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# INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

by  
DAVID CHARTERS  
MAURICE TUGWELL



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INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY  
IN CENTRAL AMERICA

An Analysis of Internal and Potential Internal  
Conflicts in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador,  
Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

prepared by

THE CENTRE FOR CONFLICT STUDIES  
University of New Brunswick

Fall, 1982

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of trends in low-intensity conflict in Central America. The sources and causes of instability and conflict in the region and in the individual countries are examined in a historical context. The study then analyses the process of conflict in each country, looking both at insurgent organisations and methods and the nature of the government response. The impact and significance of external influence on each conflict is discussed. Regional trends, from both insurgent and counter-insurgent standpoints, are examined and analysed collectively. Significant findings include the development of a model of optimal conditions for revolutionary war, and the identification of a pattern of employment of an effective broad front strategy.



## RESUME

La présente est une étude des tendances discernables dans les conflits de faible intensité en Amérique centrale. Les sources et les causes d'instabilité et de conflit dans la région et dans chacun des pays qui la composent sont examinées dans leur contexte historique. L'étude analyse ensuite la progression des conflits dans chaque pays, considérant à la fois l'organisation et les méthodes des insurgés et la nature des réactions du gouvernement menacé. On traite également de l'impact et de l'importance sur chaque conflit des influences de l'extérieur. Les tendances régionales, à partir des points de vue à la fois des insurgés et des contre-insurgés, sont examinées et analysées collectivement. Parmi les résultats significatifs, on compte l'élaboration d'un modèle des conditions optimales de la guerre révolutionnaire et l'identification d'un modèle d'emploi d'une stratégie efficace de "front élargi".

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*Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under conditions immediately encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.*

*Karl Marx*

*I wish I could give better hopes of our southern brethren. Their achievement of their independence from Spain is no longer a question, but it is a very serious one. What will become of them? Ignorance and bigotry, like other insanities, are incapable of self-government. They will fall under military despotisms, and become the murderous tools of the ambitions of their respective Bonapartes.*

*Thomas Jefferson*

## ANALYSTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Although Canadian political and economic ties to the countries of the Caribbean Basin have tended in the past to be concentrated in the Commonwealth countries, recently there has been a broadening of interests to a wider group of nations. A recent Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Mark MacGuigan, has said that the Government recognized two main concepts in its regional policy: that North and South shared a common interest in solving economic problems; and that there was a humanitarian need to direct attention and resources to the world's poorest peoples.

Canadian exports to the area have grown from just under \$Cdn 800 million in 1977 to an estimated \$Cdn 1.8 billion in 1981. Imports from the area to Canada have increased over the same period from \$Cdn 600 million to \$Cdn 1.8 billion. Countries of the region have, since the early 1970s, benefitted from the Canadian Generalized Preferential Tariff System. Canada has announced a threefold increase in development assistance to Central American countries--\$Cdn 105 million has been allocated to the region over the next five years. Major recipients will be Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama. Canadian banks have been involved in making loans to countries of the region. Clearly, Canada has a trade interest in stability in the area, and a humanitarian concern for better economic and social conditions for the people of the region. Moreover, as a member of the Atlantic Alliance, Canada shares many American strategic concerns, even though she may sometimes differ in interpretation of events and in the formulation of responses.

The Caribbean Basin, composed of the islands of the Caribbean and the mainland nations that border that sea to the south and west, has become a major crisis area. It is a region in which internal wars have been heavily overlaid by East-West conflict and North-South division. Ideological struggle affects virtually every country, and few are free of indigenous conflict sources. Nevertheless, only three Caribbean Basin nations are in turmoil, while seventeen are not. The three are El Salvador, Guatamala and, less disastrously, Nicaragua; while Honduras seems on the brink of making a fourth. All are Central American nations: hence the focus of this study.

