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GETTING TO KNOW THE GENERAL BY GRAHAM GREENE: A CRITIQUE OF AMERICAN POWER

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ABSTRACT

Graham Greene's *Getting to Know the General* offers a profound critique of American power dynamics in Latin America, particularly through the lens of General Omar Torrijos' leadership in Panama during the Cold War. The book strongly conveys the feeling that the strategic importance of Panama and the Panama Canal in the region constitutes a justification for the USA's indirect and direct interventions and presence there. Greene depicts how Torrijos, the central figure of the book, emerged as a threat to the US in that country and the region while attempting to defend Panama's sovereignty and national interests. During the Canal Agreement process, his divergence from the dictators in Latin America is emphasised by highlighting his national stance, character, human understanding, libertarian side, courage, and behaviour akin to that of a world leader. By considering political integration with his people through a parliamentary system, Torrijos envisions future plans for both economic development and establishing natural relations with countries in the region. These are perceived as an excellent risk for the USA, and Torrijos dies in a suspicious plane crash. In *Getting to Know the General*, Greene exposes the dark presence of US power in the region behind the tragic end of Torrijos, who worked sincerely and courageously for his country and refused to be a puppet leader and offers a unique approach in that it shows some still unchanging things in the world fifty years later through fiction.

Keywords: Graham Greene, *Getting to Know the General*, Panama, American power, critique

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GRAHAM GREENE'NİN *GENERALİ TANIMAK*'I: BİR AMERİKAN İKTİDAR ELEŞTİRİSİ

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ÖZ

Graham Greene'in *General'i Tanımak* adlı kitabı, özellikle General Omar Torrijos'un Soğuk Savaş döneminde Panama'daki liderliğinin merceğinden, Latin Amerika'daki Amerikan güç dinamiklerinin derin bir eleştirisini sunar. Kitap, Panama'nın ve Panama Kanalı'nın bölgedeki stratejik önemini ABD'nin buraya dolaylı ve doğrudan müdahalelerine ve varlığına gerekçe oluşturduğu hissini güçlü bir şekilde verir. Greene, kitabın ana figürü olan Torrijos'un, Panama'nın egemenliğini ve ulusal çıkarlarını savunmaya çalışırken ABD'nin bu ülkedeki ve bölgedeki nüfusuna bir tehdit olarak nasıl ortaya çıktığını tasvir eder. Kanal Anlaşması sürecinde milli duruşu, karakteri, insan anlayışı, özgürlükçü yanı, cesareti ve bir dünya lideri gibi davranışına dikkat çekerek Latin Amerika'daki diktatörlerden farkı vurgulanır. Parlamenter bir sistemle halkıyla siyasi bütünleştirmeyi düşünen Torrijos'un hem ekonomik kalkınmaya hem de bölge ülkeleri ile olması gereken doğal ilişkileri kurmaya yönelik gelecek planları vardır. Bütün bunlar ABD için büyük bir risk olarak algılanır ve Torrijos şüpheli bir uçak kazasında ölür. Greene, *Generali Tanımak*'ta ülkesi için samimiyetle ve cesaretle çalışan ve kukla bir lider olmayı reddeden Torrijos'un trajik sonunun gerisinde ABD iktidarının bölgedeki karanlık varlığına işaret eder ve elli yıl sonrası dünya üzerinde bir takım hala değişmeyen şeyleri kurmaca üzerinden göstermesi bakımından özgün bir yaklaşım sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Graham Greene, *Generali Tanımak*, Panama, Amerikan iktidarı, eleştiri

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1. INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND *GETTING TO KNOW THE GENERAL*

