Should you decentralize?

We survey

data entry, word processing, OCR

Computer Decisions
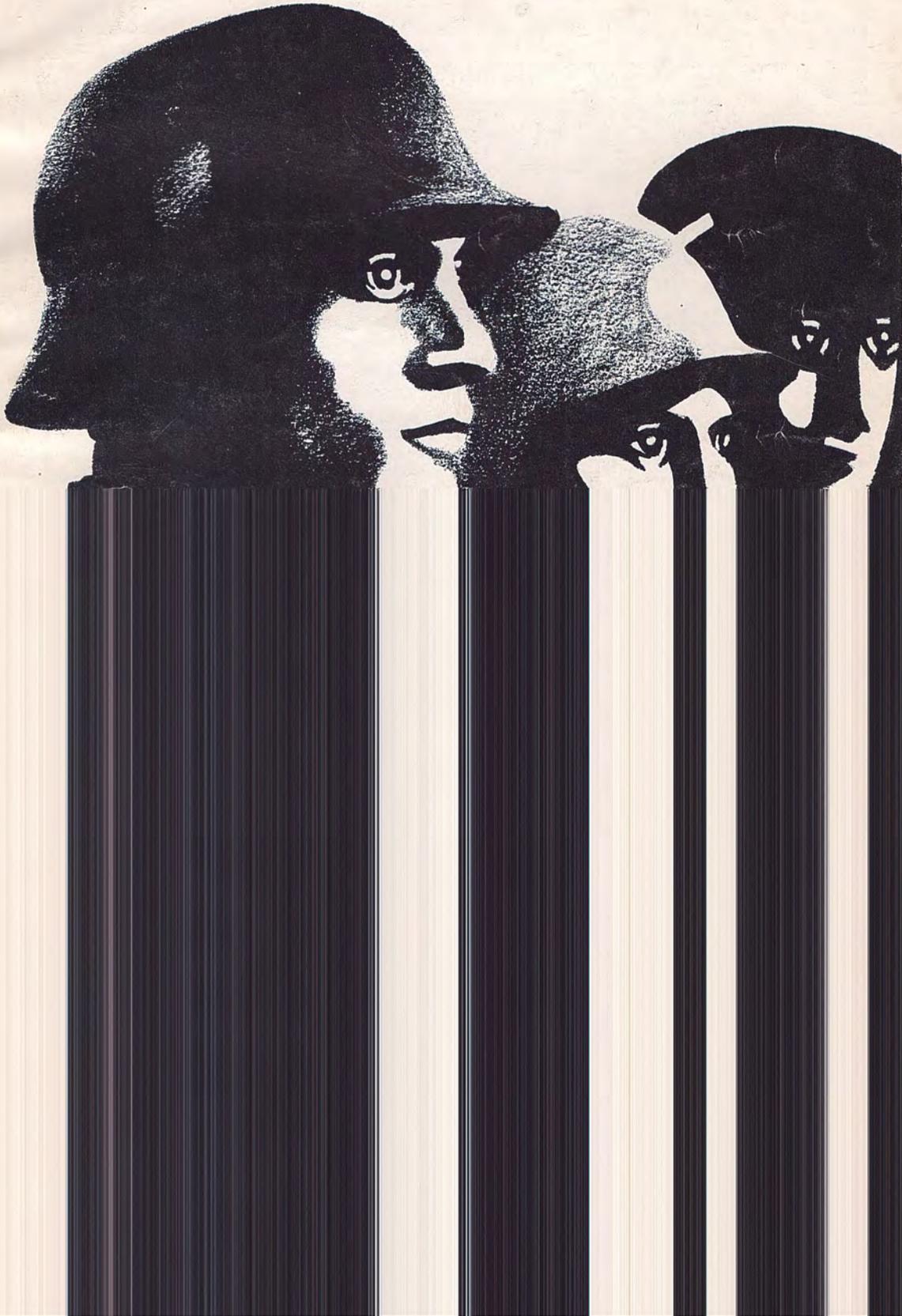
Would you sell a computer to Hitler?

Latin American dictatorships are using computers as tools of repression. It appears that American equipment makes it possible to automate "the final solution."

Would you sell a computer to Hitler?

You remember Hitler. He maimed, tortured and killed millions of people. They were, as far as he was concerned, enemies of the state. That, he felt, was enough.