The roots of these conflicts are for the most part buried deep in each country's history. They are social and economic, becoming political through their dynamic emergence as challenges to the status quo. Although most regimes claim revolutionary origins, many have failed to adapt to meet the needs of their peoples, so that fresh waves of revolutionaries have risen up, hoping to take their place. In one Central American country, Nicaragua, the newcomers have succeeded, at least in the first stage of seizing power. Whether or not they can succeed in meeting the needs of their people has yet to be seen. Meanwhile, the new rulers are challenged both by the remnants of the old regime and by defectors from their own ranks who fear that the revolution is being betrayed. El Salvador is the next country where the revolutionary process has progressed almost to the point of civil war. Although there are marked similarities between the methodology of the battle being waged here and the recent war in Nicaragua, the differences are very great too. The revolution is more ideological and elitist, and less broadly based.

In Guatamala, the revolution is at a different stage, and in Honduras, it is an embryo, although the conditions

for growth are present. Neither Costa Rica, Panama, nor Belize is immediately threatened by internal war. They are all vulnerable to coups and disturbances, just as they could be threatened by neighbours, particularly if revolutions in other countries were to succeed.

Strategically, the principal concern arises out of the political colouring of many revolutionary forces. The new Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and the guerrilla leaders in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras describe themselves as Marxists, of various stripes. There are broad front organizations which exhibit plurality; there are also narrowly Marxist-Leninist leaders in most key positions of influence. Their Marxism-Leninism may be Fidelist, with nationalist overtones, but some have cemented alliances with Cuba and the Soviet bloc, thus introducing an East-West dimension into Central American insurgency. And with Fidel Castro as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Nations, the "South" tends to be mobilized too. The security implications of these external influences will be examined in the course of this analysis.

This study begins with an overview of the region, taking in its geography, history, and strategic importance to the West. Still in this broad view, we then look at various external influences that may affect the course of internal wars. Countries are then discussed one by one, and the subject of this study is brought into sharper focus--insurgency and counterinsurgency. This is not a political, social or economic regional study, although these aspects necessarily receive some attention. It is a conflict study, concentrating on the motivations, methods, organizations, and performance of the two sides in each internal war, and on the potential for such violence in countries still at peace. The impact and significance of external influences on each conflict will be discussed.

Trends in regional conflict, both from the insurgent and the security force standpoints, will be analysed collectively. A final chapter will contain conclusions. This study is not a policy paper leading to a list of recommended actions. It is a background paper providing facts and analysis that may be useful in the formulation of policy. Our conclusions, therefore, will point to options and their likely consequences, rather than to a course of action.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE REGION

#### General

The Central American countries--Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the newly independent, formerly British, territory of Belize--link the two great land masses of North and South America. They form a distinctive region that tapers from north to south to the point where the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are very close. Together they occupy 544,700 square km, which is less than the size of Texas, but more than twice that of the United Kingdom. The total population is in the region of 23 million, increasing at about 3.2% per year. Whereas in Guatemala only about half the countryside is populated, in El Salvador the available land can scarcely support the dense population. Taken as a whole, the region can be compared in size to Manitoba, with a population not far short of the whole of Canada.

The degree of development differs sharply. Costa Rica has the highest standard of living, earning the title "the Switzerland of Central America"; Honduras, in contrast, has one of the lowest standards of living.

Geographically, these countries have much in common. All are mountainous, have a similar climate, and produce much the same kind of products--mainly agricultural; bananas, cotton, sugar, coffee, cocoa and cattle. However, there are sharp differences in the racial composition and traditions of their peoples. Costa Ricans are almost wholly white, Guatemalans are largely Amerindian or of mixed blood; Hondurans, Nicaraguans and Salvadoreans are almost entirely mestizo.

Panama has the most racially varied population, with a large white group. (The distinction between mestizo and Indian is as often cultural as racial; mestizo speak Spanish and wear European-style clothes even if, as is often the case, they are pure Indian by blood.)

Some observers compare the countries of the region to city-states rather than larger nation-states. They point out that politics in a city-state are qualitatively different from politics as we know them. The small state permits politics to be more personalized, family-based, organic, cliquish, patrimonial, clannish or even tribal. Violence and extra-constitutional challenges to power, it is said, may be endemic and even "normal". Certainly, the larger scale, impersonal institutions of politics, such as parties, legislatures, etc., are seen as less important and real than in the nation-state. The argument goes on to suggest that this city-state outlook accounts for a diminished concern about elections, and an enhanced fear of disorder which justifies strong authority and discipline to defend the weakly established political framework. (See, for instance, Roland H. Ebel, "Political Instability in Central America," Current History, vol. 81, no. 472 [1982].)