The Cold War, which intensified in the 1970s and polarised global politics between the USA and the Soviet Union, also influenced Latin America, where the U.S. aimed to counter Soviet influence and safeguard strategic assets like the Panama Canal. Amid political instability, military dictatorships, and leftist insurgencies in South America, the U.S. supported allied regimes with military and economic aid to suppress leftist movements and maintain regional stability. Once the Cold War became the dominant factor in global politics (and above all in American and Soviet perceptions), each side viewed every development around the world in terms of its relationship to that great struggle, and each was inclined to act according to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Garthoff, 1994, p. 12). This power rivalry extended its reach to Latin America, where the United States endeavoured to counter Soviet influence and maintain control over critical strategic assets, notably the Panama Canal. South America was characterised by political instability, military dictatorships, leftist insurgencies against them, and social unrest in many countries. The USA supported friendly regimes, or dictatorships, in South America and provided military and economic aid to these governments to counter leftist movements and maintain regional stability.

Within such a critical framework, the United States viewed Panama as a vital ally in its efforts to contain Soviet expansionism in the region. The United States' relationship with Panama was shaped by the unhindered establishment of close diplomatic, military and economic ties between the two countries. Panama had an essential position in global geopolitical and South American issues due to its strategic location as a gateway to South America and the Panama Canal, the key to maritime trade between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The USA, which controlled the canal and established a privileged region within Panama, assigned a global and regional role to Panama and implemented this despite Panama. Looking at how the USA used and protected the Canal during World War II, even after the war, is enough to understand what Panama means to the USA (Kitchel, 1978, pp. 165-166). As a global power and a primary shaper in the region, the USA naturally put negative pressure on Panama, especially its people.

The construction and control of the Panama Canal, a project heavily championed by President Theodore Roosevelt, significantly influenced Panama's political and economic landscape, leading to decades of U.S. dominance and interference, which was challenged by General Omar Torrijos during the negotiations of the Torrijos-Carter Accords. The Canal, which started at the end of the 19th century but was officially opened in 1914, significantly reduced the travel time and distance of ships between the two oceans. President Roosevelt was convinced that the construction of the Canal was the most important project of his presidency, and in a presidential address, he stated (1903), "We have taken the first steps towards digging an Isthmian canal, to be under our control. It is a canal that will make our Atlantic and Pacific coastlines continuous, which will be of incalculable benefit to our mercantile navy and our military navy in the event of war." (p. 393). After its construction, the control of such a critical place naturally came to the United States, and this profoundly shaped Panama's political and economic landscape in the following years. The negotiations between the United States and Panama in the 1970s resulted in the signing of the Torrijos-Carter Accords, which would provide for the gradual transfer of control of the Panama Canal from the United States to Panama. However, while this was happening, it also accelerated the US's direct and indirect interference in Panama's internal affairs and its manipulations in line with its political interests. At this point, General Omar Torrijos, who could break the US presence in the country, was seen as a threat to the US with his actions and policies.

Henry Graham Greene (1904–1991), in his novel *Getting to Know the General*, uses his literary work to explore and critique the complexities of power, politics, and American influence in Panama through the lens of his relationship with General Omar Torrijos, ultimately examining the broader implications for U.S. policy in Latin America. At this point, he brings this critical stance of General Torrijos into fiction with his work, *Getting to Know the General*, and opens the subject for discussion from a literary perspective. Greene is an English novelist, playwright and critic known for his literary works that explore moral and political themes. Although he has a mission to collect information in different countries on behalf of the British Secret Service (Brendon, 2010, p. 74), Greene is primarily a man of letters. He is a productive writer who has travelled to many parts of the world, especially Latin America and has created many works inspired by these places. William Golding praises Greene as "Graham Greene was in a class by himself... He will be read and remembered as the ultimate chronicler of twentieth-century man's consciousness and anxiety" (Stade, 2009, p. 218). He has internationally acclaimed novels such as *The Quiet American*, *The End of the Affair* and *The Power and the Glory*. In *Getting to Know the General* (1984), one of Greene's excellent books, he discusses his friendship and experiences inspired by his relationship with the General during his visits to Panama. However, Greene shares her insights into the complexities of power, politics, and American influence in Panama during Torrijos' leadership through personal anecdotes and political analysis. It sheds light on Torrijos' role in the negotiations of the Torrijos-Carter Accords, which led to the transfer of control of the Panama Canal from the United States to Panama. While General Omar Torrijos, the book's central figure, attempts to defend Panama's sovereignty and national interests, he turns into a threat to the US presence in

Panama and the region and witnesses the consequences. From here, the paper attempts to determine Greene's perspective on US policy in Panama and Latin America centred on the main character, Torrijos.

