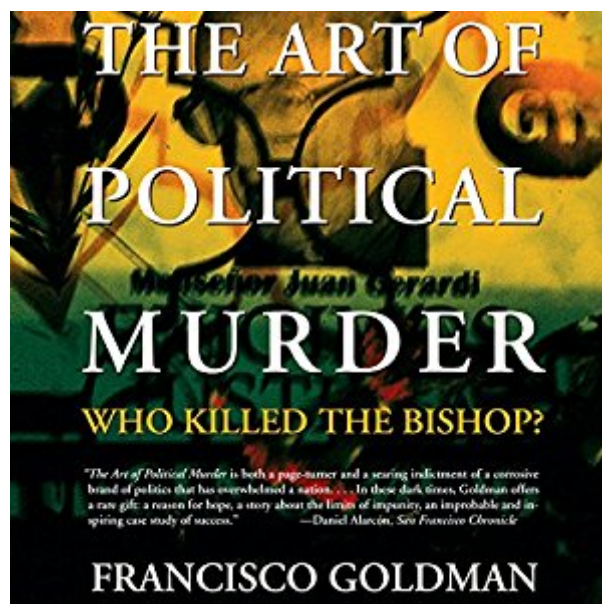


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The Art Of Political Murder: Who Killed The Bishop?



Synopsis

Bishop Juan Gerardi, Guatemala's leading human rights activist, was bludgeoned to death in his garage on a Sunday night in 1998, two days after the presentation of a groundbreaking church-sponsored report implicating the military in the murders and disappearances of some 200,000 civilians. Realizing that it could not rely on police investigators or the legal system to solve the murder, the church formed its own investigative team, a group of secular young men in their 20s who called themselves Los Intocables (the Untouchables). Known in Guatemala as "The Crime of the Century", the Bishop Gerardi murder case, with its unexpectedly outlandish scenarios and sensational developments, confounded observers and generated extraordinary controversy. In his first nonfiction book, acclaimed novelist Francisco Goldman has spoken to witnesses no other reporter has reached, and observed firsthand some of the most crucial developments in the case. Now he has produced *The Art of Political Murder*, a tense and astonishing true detective story that opens a window on the new Latin American reality of mara youth gangs and organized crime, and tells the story of a remarkable group of engaging, courageous young people, and of their remarkable fight for justice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Francisco Goldman has written a brilliant non-fiction account of the 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi and the ensuing investigation and trial of the persons responsible for the crime: a conservative closeted homosexual priest who was sharing the parish house with the bishop, and

several military officers with the Presidential Military Staff (Estado Mayor Presidencial--EMP) who are also linked to organized crime. At the heart of Goldman's story is the account of how a group of human rights investigators, lawyers, prosecutors and judges, a small circle of whom jokingly referred to themselves as Los Intocables--The Untouchables-- pursued justice despite the onslaught of violence, threats, slander and condemnation hurled at them from virtually every direction: the military, politicians, defense lawyers, the press, even respected Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa. One lost his brother to an unspeakably vicious death. Several had their homes bombed, or were forced into exile when military thugs followed their children to school to let them know how easy it would be to kill them. All endured countless death threats that they never disclosed to Goldman personally, out of an intrinsic sense of honor (he learned of the threats from other investigators, or by reading documents related to the case). But these people were true believers that justice had to be done, despite the cynicism of most of their countrymen.

The reviews here seem to fall into 3 camps: the "it's a perfect masterpiece" camp, the "he was duped by ODHA - 'who killed the bishop' got it right" camp, and the "he is a leftist fool" camp. I belong to none of these, so let me throw my two cents in here....I spent a brief time in Guatemala doing human rights work in the mid 80's (a shout out to any PBI alums in the house :)), and so was interested in the subject matter, and had at least a glancing acquaintance with the horrid murderous travesty that was the Guatemalan government, as well as the impenetrable fog of denials, mis-statements, forgeries, violence, hidden agendas, disappearances and murk that hid virtually any attempt to get at any truth. I found the first half of the book (which focuses on the "who-done-it") outstanding. Here Goldman relates the story of the investigation - the false leads, the disappearing witnesses, the hopelessly (and deliberately) contaminated crime scene, the (deliberately) conflicting evidence, the overlapping areas (and agendas) of the investigators, etc. That the investigators were able to finally pierce it (not completely, but most crimes never are) is just amazing, especially given the very real threat to themselves and their families. I think the other reviewers who criticize this book for not analyzing the case for/against Monsenor Mario, or for not analyzing the case made by 'who killed the bishop' are being unfair - Goldman spends a lot of time on each of these, especially the latter, to the point that you could almost criticize the book for over-focusing on it.

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