Being relatively small in size, population and resource endowment, the Central American states have tended to be dominated by more powerful neighbours, particularly Mexico and the United States. But in spite of attempts at political and economic union dating from the early nineteenth century, they remain today distinct and separate.

### Early History

The Maya civilization is thought to have originated in about 100 A.D. in the Pacific highlands of Guatemala and El Salvador. After 200 years of evolution, it entered what is known today as its "classic" period when the civilization flourished in what are now Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and

Chiapas and parts of Campeche (Mexico). This period lasted until 900-1000 A.D., after which time the Mayas, forced to converge on Yucatán after a successful invasion of their lands by non-Maya people (a rival theory holds that the challenge came from a peasants' revolt), came under the influence of the Toltecs who also lived in the area.

The Toltecs gradually spread their empire as far as the southern borders of Guatemala. They, in turn, were conquered by the Aztecs, who did not, however, penetrate far into Central America. At the time of the coming of the Spaniards at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Mayan civilization had long since disappeared. In its place there had evolved various cultural groups--the Pipil of El Salvador; the Lenca in Honduras; the Suma on the northern border of Nicaragua; the Miskito on the "Mosquito" coast of the Caribbean; the Guaymí in Costa Rica; and the San Blas in Panama.

The Spaniards and Portugese explored the area, seeking gold and converts. In 1513 the governor of the colony of Darién was the energetic Balboa. Taking 190 men, he crossed the isthmus in 18 days and caught the first glimpse of the Pacific. A few days later he was striding into the water, sword in hand, possessing it and all neighbouring lands in the name of the King of Spain. In April 1519, Cortés began his conquest of Mexico. Then, from the nodal points of Panama and Mexico Cities, the isthmus was conquered and colonized from both extremes. Panama was ruled from Bogotá, but the rest of Central America was subordinate to the Viceroyalty of Mexico City, with Guatemala City as an Audiencia for the area. Even at this early stage, it was Panama that was seen as being of strategic importance--the other provinces were of small value.

European diseases killed the Indians by the thousands, much reducing the indigenous population. Spaniards married freely with the survivors, creating the restizo populations

of today. The European or mixed settler groups of Central America were too poor and too scattered to permit or encourage close control from Madrid. In 1811, two Salvadoran priests organized an armed revolt. They removed the Spanish officials and proclaimed Salvadoran independence. However, the Audiencia responded quickly and suppressed the revolt. Independence in the colonies had to await collapse at the imperial centre.

This came very soon. The Spanish revolution of 1820 precipitated revolt in Central America. In February 1821 the Mexican patriot, Iturbide, announced his plan for an independent Mexico. Central Americans decided to follow suit, and a declaration of independence was made in Guatemala City. There was no effective Spanish resistance. Iturbide invited the Central Americans to join his new empire, an invitation which was accepted, then regretted, and finally cancelled. The Mexican republic acknowledged their independence in 1824. With a constitution modelled on that of the United States, the central provinces formed the Provincial Unidas del Centro de América, with a seat of government in Guatemala City. Catholicism was declared the state religion and slavery was abolished.

This union was to be short-lived. In 1828 Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica joined El Salvador in revolt against an unpopular central government. General Francisco Morazán, in charge of the army of Honduras, defeated the Federal Forces, ousted them from El Salvador, and later captured Guatemala City. He overhauled the Federation and became its leader. But conservatives on the one hand and Indians on the other opposed him, and eventually, in 1838, the Federal Congress virtually abolished itself by permitting each province to govern itself as it chose. Morazán became El Salvador's president. Other states, fearing his intentions, made war against him and forced him to quit the

region. There was then a general massacre of liberals throughout Central America. In 1842 Morazán returned and made his final bid to reestablish the Federation. Opponents defeated him and he was shot in 1842. With him perished the practical hope of Central American political union, although from 1842 until 1844 there was a new confederation involving El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

The Spanish conquest imposed upon Central American Indian culture the Roman Catholic religion, the hacienda system of large plantations run by slave or near-slave labour, and Roman Law. Imperialism in time generated a revolutionary spirit, which remains as a generalized ideal in the region. Images of martyrdom and of the messianic revolutionary have been important cultural symbols for many decades.