2. READING *GETTING TO KNOW THE GENERAL AS A CRITIQUE OF AMERICAN POWER*

Graham Greene has often been praised for the quality of his observation, but this lies in creating an atmosphere appropriate to period, place and character rather than in what things look like (Symons, 1983, pp. 11-12). *Getting to Know the General* is a work within this framework. As a fiction that combines elements of biography, memoir and political analysis, it addresses the reader with the personal and political dimensions of one of Panama's most influential leaders, General Omar Torrijos. Behind this central image, the book reflects what Torrijos did for his country, his relations with the countries in the region, the Panama Canal negotiations, and their impacts on the US power in the country and the region (Ward, 1987, p. 351). However, it would be more accurate to consider the work as fiction, thinking as if reality is reflected in fiction and creates a fictional reality. Greene first thought about writing a novel titled *On the Way Back* from the diaries he kept during his visits to Panama in 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 - 1980 and 1983. However, later, it turned into a memoir about the idealist Torrijos, his Panama, and the US power that extended there (Mansfield & Gessell, 2022, p. 271), which gives the book a much more vivid awareness.

In *Getting to Know the General*, the impressions from Greene's travels with Chucu, one of Torrijos' most trusted men, the head of the General's security guards, a professor of philosophy and a poet, are given through a first-person narrative. He examines Torrijos, the country, the region, and the political presence of the US in the region through both his and Chucu's eyes, along with his experiences during his travels. Torrijos' personality, his leadership style, what he tried to do for his country, his relations with his people, his view of the Canal Zone, his approaches to the countries and peoples of the region, and his subtle politics with America come to the fore from time to time in the book, and by drawing attention to the background of the dark events of that period, Greene tells the story of Torrijos with the dark power behind it, the USA. Greene himself knows journalism is as a powerful weapon as the bullet when he unalterably writes, "What a mess you make behind the scenes. The other kind of war is more innocent than this. One does less damage with a mortar." (Greene, 2004, p. 110). This is precisely what happened in Panama. By raising the question of whether Torrijos died in a plane crash or was blown up by planting a bomb, he draws attention to the dirty work of global power and leaves the reader with doubt, anger, and sadness.

In the preface of the book, a memoir of his friendship with Torrijos, in which Greene emphatically asserted this support (Benz, 2003, p. 116), he writes that while he was packing his suitcase for his fifth visit to Panama in August 1981, he received the news of the death of his friend General Omar Torrijos through a phone call from Chucu. He says, "I know there was a bomb in the plane, but I cannot tell you why over the phone." (Greene, 1984, p. 9). In the rest of the book, Greene frequently talks about the activities of the USA both within the country and in Latin America, the secret affairs of the CIA, and Torrijos's conflict with this policy. For many analysts, Torrijos' death in a plane crash remains mysterious, triggering a series of political developments destabilising the country for the next decade (Gandasegui, 1993, p. 7). The traces of this are frequently felt in the book, and the possibility of Torrijos being killed is also quite probable for Greene. We read that Torrijos refuses to fall into despair by drawing attention to the Panama Canal agreement processes between Panama and America and that, if necessary, he even risks a possible armed struggle between his small country and the superpower occupying the region (Greene, 1984, p. 11). It is stated that the Panama agreement was signed with the USA on behalf of Panama by an unauthorised Frenchman, that this was a general problem within the country, that the USA reviewed the agreement with the rebellion in 1964, that two colonels overthrew the American-backed government in a coup in 1968, and that, a year later, one of the colonels was sent to Miami by plane by the other one, Torrijos (p. 13-15). The general, opting for a peaceful policy in favour of his country, does not kill the colonel he overthrew in a coup but instead removes him from the country. The general prioritises the natural self-return movement of the country and the region. However, his justified and clean policy is a threat to the power in the region.