Some people escaped. But imagine if Hitler had had a computer to keep track of his victims and intended victims. Log in. Type GIVE ME THE NAMES OF 20 JEWS AND 30 CATHOLICS IN BERLIN. And. . .but why go on? Hitler died a long time ago. These

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things don't happen any more. Or do they?

There are countries on this earth with governments so cruel that you can't find words to condemn their actions. And these governments carry out their missions, it seems, with the aid of computers. American computers.

In Chile, Uruguay, Argentina or Brazil an agent of the secret police can come to your door and ask you detailed questions about one of your friends—or even about someone you hardly know. If you do not answer satisfactorily, you may be threatened or taken away.

If you are taken away by the secret police, you may be tortured. According to a United Nations report, you could be hung upside down in a vat of urine or forced to eat vomit until your memory improves. If it doesn't, what follows will make you wish you

had drowned in the tank in which you were hanging. You may be told that your loved ones will be treated even more harshly, although you probably can't imagine what more harshly means.

Like all modern police forces, secret police agencies have the latest in crime information systems, as sophisticated as their governments can afford. For example, according to a knowledgeable refugee, the Chilean government's computer systems store complete information about "the opposition, those considered leftists or suspects. The computer has all the facts." In South America, such systems are running on American computers—the United States is the technological supplier of choice in this hemisphere.

The American computer manufacturers that supply Latin American governments with computers say

they are not aware that their machines are used by the secret police. But they do concede that it is not possible for them to control how their machines are used by their customers. Most vendors say that they can not take responsibility for the ultimate use to which their products are put.

"We are in a position similar to a car manufacturer," says IBM's director of information, Dan Burnham. "If General Motors sells you a car, and you use it to kill someone, that doesn't make General Motors responsible.

"Once the manufacturer sells the automobile, there's no guarantee it won't be used to commit a crime."

Control Data Corp.'s vice president Roger G. Wheeler, speaking for that company, concedes the responsibility of a manufacturer, especially a manufacturer of computers of awesome

capacity. CDC, alone among American mainframe vendors, has a corporate policy governing the sale of its machines.

"Our own sense of responsibility," says Wheeler, "would not permit us to provide a computer system for any purpose that abridges human rights and dignity."

Asked whether IBM has a similar policy, Dan Udell, an IBM public relations officer, said that "IBM's official policy is to act in accordance with U.S. national policy in dealing with all countries."

IBM has substantial interests in Latin America. In Brazil, for example, IBM's factory in Sao Paulo makes System 370s. In Argentina, IBM builds high-speed line printers. In Uruguay, IBM has an enormous service bureau and data cen-

ter. In Chile, IBM has no plants but does have a data center in Santiago.

It is in Santiago that the DINA, Chile's secret police, is headquartered. In the old offices of the Pan American Bank, an eight-story building, the DINA directors oversee their work. Sources say that there are computers in this building, computers of American manufacture, which may well be linked to other DINA offices and police organizations by Chile's sophisticated telecommunications complex.

Communications links in Chile include a modern ITT telephone system said to be as good as any in the United States, an extensive microwave network for long distance communications, satellite links and government radio channels.

These facilities enable the DINA to keep in touch with its more special-

ized offices.

On José Arietta street, on the outskirts of the Chilean capital, is a building officially known as Villa Grimaldi, commonly called the Palace of Laughter. It is here that victims of the secret police may be taken for torture. Ultimately, victims are sent to concentration camps or prisons, of which there are many in Chile. Villa Grimaldi, according to United Nations sources, has extensive communications equipment.

The use of computers by the secret police in Chile was first brought to public attention by the National Council of Churches. Reports received by the council indicated that an American computer was destined to become a tool of the DINA.

NCC representatives went to an IBM shareholders' meeting on April 28, 1975, with the hope that they could halt IBM's planned installation of a 370/145 at the University of Chile in Santiago. They claimed that

the system would be used by the police agencies of that country, not the university.

"The Chileans did purchase a 145," IBM's Burnham explains, "and they told us they weren't doing it for intelligence purposes." IBM decided to trust the Chileans.

"If I was the Chilean military junta, I wouldn't put my computer in the University of Chile," reasons Burnham. However, he says, he does "understand the generals have taken

The United Nations findings

In the movie *Casablanca*, Rick (Humphrey Bogart) is standing over a corpse with a smoking gun in his hand. The French police inspector calls into headquarters.