This spirit has been opposed by a rigid social system framed around the Church, the powerful land-owners (the oligarchy) and the military. Although this structure has undergone change, it remains firm enough to provide a focus for revolutionary challenges and it is particularly susceptible to Marxist critique.

Costa Rica, with its mainly white population, is in a sense a country apart, as for quite different reasons is Belize, the recently independent nation squeezed between Mexico, Guatemala, and the Caribbean. Panama was part of Columbia until 1903. The history of the other four republics from the breakdown of Federation to the twenties of the present century was tempestuous in the extreme: civil war, war against neighbours, shifting alliances and tensions, and recurrent dictatorship have been the norm. War broke out between El Salvador and Guatemala in 1876 while delegates from the five republics were discussing union. President Barrios of Guatemala was killed in 1885 while trying to enforce union. In 1893 Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras

entered into a partial Federation, but this was quickly overturned. In 1907 José Santos Zelaya, dictator of Nicaragua, attempted to unite Central America by force. The other states resisted and Mexico and the United States intervened to bring the war to an end. In the same year delegates from the republics signed a treaty at Washington providing for the maintenance of peace and the compulsory judicial settlement of all disputes, and established a Central American Court of Justice, which functioned until 1918. In 1921 another attempt at federation failed.

#### The Role of the United Kingdom

In 1678 the Governor of Jamaica set up a protectorate of the Indians along the Mosquito coast, where the British were interested in logging. During the nineteenth century, a new interest developed--to construct a canal across the isthmus. This European presence was not welcomed by the United States, and under diplomatic pressure Britain in 1860 signed a treaty with Nicaragua recognizing the latter's sovereignty over the Miskito Indians. In 1894, however, when Nicaraguan troops entered Miskito territory and the Indians applied to Britain for help, the British (with American encouragement) landed forces at Bluefields. Britain dropped her interest in an interoceanic canal and left this project in United States hands. Her remaining stake in the region was the colony at Belize, then called British Honduras. Guatemala has repeatedly claimed sovereignty over this territory. The granting of independence in 1981 has not resolved this problem. Britain retains a residual defence commitment and role in Belize.

#### The Role of the United States

Concerned by a threat of European intervention to suppress the revolts of the Spanish-American colonies in Mexico, Central and South America, President James Monroe

in 1823 announced his famous "Doctrine". This maintained:

1. that the American continent was no territory for future European colonization;
2. that there was an essentially different political system in the Americas from those in Europe;
3. that the U.S.A. would regard any attempt by European powers to extend their influence in the Americas as dangerous to its peace and security; and
4. that the U.S.A. would not interfere with existing European colonies, nor participate in purely European wars.

The Doctrine remained the basis of American foreign policy for over a century, being modified, notably by President Polk in 1845 who declared "The people of this continent alone have the right to decide their own destiny," and by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 when he announced that the U.S.A. was "an international police power" for the American continent.

In 1849 the U.S. made her first overtures of friendship to Nicaragua, supporting the Nicaraguan government against coastal British encroachments. At this stage Nicaragua was a favoured site for an interoceanic canal. When the canal site shifted to that part of Colombia that is now Panama, United States interest moved with it. Here it was the French who had to be replaced in the sponsorship of the canal, and this too was achieved. Both the canal and the Panamanian nation were, in effect, American accomplishments. Because of the canal's strategic and economic significance, this country has always been the major focus of U.S. interest in Central America, and this is unchanged today.

The Nicaraguan connection was brought back to life by the reckless regional policies of the dictator, General Zelaya, and by 1912 the U.S.A. had become a kind of overlord in that country. This involvement lasted until 1933. Elsewhere, American influence has tended to be economic, in the

form of what is now often described as neo-colonialism. Guatemala, more than any other nation, became the quint-essential "banana republic", with nearly every aspect of its national life controlled or influenced by the United Fruit Company. The contradiction between, on the one hand, a clear American desire for hegemony in the region including total control over the canal (the international police power) and, on the other, ideological opposition to colonialism (the Polk amendment) has seemingly pushed the United States into the worst of both worlds. Her grasp on power has often been feeble where the political stakes were highest, and strong where the economic factor has been uppermost. But economic control has often amounted to political power without responsibility, and this can leave an unwelcome legacy.