Even though his steps are peaceful, Torrijos is also aware that they are dangerous for him, so some security measures by Torrijos are presented to the reader in the fiction. For example, Torrijos sometimes stays at his friend's house, where he is a copper mine manager, and Greene thinks that Torrijos does this as a countermeasure (p. 24). Moreover, Greene also adds that the murder of Torrijos in an explosive assassination was something he expected after what he witnessed during his four years of travel to and from Panama (p. 25). It is underlined that Torrijos has some preparations against such attempts. For example, Torrijos is about to get into the working helicopter, but at that moment, a car suddenly comes and gets in it (p. 78). Chucu, on the other hand, is extremely sure that the plane was brought down by a bomb because, considering the experiences of the USA and Panama, this is something that benefits the USA (p. 165). The fact that Canadian experts examined the plane after the crash and could not find a problem with the engine strengthens the possibility of pilot error or a bomb (p. 192). This type of assassination requires international connection and power. It is a known fact that the CIA actively intervened in

American politics during the Cold War (Levin, 2019, p. 840). Therefore, a suspicious intervention of the USA behind the events is a prominent element in the narrative.

Why is General Torrijos not a character that a global power, the USA, wants in Panama? Is he really a risk to the American power? What, if any, could be the reasons for Torrijos's elimination in this way? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary first to find an answer to the question of what Torrijos means for the USA. When we look at the recent history of Panama, some information, such as the fact that Theodore Roosevelt personally initiated the construction of the canal, that the United States attempted to separate Panama from Colombia at the time, that the administration of the country was given to the Arias family by the Americans, what had happened was beneficial to the USA for a century, and that there was no need for even an authorised person from Panama to give the Canal and the Canal Zone to the USA (Greene, 1984, p. 12-13) shows how much the USA attached importance to this area and how it wanted to shape it. First and last, the Panama Canal is part of the National Defense system of the United States, an instrument of its own national policy and defence plans during any considerable international conflict (Padelford, 1943, p. 277). Naturally, such an essential place for America cannot be abandoned to its fate. Torrijos is not like the dictators in South and Central America, such as Videla, Pinochet or Banzer, who represented anti-communism and survived with American help; he is a lone wolf, a friend of Tito and Castro, who makes his country a haven for refugees in Latin America; and he wants to establish a social democratic Panama without posing a threat to America (Greene, 1984, pp. 28-29). He is a leader qualified enough to achieve this, and as he gets closer to success, he gets closer to death, but he is not afraid of death. This kind of leader is an excellent risk for the United States that must be eliminated.

Despite his efforts to peacefully guide his country toward independence, Torrijos is aware of potential challenges and takes some precautions accordingly. He establishes a particular unit, the Wild Pigs, to fight the guerrillas, and Greene tells the reader the anthem sung by this unit against the USA (p. 32). Torrijos deported 400 people from the Peace Corps that Kennedy sent to Panama (p. 53). He is also pleased that the Americans who came for the Canal Agreement left the country early (p. 66). In fact, having the patriotic and idealistic Torrijos, free of extremist ideologies, as their interlocutor is a significant advantage for the USA, but he is a man who acts on his own, preferring the left over the right and despising the bureaucracy (p. 105). Torrijos, who can see and expect his death, is not the type of person the United States can send by plane to Miami like previous dictators (p. 106). Torrijos's famous words about the Canal in 1976 are that it has never been attacked or sabotaged. However, it is as vulnerable as a newborn baby (Omang, 1976), showing what the General is willing to risk for his country, which America is also aware of. The relevant minority report states that Torrijos is a variable and unpredictable person who can use his veto right. In another document, Torrijos's relations with harsh and extreme dictators and even Carter are criticised (Greene, 1984, pp. 191-192). In short, since General Torrijos is not a suitable type for the US's Latin American policy, he has a risky personality and many valid reasons for his elimination.