"Major Strassler has been shot," he says. "Round up the usual suspects."

That scene is a daily occurrence in countries like Chile.

On October 8, 1976, the United Nations published a report developed by its Economic and Social Council entitled "Protection of Human Rights in Chile." The report details some activities of the DINA, Chile's secret police. Here are excerpts from that report:

The DINA is the organization which allegedly has assumed responsibility for selective repression. Its functions, according to the preambular provisions of decree-law No. 521, which established it, consist in giving the government of Chile "immediate and permanent assistance. . .to provide it with the systematic and duly processed information it may need to do justice to its decisions in the field of national security and development."

Villa Grimaldi, or "the palace of laughter," as this center is known to many persons, houses most of the DINA's organization and a communications center. The communications center includes antennae and equipment for high frequency communication, which makes it possible to communicate with people throughout the world, as well as VHF antennae and equipment, which makes possible rapid communication between the center and the President of the Republic, and with vehicles and operating groups in action. It is the DINA's largest torture center and at times has allegedly held between 120 and 150 political prisoners.

The outstanding features of the detention area of Villa Grimaldi are the following: a prisoners' area, a workroom, accommodation for staff, a *parrilla* area, guardhouses and bathrooms, tiny cubicles smaller than telephone booths where prisoners are locked up with their hands and feet tied, the tower for special tortures and punishment, and the pool, which is used for torture. The following methods of torture are being frequently applied during interrogation:

The *submarino* (submarine). The detainee is bound hand and foot and lowered into a drum of nauseating liquid (urine, sewage water, petroleum), thereby provoking temporary asphyxiation. This method is said to have been applied in Villa Grimaldi utilizing a swimming pool attached to this center;

The *paloma* (pigeon), which consists of tying the prisoner's hands behind him, then hanging him up by them; his feet are often also tied. Then the prisoner is beaten or given electric shocks. This method is also used with the prisoner suspended in a tub or in the pool at Villa Grimaldi, and electric current is applied to the water;

Driving vehicles over the hands and feet of prisoners, causing multiple fractures, or over other parts of the body, causing death;

Programmed beating in one part of the body to cause insanity: constant beating of the head, armpits, bare feet, groin;

Sexual outrages, including rape and the use of animals specially trained for sexual depravation;

Pau de Arara. This consists of tying the hands and feet together and hanging the prisoner from a stick with his calves tightly bound to it. The prisoner is turned and electric shocks and blowtorch flame are applied to genitals, mouth, head, etc., and blows to all parts of the body;

Applying alcohol and electric shocks to torture or gunshot wounds;

Breaking bones of the fingers, feet, arms and legs with blows or "levers;"

Acid burns on the eyes, testicles, vagina or other body parts;

Forced ingestion of vomit;

Electric shocks in a chair. This method is allegedly commonly used because it is quick and easily applied. Prisoner's homes and places of work are often used.

Special booths which are smaller than a telephone booth and barely large enough to hold a seated person. The prisoner, in chains, is left in the booth for an indefinite period of time and taken out for interrogation or further torture;

Cold-blooded extraction of teeth;

Pulling the nails from fingers and toes, and burning the most sensitive organs of the body with cigarettes or directly by fire;

Simulated hanging or firing squads;

Psychological pressure, such as arresting and torturing the prisoner's immediate relatives, in particular his wife and children. The children are sometimes later placed in Carabinero orphanages.

In Colonia Dignidad prisoners have allegedly been subjected to different "experiments" without any interrogation: to dogs trained to commit sexual aggressions and destroy sexual organs of both sexes; to "tests" on the limits of resistance to different methods of torture (resistance to beating, electricity, hanging, etc.); to experiments designed to drive detainees insane through administration of drugs; to prolonged periods of isolation and other inhuman conditions. It is noteworthy that in this camp prisoners allegedly hear nothing from their captors other than the orders for torture. In Colonia Dignidad there appears to be a torture center of a particular kind in a specially equipped place underground: there are small, completely soundproof, hermetically sealed cells for prisoners. Leather hoods are placed over the prisoners' heads and stuck to their faces with chemical adhesives. In these cells torturers allegedly carry out interrogation over a closed-circuit radio system, with the detainees naked and tied to their berths while electric shocks are applied. □

It's not whether you'd sell a computer to Hitler. . .but whether you'd sell him gas chambers. Either way you're giving him weapons. . .

over the university."