#### Regional Influences

By the late 1950s, the revolutions of the early nineteenth century had in many Central American republics run their courses, becoming no more than rhetoric to decorate reactionary, static regimes. The old revolutionary legacy was used as a weapon against social and economic reform and against new revolutionary movements. The success of Castro's revolution in Cuba changed the balance of power in the Caribbean Basin and changed too the political hopes and beliefs of the young and the radical in the whole region.

Within six months of Castro's victory, a mixed Panamanian-Cuban guerrilla force attempted to seize the Panama Canal after a period of rural insurgency, but surrendered in May 1959 to an Organization of American States (OAS) reaction unit. In June 1959, a force of 114 men led by Dr. Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, publisher of the Managua newspaper La Prensa, invaded Nicaragua. This attack also failed. Chamorro was imprisoned but released in 1960. The



flame of revolution had spread too quickly, the "objective conditions" were not in place. But the hope did not die with the failed uprisings.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the region was seriously affected by the escalating cost of imported oil and declining prices for their major exports. This caused serious inflation, high unemployment, declining gross domestic product growth, enormous balance-of-payments deficits, and a pressing liquidity crisis. These economic conditions tended to undermine government credibility and encourage radical opposition, to the advantage of revolutionary leaders.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKDROP TO INSURGENCY

#### United States Policies

In a recent study of the region for the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Michael Kryzanck concluded that the era of U.S. intervention--1898 to 1934--provided five main lessons on the effects of an aggressive U.S. military and civilian presence:

1. It was easier to become involved than to withdraw. Some host countries therefore became protectorates.
2. Natives did not appreciate the modernization of their countries by the U.S., remembering instead the legacy of military occupation.
3. A U.S. presence spurred nationalism and encouraged militant radicalism.
4. The U.S. was unable to establish a firm base of democracy in occupied countries in spite of good intentions. To ensure internal security the U.S. set up National Guards which later supported oppression.
5. Intervention by the U.S. won that country a reputation as champion of the status quo. By supporting reactionary governments the U.S. lost opportunities for easing the transition of power to popular successor regimes. (AEI Foreign and Defense Policy Review, vol. IV, no. 2 [1982].)

These lessons, we believe, are relevant today. They act as powerful disincentives against deeper U.S. involvement in Central American insurgency, particularly in El Salvador and Guatemala.

United States policy has also to take account of the still considerable effect of the "Vietnam Syndrome". This state of mind, or gut feeling in the Nation's perceptions, cannot be defined with certainty, but it seems to warn many Americans:

1. to stay out of foreign wars, particularly insurgency wars, because no amount of American money, troops and firepower can match the staying power and fighting quality of an ideologically committed enemy;
2. that the efficacy of military force, per se, is not what it used to be;
3. that it is morally unsound for America to use its massive power to influence the outcome of distant civil wars in impoverished developing nations; and
4. that the methodology of modern warfare is anyway inherently immoral.

In combination, these warnings amount to massive uncertainty over United States ability, will and moral right to influence events in the Third World. The inquiries into the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other intelligence bodies spread the feeling of guilt and inadequacy wider. The Carter Administration's attempts to construct a new moral base on the platform of Human Rights, although fundamentally sound, backfired against U.S. self-confidence because it was turned around and used against America by hostile propaganda agencies. More recently still, the failed rescue mission in Iran seemed to discredit American military talent. Countering insurgency, it is accurately felt, is not an activity in which technological and manufacturing prowess are decisive: since these have traditionally been America's military ace cards, there is a need for new military philosophies.

But these are not being developed. The U.S. Army has reduced its counterinsurgency capability since the mid-1970s, concentrating its attention on full-scale European-style war.

The Special Forces retain a keen interest, but the mainstream American career officer tends to see counter-insurgency as a minor concern, one that is unlikely to enhance his promotion prospects. There is fresh interest in reaction forces, both in the strategic sense (the Rapid Deployment Force) and the tactical (the anti-terrorist role): neither is particularly suitable for protracted counter-guerrilla war.