The fiction also emphasises that the USA acts beyond the visible relations for its political interests in Panama and Central and South American countries. 1977 was a critical year for Panama, and if things went wrong, the CIA had alternative secret plans within the country for a possible conflict (p. 39). When almost the entire population of Nicaragua revolted against the dictator Somoza, some technical materials such as military uniforms, always ready-to-use explosive flashlights, and Mickey Mouse picnic boxes, which proved an American intervention and even some things regarding the traces of the CIA were mentioned, and this type of preparation is also possible for Panama. Again, on page 192, there are some references to the secret dirty work of the USA in Panama and the region. It is known that "the U.S. government has instigated and perpetrated many evils and horrors, directly or clandestinely through the CIA and other organisations, on behalf of power-lustful and greedy dictators in Chile, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Vietnam, the Philippines, Panama, and many other places in the world in which corporate capitalists based in the United States rapaciously exploit the indigenous population" (Gordon, 1997, p. 28). Thus, an assassination of Torrijos seems entirely expected for the USA, as Torrijos does not align with the path set by the USA and even poses an obstacle to it. These are signs of the undetectable boundaries between fiction and reality.

Looking at what General Torrijos means to Panama and its people within the narrative will shed light on the concerns of the US in Panama. Panamanians see Torrijos as the true owner of the country and the leader of the revolution (Greene, 1984, p. 22). General Torrijos is a brave man who sees it as a shame that the National Guard only watched the events in the 1964 rebellion and clearly states that he will not suppress the next rebellion (p. 28). Greene sums up Torrijos candidly with the question: "How could one fail to like this man?" (Reed, 1984, p. 113). He is a leader who tries to establish a new state system with his distinctive charisma, prioritises justice in parliamentary elections, listens to the people's problems in the regions and tries to solve them with the regional authorities (Greene, 1984, pp. 34-35). He thinks of setting up a party to continue his politics and wants to present it to the public in a social democracy (p. 35). Moreover, in the streets of Panama, some graffiti such as "Omar has an ideal: complete freedom, they have not yet found a bullet to kill it" or "Fifth border country USA / El Charillo Martyrs Boulevard" (p. 35) show how the people embrace Torrijos. The villagers love him because he can "think

like them” (p. 57). He is also one of the people of Panama. He considers a national currency instead of the dollar (p. 68), he has put a large banana farm into operation on behalf of the state (p. 78), he still has relations in the place where he spent his childhood (p. 79), and when the Americans withdraw from the region, he plans the places where they live for poor people (p. 81). In other words, he is a leader who is close to the people of Panama and touches their lives (p. 82), and his people are behind him. Even his people clarify that they will support the general if the canal agreement is not approved and a war breaks out (p. 86). As a result, it appears unlikely that the USA could remove General Torrijos from the presidency through conventional means.

Panama is like a theatre stage with a few actors; the same actors appear on the same stage repeatedly with different roles (p. 93), and this stage is under the direct supervision of the USA. The fact that General Torrijos has a dream for his country breaks this surveillance. Torrijos envisions a non-Marxist socialist and independent Central American country to govern his country (p. 97), and he thinks of doing this through the parliamentary system by establishing a party and participating in elections (p. 114-115). The death of such a leader is deeply felt throughout the country (p. 163). For example, the international airport is named after him (p. 164). In a peasant's poem, Torrijos is depicted as a supra-national general, a world-class leader, and a supporter of the poor (p. 186-187). Torrijos is an essential part of Panamanian territory and is a natural threat to the United States, which has settled in the region and designed its future.

