

## Disappeared: A Journalist Silenced

June Carolyn Erlick

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"If I die, don't cry for me—because I was fighting for what I love."—Irma Flaquer

On a quiet October evening in 1980, Guatemalan journalist Irma Flaquer, returning to her downtown apartment after a visit with her four-year-old grandson, was dragged from her car, never to be seen again. Founder of the first Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, she was a crusading reporter who did not tolerate corruption or repression. Best known for her weekly column that ran for over twenty years in various Guatemalan newspapers—Lo Que Otros Callan or "What Others Don't Dare Write"—Flaquer criticized presidents, politicians, and the heads of the Roman Catholic Church, and championed the rights of the disenfranchised, in some cases, making and breaking political regimes. A tenacious detractor of the U.S.backed, corrupt Guatemalan governments, Flaquer survived government-organized beatings, a car bomb that riddled her body with shrapnel, and drive-by shootings of her newspaper office, refusing exile and continuing her call for freedom and democracy until her abduction. Disappeared paints a gripping and complicated portrait both of a vibrant woman with a passionate vision and of an emerging nation, struggling against the strictures of Cold War politics and behind-the-scenes U.S. involvement.



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