Yet, in spite of these several negative factors, the United States can hardly rule out the possible use of force, direct or indirect, in Central America. The region is certainly seen as too important to "go by default". Consequently, its protection may one day present the U.S. leadership with a choice of unwelcome options.

To keep that day from dawning, current U.S. policy to Central America aims to find a middle course between the support of reactionary or brutal regimes and permitting such regimes to be replaced by Marxist-Leninist successors allied to the Soviet Union and Cuba. There is support for democratic political institutions and the free market economy. Less is said about human rights than under the Carter Administration, but there is strong concern that governments should progressively improve the legitimacy of their rule by behaving better. U.S. support is to take the form of sustained political, economic and military cooperation, including:

1. a relatively small but indispensable military assistance programme--mainly in terms of equipment, but with an element of training and education;
2. a substantial programme of economic assistance (This is described below.);
3. a new proposal for long-term trade and investment measures, in conjunction with other hemispheric powers;

4. a commitment to lively, working democracy in the region, rather than democracy in name only; and
5. a determination to use U.S. influence to help neighbours overcome human rights abuses.

Spokesmen point to recent elections in Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador as positive indicators, and express the hope that the March 1982 coup in Guatemala will lead to reforms there. Over Nicaragua, the U.S. expresses optimism that a settlement will be negotiated concerning the arms build-up and support for nearby insurgents; also that the Sandinista pledge to hold free elections will be honoured. U.S. support for land reform schemes in El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica is seen as part of the socio-economic effort.

The measures of economic assistance and trade stimulation were unveiled before the OAS by President Reagan on February 24, 1982. They covered the whole Caribbean Basin, and are described as the Caribbean Basin Initiative. Mr. Reagan announced these plans:

1. free trade for Caribbean Basin products exported to the United States;
2. significant tax incentives for U.S. investment in the Basin;
3. a supplemental fiscal year 1982 appropriation of \$350 million to assist countries with special economic problems;
4. technical assistance and training;
5. close cooperation in the endeavour by Mexico, Canada and Venezuela; encouragement to European, Japanese and other Asian assistance; and
6. special measures for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

It is too soon to pass judgement on this Initiative, except to note that the emphasis on socio-economic rather than purely military response to the region's problems seemed to overturn

the Reagan Administration's stereotype media image. If the Initiative can be made to work, it may go far towards creating conditions in which democratic institutions and free market economies can flourish. Thus far, it has not proceeded much beyond rhetoric.

#### Strategic Considerations

In the opinion of Ambassador J. William Middendorf II, the U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, the recent resurgence of Soviet activity in Central America and the Caribbean, directed mainly through Cuba, spells a threat to the security of the Western hemisphere as great as any since the 1962 missile crisis (speech, Leeds Castle, England, 23 July 1982). He attributes this Soviet interest to recognition of Latin America--especially the Caribbean Basin--as the strategic underbelly of the United States and the Achilles Heel of NATO.

In peacetime, 44% of all foreign tonnage and 45% of all crude oil shipped to the U.S. passes through the Caribbean. In war, half of NATO's supplies and most of the U.S. reinforcements and petroleum for forces in Europe would embark from Gulf ports and sail through the Florida straits. The region is also seen as the strategic linchpin between vital interests in the Atlantic and the Pacific. The Panama Canal saves a 7,400 nautical mile trip around Cape Horn.

Moreover, it is argued, in a period when the Soviets are increasingly emboldened to act offensively nearer to their own sphere of interest, it serves her interests to preoccupy the United States in the Western hemisphere, thus gaining a free hand in Asia, Europe and Africa. The potential outflow of refugees, on the Cuban model, is an additional factor.

Harvard professor Jorge I. Dominguez has analysed U.S. interests in a recent study (Dominguez, U.S. Interests and Policies in the Caribbean and Central America

[Washington, 1982]). His conclusions differ from those expressed by the Ambassador. Concerning Central America, Dominguez asserts that Panama and its canal is the sole objective U.S. interest, and that even this has less strategic importance than is often claimed. Modern warfare, he believes, has reduced its relative value. Nuclear weapons could close it and, in peace or conventional war, no U.S. aircraft carrier on active duty can traverse the canal. With a multi-ocean Navy, the U.S. ordinarily conducts few transfers between fleets. Economically, the canal has become more important to the ocean trade of other countries (mostly Latin American) than to the United States.