It is a fact that the CIA actively intervened in Latin American politics during the Cold War (Absher et al., 2023, p. 1) and some CIA-sponsored regime changes were identified in Latin America (Berger et al., 2013, p. 24). Torrijos is a leader who contradicts this reality because he gives Panama an identity among the countries in the region. He moves his country away from the puppet regimes established by the USA there. He surreptitiously supports the liberation movement in countries such as Nicaragua and El Salvador (Greene, 1984, p. 9). He protects refugees from the regional countries under the name Pigeon House (p. 65). General Torrijos is a friend of some countries, but there is always a distance between him and the dictators supported by the USA. Shaking hands followed by a hug or not demonstrates this during the signing of the Panama Treaty (p. 107). He indirectly saves politicians from danger in neighbouring geographies (p. 118). He represents a personality that knows the geography of the region (p. 119), tries to establish open and friendly relations with anyone as much as possible (p. 120), and feels their problems closely (p. 140). He even helps save the lives of two British bankers by getting Greene to act as an intermediary (p. 134-136). In brief, General Torrijos advocates for peace and stability in a complex region, fully aware of the dangers this poses to the area in which he resides. By emphasising these aspects, Greene directly criticises the US government through the events unfolding in the heart of Panama.

There is a well-known saying that Panama is Casablanca without heroes (Paternostro, 93, p. 53). In other words, it is a place everyone knows and recognises, but it does not have a hero who will do something for their country. General Torrijos is an exception to this saying and is the true leader and hero of his country. Panama's heroic days (Greene, 1984, p. 166) and former active days (p. 177) seem over. General Torrijos is an eye that looks at the graveyards wherever he goes and pays attention to whether the people there take care of their dead because people who do not take care of their dead do not care about their living ones (p. 26). He is a liberal, sensitive and great man who records the sound of a budgie in his house on tape and makes that bird sing by making it listen to these sounds (p. 71), who has friendships with world-class writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez (p. 100) and who he does not interfere with former President Arias's arrival in the country and speaking against himself even after the agreement (p. 114). With the death of Torrijos, this atmosphere that has permeated all over Panama dissipates. His introduction of Chucu as the Minister of Defense while meeting with the Pope (p. 167), the value he gives to Greene by frequently taking advice from him (p. 151), and his respect for the writers' instinct to understand human characters (p. 129) indicate the bond he establishes with the people around him. With similar depictions in the fiction, Greene makes the reader feel that General Torrijos's plane crash targets this bond that the United States cannot possibly break through normal means.

General Torrijos is considered highly risky by the USA because he seeks to connect deeply with his people and forge authentic relationships with other countries in the region, aiming to resolve issues for the mutual benefit of all parties and to build a shared future. While doing these, he closely follows what is happening worldwide (p. 157). He is aware that it is impossible to become stronger without knowing the course of the world. He takes advantage of every opportunity to make his country known positively. For example, he offers a much better offer for shooting an anti-war film than other countries in the region or even France, allowing the film to be shot in Panama (p. 92). A man with such strong roots in the soil who reaches out to the future will, of course, be on the radar of the US power and under surveillance.

General Torrijos has a national stance and is conscious of what he is up against. A symptom of this is that he frequently dreams of his death (p. 63, 150). The US Senate's change of some articles during the agreement affects him negatively (p. 77), but he also focuses more on the country's problems (p. 152). Torrijos has a realistic approach to critical issues, such as the revolutionary left playing into the hands of the USA, the country's small population and limited opportunities; therefore, radical change cannot be a solution (p. 116). General Torrijos

pioneered the political process that would carry his country into the new century and annex the canal and canal zone to the nation's territory (Gandasegui, 1993, p. 7). Greene frequently shows the reader that this will somehow mean a conflict with the US, but it is also clear that this conflict will not be face-to-face for the US, which has a mile-long criminal record in the region, but through dirty ways.