The National Council of Churches is more definite on this issue than any IBM spokesman. William Wipfler, the Latin-American director of NCC, feels that IBM does indeed have a responsibility in this matter.

"We called the attention of IBM to the repeated violations of human rights in Chile and asked them to reconsider their plans to install the 145."

The National Council of Churches backed their pleas with proxies totaling 200,000 shares of IBM stock.

"The question is not whether they would sell computers to Hitler," says Wipfler, "but whether they would sell gas chambers to Hitler. Either way you're giving him weapons. When you know who Hitler is, you can't pretend you don't know what he's doing with your equipment."

Frank Cary, IBM chairman, spoke at the 1975 meeting in response to the church group's protest.

"We don't think the installation of a computer on the campus of the University of Chile has any sinister implications at all."

Sinister, according to Washington journalist Tom Mechling, is hardly the word. "The University of Chile would be a real Machiavellian place to put the thing. On the basis of what I've learned from extremely reliable sources, I'm very much convinced that that computer is being used for name, rank and serial number. These people who say they don't know what it's being used for suffer from the Eichmann syndrome. They claim they're only carrying out orders."

But IBM did send Dan Udell down to Santiago.

"We checked it out in detail. It's used for payroll, for processing student aptitude tests, for enrollment statistics and applications to college. To the best of our knowledge there are no other applications."

Perhaps the 145 at the University of Chile is not used by the secret police. But there is another, more direct link between the university and the Chilean secret police, a link typical of those that connect various Chilean institutions.

The leading computer service bureau in Chile is ECOM (for Empressa Nacional de Computacion), an organization that provides extensive computer support to the government. This relationship is a long-standing one, according to a Chilean refugee now living in England. But, our source indicates, that relationship now includes computer support for DINA operations.

The president of ECOM is René Peralta, a former official of the Chilean Navy. He is also the former head of computation at the University of Chile, the very organization now training people in the use of a 370/145. The chairman of ECOM is an active general in the Chilean Army.

Our source claims that the systems at ECOM include modern powerful American computers. The services provided by ECOM include tele-processing; the software there is capable of running database applications.

On May 20, 1975, General Pinochet, head of Chile's military junta, dedicated a 370/145 at the Technical University. This computer has been linked to other campuses by telex lines, according to Chilean sources.

The Technical University system is one of several shared by the Chilean Association of University Computing Centers. Among the members of this association are the University of Chile, Catholic University, University of Concepcion and ECOM.

Today, the Technical University is headed by Army Colonel Reyes. Commenting on this, an informed exile said "interrelationships between the universities and the military are natural" in Chile.

In addition to Peralta, there is another figure whose name comes up whenever computers and repression in Chile is discussed. He is Patricio Léniz, a former civil engineer who, according to informed sources, was a key software man on the computer projects of the DINA.

Patricio Léniz is the brother of Fernando Léniz, former minister of the military junta ruling Chile. Fernando Léniz is also the former

chairman of *El Mercurio,* Chile's right-wing newspaper.

Further substantiation of the DINA's use of computers comes from refugees' accounts of mass arrests in Chile. Those rounded up surrender their identification cards which are quickly processed. Suspects are separated from the detainees and ID cards are soon returned to those freed. The rapid checking of names against police files requires an online computer facility. Other stories from individuals detained by police corroborate the rapid checking of dossiers.

IBM is not the only American manufacturers that sells computers to Chile. Burroughs also sells machines there. Neil Jackson, Burroughs director of communications, said that the Chileans have one older machine which Burroughs sold them in 1970. This, he points out, was three governments ago.

Jackson's statement conflicts with a report that there are Burroughs mainframes at the Technical University, the Catholic University and at the government's service bureau, ECOM.

Jackson stated that "Burroughs's official policy is that we never comment on the political affairs of any of the 120 countries with which we do business, including our own."

Suppose a B3500 is now used for police purposes? "Obviously we hope it's not," said Jackson. "We're not aware of any use by any of our customers for any purposes that violate human rights."

Refugees from other Latin-American police states also tell of the use of computer printouts during interrogations to cross-check data provided by detainees. According to these exiles, dossiers are shared among the police forces of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil.

The most detailed report of the use of computer-generated information during a police interrogation comes from a clergyman. He entered Uruguay and was picked up by the police there for questioning. During the ordeal the police tried to get him to talk about a Catholic priest they were investigating.