Dominguez doubts if any other Central American country is of objective interest to the U.S., and he considers that the U.S. therefore has, in principle, many choices concerning the degree of its involvement in the region. Panama excluded, the region accounts for only 0.5% of the U.S. worldwide economic investment and for a modest, and declining, share of U.S. trade.

It is in the field of subjective interests that Dominguez believes that Americans feel most strongly about the region. He lists Democracy and Human Rights, Political Order, Ideological Conflict, the Defence of Capitalism, Regional Stability, International Terrorism and the Narcotics Trade, and the Defence of U.S. Hegemony as subjective interests that shape American policies. All but the last of these interests, he concludes, have two common features. They can become extraordinarily important to U.S. policy-makers if the latter so choose, and they can be ignored in Washington, as they have been at various times in recent decades. As for hegemony, Dominguez stresses the high degree of American success and influence in the region, almost regardless of policy and performance, and the relatively small degree of Soviet involvement outside Cuba, or of Cuban involvement outside Nicaragua and

Grenada. He believes that fear of "another Cuba" is misplaced. Consequently he recommends that United States policy towards the region be framed in a more relaxed and less bi-polar manner, stressing the wide choice of options available.

This analyst is grateful for the Dominguez analysis and others like it as correctives to the somewhat alarmist view outlined earlier. Certainly, the United States stands to lose prestige and influence if she overrates the potential and the performance of her opponents, and overreacts to a false scenario. Nevertheless, the subjective interests are not to be discounted too easily. In what is essentially a political, ideological and psychological struggle between the West and Moscow-led Marxist-Leninism, the decisive factor is the state of men's minds. The Soviets appreciate this. Their military build-up in Europe has earned them the fear and consequently the respect of many West Europeans: it has partially undermined the political will of the NATO countries. The changed "correlation of forces" on that continent has had its intended effect on men's minds. By the beginning of 1980, a rather similar climate of defeatism was beginning to affect Central America. American indecisiveness combined with the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua created a "climate of collapse". Mexico, the Socialist International and other spectators hedged their bets by backing revolutionary forces. Whether or not subsequent events have lessened or merely postponed the prospects of war in the region it is difficult to say. Perhaps Dominguez's apparently relaxed view owes in part to the more determined and outwardly confident tone in Washington.

In the political, ideological and psychological struggle, there is a danger that, at the point where the apparent correlation of forces tips in Moscow's favour, or



where, in Marxist-Leninist jargon, history becomes irresistible, partial American hegemony may give way to Soviet hegemony. Dominguez speaks rather carelessly when he discusses Soviet influence. His list of Soviet assets has grown from one country to three in the past three years. Viewed from Moscow, this is not bad progress, and El Salvador and Guatemala may both be part-way to joining the list. To be sure, it has yet to be proven that Nicaragua is fully committed to the Moscow camp, and there are those who see hope for a "Zimbabwe" style settlement in El Salvador. These are valid considerations, which will be discussed more fully in the relevant chapters. However, in terms of upsetting the balance of power, of displacing American influence with, at least, regimes hostile to the U.S., a point might be reached in Central America where there was no turning back, when even the democratic countries would succumb. Domino theories are unfashionable, just as it is regarded as simplistic to address regional issues in bi-polar terms. Yet each has relevance, as the peoples of Cambodia and Laos have discovered: the need, surely, is to keep them in perspective.

If most of Central America did take the Nicaraguan path, and if Moscow then extended its influence through Cuba to achieve hegemony there, what may now be termed subjective U.S. interests would become objective. The threat to Panama, Caribbean nations and Mexico would be serious. Latin America as a whole would feel insecure, and the military strength of the Western Alliance would be weakened by a shift of emphasis away from Europe towards the defence of continental North America. This may be an unlikely scenario. However, so long as it remains even remotely possible, United States concern is justified. It would seem to this analyst that Canadian and allied concern is also appropriate. It is equally true that these concerns ought not to dominate policy-making to the point where indigenous problems and legitimate socio-economic

concerns are neglected. Both Middendorf and Dominguez make valuable contributions; our assessment lies between.