Through his transparent policies and peaceful approaches in a highly critical and complex region, General Torrijos represents an opportunity for both his country and the region. However, this opportunity is not viewed in the same light by the United States. General Torrijos, who patiently carries out the agreement process (Greene, 1984, p. 24) and can calm his people (p. 37), also knows that if things do not go well, he opens the door to a confrontation with the USA, which means war (p. 54). This man can meet with Carter in a friendly and comfortable manner (p. 98) and never forgets his friends by saying his greetings to Castro via radio over Cuba from his plane on the way to the meeting (p. 99), is not someone to be sent to Miami like the previous dictators (p. 106). Although he wants respected heads of state to be in the agreement hall (p. 107), Carter also calls his puppet dictators. With the canal agreement in 2000, Torrijos, who is aware of his country's gains such as ownership of the canal, exports, copper, cement and land (p. 116-117), takes very patient and cautious steps during the agreement process. Naturally, direct and indirect statements that such steps shake the US power in the country and the region are frequently included in the narrative.

While Greene negatively portrays American politics here in a literary text, he also compares the main character to his peers in the region. The participation of Latin American dictators in the ceremony where the agreement will be signed is to portray General Torrijos as one of them (p. 98), and the fact that even Carter asks Torrijos how he can deal with them (p. 100) shows that Carter is aware of this. The information in Carter's notes is that on the day the signing is made, Torrijos falls into his wife's arms and cries (p. 100). That day is so crucial for Torrijos that he brings to the hall important people for Panama, such as Marquez and the mother of one of those killed by American sailors in the 1964 mutiny (p. 103). Torrijos appears on stage with Carter amidst the grins of people who confuse the world and geography and among people who cause trouble for the world, such as Nelson Rockefeller. After Carter's ordinary speech, he begins his speech ironically with words quoted by the American President in 1903 (p. 105). General Torrijos is highly confident and represents his country as if he were one of the most consequential presidents in the world. On one hand, Greene portrays him in the narrative as someone who is integrated with his country. On the other hand, he highlights him as someone equally incompatible with the USA and the region because he is against the project the US is trying to design.

Behind General Torrijos' strong stance lies his solid and sensitive personality. One of his greatest characteristics is his ability to understand events intelligently and express his experiences humorously (p. 20). At first glance, he is a different personality who can give the feeling of encountering a new species within the human race (p. 25). He can openly talk about the course of relations with the USA in public (p. 28). He sees Panama and the USA as equal countries on international platforms and talks this way (p. 28). He is also ready for a possible bad situation with the USA and has thought and planned all the details (p. 54-55). Torrijos likes to announce that I do not want to enter into history. I want to enter the Canal (Reed, 1984, p. 113). For the United States, a leader who is devoted to his country and possesses a strong character naturally presents a significant challenge that must be addressed.

The USA already knows that the people of Panama are behind General Torrijos. Panamanians frequently tell Torrijos that they are ready to enter the US territory within the country (Greene, 1984, p. 36). This autonomous region is a different world (p. 37) and does not reflect Panama. There is no border between them, but the two places are physically very different from each other (p. 42). Greene underlines that the tolerance and openness of General Torrijos, who is constantly on the move, listen to the people's complaints, and can meet with both his opponents and supporters, stands in marked contrast to the intolerance and close-mindedness of Americans in the Canal Zone (Greene, 1977, p. 13). The USA may do something similar in Panama to find a solution to its usual indirect and dirty dealings in Latin America when the course of events turns against it. Behind the curtain, the dark hands of the powerful always pull the strings and keep the course of events under control.

America's reflection in literary works in the context of power has been problematic. Greene's *Getting to Know the General*, a memoir based on his five-year diary (Greene, 1984, p. 9), is a clear example of this. Greene admits that it was with his permission that he could get to know General Torrijos a little more (p. 57). Greene portrays Torrijos as a personality who prefers left to right, has no official ideology, and despises bureaucracy (Greene, 1978, p. 9). He is bold enough to invite a stranger like Greene to his country and has his portrait drawn through his eyes (Greene, 1984, p. 26). He supports Greene's article titled "Five Bordered Countries" in *The New York Review of Books* and his criticism of the CIA there, but he does not change a word in the article (p. 77-78). He allows Greene to travel freely to see Panama with his own eyes (p. 84-85). He sees Greene as a friendly outside observer during the signing process of the agreement (p. 107). He sends Greene to neighbouring countries, which allows him to observe what is happening (p. 141). He even tries to solve some of Greene's problems in France (p. 159). Although Greene sees that General Torrijos is genuinely a great person and a chance for his country and the countries in the

region, he knows that Torrijos is a complete misfortune in terms of the policy followed by the USA and criticises the dark politics of a powerful country like the USA.