When detained for questioning, the clergyman was presented with a computer printout describing the details of the career of his colleague. On the printouts were all the addresses at which the sought-after priest had lived, his salary at each point in his career, his telephone numbers and his relations with other Catholics in Uruguay.

The interrogated clergyman said that the most incredible thing about the questioning was that, as far as he could tell, the man the police sought had never been in Uruguay.

This printout, a church spokesman claims, could not have been stolen from the personnel files of the Catholic church, it must have come from some police computer system. Police in Latin America, he said, keep close tabs on many priests.

The idea of using computing equipment to support police activities in Latin America has been promoted by the United States government. During the early years of this decade the Agency for International Development (AID) provided South American police forces with weapons, training and data processing equipment under its "public safety" programs.

In an AID document describing U.S. assistance to the government of Venezuela, contract 529-11-710-022, U.S. officials report that "the technical groundwork has been laid for the country's public safety agencies, through electronic data processing and related processes, to pool their identification and intelligence data in a central location for more efficient coordination and rapid distribution of relevant facts and leads."

AID's Office of Public Safety, in a report on its assistance to Brazilian authorities, specifically lists IBM systems among police equipment shipped to that country.

Is this practice continuing? An AID official said that that agency no longer provides police equipment to Latin states. But AID does "provide computers to Chile."

The computers are included with moneys earmarked for activities other than "public safety." An AID official said that a recent grant for agriculture included a "computer component." He added that there is no practical way for AID personnel in Washington to check on the ultimate use to which such a computer is put. Informed sources state that the Chilean Institute of Agriculture building in Calle Belgrado, Santiago, is a center of communications for the DINA.

Evidence that Latin American authorities use computers for repression is abundant. Yet there seems to be no way for either computer manufacturers or humane governments to halt this activity.

What little hope there is for a change in these practices may lie with the United Nations, a body limited to persuasive power.

The United Nations has been concerned about the possible use of computers as an aid to police in dictatorships. The proposed United Nations code of ethics states:

"It would seem imperative for computer experts to have some training in human rights concepts and in certain aspects of the law.

"In computer-based decision-making, the computer user should bear in mind the need to protect and promote the rights of the individual."

Can the United Nations actually halt the use of computers by police states? Can it prevent automation of "the final solution?"

"The U.N. has no methods of enforcing its principles," says Leonore Hooley, a United Nations human rights officer.

"We operate on the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of countries."

Meanwhile, the Chilean government published a booklet last year. It is entitled "Universities and Development" and is written by Sergio Maldonado. In that booklet is a statement about a familiar figure:

"Hitler, a politician of the highest rank, knew how to majestically interpret the aspirations of the German people at a propitious moment. In a short time, he was able to raise them up so they could regain their place among world powers." □

German system protects people

The most sensibly designed police information system in the world is Berlin's criminal police information network. This recently-installed system uses special hardware and software to protect the rights of citizens while it speeds police and court work.

When an arrest is made, the arresting officer is required to enter relevant data on a workstation terminal at his local precinct house. But before he can log on the system, the officer must insert his machine-readable identification card into a reader. Only when complete and correct data is presented at the terminal will it be forwarded to a central system which again checks for errors and creates or updates a file which automatically produces documents for the police force. Later, reports are generated for prosecutors and jurists should court action be necessary.

A detective making an inquiry about a suspect must follow a similar procedure. The officer's identification card is checked against records to assure that the action is within the officer's jurisdiction.

Any illegal action is detected by the system which also produces summary reports of proper as well as improper activities for review by police authorities. Further, data can be made available to defense attorneys and other appropriate parties during the preparation of a legal case or during an actual trial. No party can receive data beyond that mandated by law.

The terminals, which have hardwired programs, were built by Nixdorf Computer. They contain a special processor, printers, identification card readers and communications hardware. The mainframe that guards the data base is a Siemens system. Training for all users is performed by police personnel.

There are currently 79 of the Nixdorf terminals online, and many more can be accomodated as needed. The mainframe can be altered, too, because the terminal is intelligent enough to match any new protocols that might be established.

While the system was installed to cut the amount of paperwork officers must complete in the course of dealing with routine crimes, the approach taken by the police of Berlin demonstrates that an effective criminal information system can also be designed to insure justice, security and accuracy. It is expected that the Berlin system will be adopted by other police forces in Germany and in other countries as well. □