The impact of literature on reality and human perception of reality has always been strong, and literature's relationship with power is critical. European writer since Conrad has put the earth's hot, poor and foully governed places on paper as vividly as Greene (Bradbury & Bigsby, 1983, p. 74). One of the best examples of this is *Getting to Know the General*. In the book, Greene examines a fundamental critique of US power and offers the opportunity to explore various themes such as geopolitics, foreign relations, and the impact of power dynamics on small nations, as in Panama's case. By emphasising the place, role and importance of General Torrijos for the USA, Panama and the region, he draws attention to Torrijos' demands and reactions from the USA during the Canal Agreement process. To Hegel's statement that "history repeats itself", Marx adds "the first-time tragedy, the second time farce", and since the US government seized Panama from Colombia in October 1903 without even firing a shot (Weeks, 1992, p. 184), it had been a country where comedies took place until Torrijos. Greene draws attention to the role of Torrijos's character, human understanding, libertarian side, courage and behaviour like a world leader in achieving this. Therefore, he emphasises that Torrijos' policy on the canal, Panama, and the region is contrary to that of the United States. By pointing to the dirty work done by the CIA, which is not visible behind the functioning of the USA's relations in the region, he clearly states that Torrijos' plane crash raises a big question mark. The USA has shady relations that can use its power to solve a complex problem for itself by indirect and dirty means when necessary.

3. CONCLUSION

The original aspect of this article is that a famous English literary writer draws attention to Latin American countries during the Cold War years and brings the events there into his fiction in a political sense and that it underlines the efforts of the American government to continue its policies not only in a specific part of the world but also in different and perhaps everywhere, despite those regions and countries, and does this through fiction. The fictional reality created in the book indicates that what global powers have been doing in the age we have lived in is far beyond our perceptions. In *Getting to Know the General*, these are traced from a literary perspective. Graham Greene adeptly captures the intricate landscape of Cold War politics in Latin America, offering readers a critique of American power dynamics through the lens of General Omar Torrijos' leadership in Panama. Greene makes General Omar Torrijos's struggle for Panama's political future a part of the narrative in an environment complicated by all kinds of direct and indirect US interventions in the country and the region and draws attention to the tensions between sovereignty, hegemony, independence and power.

Through his adept weaving of personal anecdotes, political analysis, and historical context, Greene challenges the reader with unsettling revelations about the misuse of power and the manipulation by dominant nations for geopolitical advantage. He has many positive attributes, such as being a natural and respected leader for his country, his integration with his people, his vision of fair economic distribution, the establishment of political infrastructure paving the way for social democracy, his aspiration to nationalise the channel and the region, and his nuanced understanding of Latin America and the world, Torrijos emerges as both a worthy figure and a risk for America. His approach to art and people is noteworthy. In his dealings with the USA, he advocates for Panama as an equal to the USA. He seeks to resolve the issues patiently and peacefully while preparing for potential confrontations. However, these clashes were incompatible with the US presence and policy in the country and the region, and so Torrijos' death in a suspicious plane crash leaves many questions behind. Ultimately, Torrijos' untimely and suspicious death underscores the inherent dangers of challenging the interests of a superpower like the United States, leaving a legacy fraught with unanswered questions.

In a world where Cold War politics still echo, Greene's work serves as a timely examination of the ongoing struggle for freedom, dignity, and self-determination. *Getting to Know the General* stands as a thought-provoking example of literature's endeavour to shed light on the darkest corners of history and the quest for a more just and egalitarian world while also illustrating the consequences of the dark actions of the global powers.

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ÇALIŞMANIN ETİK İZİNİ

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