### The Spectators

World attention has been focussed on Central America since the Nicaraguan revolution. At present, El Salvador is in the spotlight, although this has been dimmed since the March 1982 elections upset journalistic expectations. Media coverage has been no better and no worse than average, being apt to dwell upon the sensational and immediate (particularly in the electronic media) at the expense of origins, issues and key factors. United States television seemed intent on presenting El Salvador as potentially "another Vietnam", while world coverage generally has been hostile to successive Salvadoran governments and critical of United States support of them. Coverage "from the other side" has invariably been with the consent of the insurgents and, in consequence, has tended to glamorize. Blame for this unbalanced coverage can be laid on the regime and its extremist supporters, whose brutal behaviour and apparent disdain for world opinion has undoubtedly offended liberals worldwide. But although the unbalanced reporting is understandable, it is still unbalanced. Whatever these regimes do, even those things that are enlightened, tends to be denigrated, while the triumph of rebel forces is portrayed as both inevitable and welcome.

Mexico and Venezuela both supported the Nicaraguan revolution. While both support change in El Salvador, Venezuela would prefer a negotiated settlement on democratic terms while Mexico expressed outright support for the rebels. This Mexican enthusiasm for revolution abroad seems to be lessening under new presidential leadership, and in the face of a severe domestic economic crisis. The Caribbean Basin Initiative

may also draw Mexico into partnership with the U.S. Nevertheless, Mexico City remains a safe haven for Salvadoran rebels, particularly propaganda front organizations, and the August 1981 joint Mexican-French statement recognizing the Salvadoran rebels as a "representative political force" has not been retracted.

That statement brought a sharp reaction from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Venezuela, whose foreign ministers rebuked Mexico and France for interfering in the internal affairs of El Salvador and reaffirmed support for the regime. Other Latin American nations made similar points.

France's action followed the election of a socialist government and reflected the position adopted by the Socialist International (SI). This body represents socialist and democratic parties that have traditionally opposed totalitarian socialism. In recent years, under Willy Brandt's leadership, SI policies have become increasingly ambivalent over this important principle: it has almost seemed as though some social democrats in West Europe had lost faith in their cause and concluded that the struggle to contain Marxism-Leninism was hopeless. Both in Third World issues and in the debate over peace and disarmament, SI leaders have tended to back the Soviet position, or at least to take a neutral stand which effectively amounted to the same thing. While support for the broadly based Nicaraguan revolution was understandable, SI commitment to a Marxist-Leninist victory in El Salvador is difficult to explain except in the context of a loss of faith in democracy. (See, for instance, Arnold M. Silver, "The New Face of the Socialist International," Institutional Analysis No. 16 [Washington, Heritage Foundation, 1981]; Constantine C. Menges, "Central American Revolutions: A New Dimension of Political Warfare," Proceedings of the Eighth Annual National Security Affairs Conference 13-15 July 1981 [Washington, NDU Press, 1981].)

At the September 1981 SI meeting in Paris, the Bureau resolved: "In particular, the Socialist International stresses the need for a comprehensive political solution in El Salvador in which the alliance of the FDR-FMLN should participate as an important political representative force." The United States was condemned for its policies, but no criticism was levelled against the Soviet Union or Cuba for theirs. Although the SI uses the plural rebel front organization as a symbol of democratic intent, members are well aware of the narrowly Marxist-Leninist nature of the real revolutionary leadership. They must know too that the only "comprehensive political solution" acceptable to that leadership is proletarian dictatorship.

#### The Church

The Church's power is based on the fact that 90 percent of the population of the region are Roman Catholics, on its extensive ownership of property and its consequent role as employer, and on the role of clerical parties and the influence the Church exerts over moderate and conservative parties. In addition, the Church has taken a strong position on social issues, being today a strong supporter of moderate social and economic reform. Conservatives throughout Central America espouse tradition and authority as they emanate from Church doctrine: they try to use the traditional Catholic values to uphold the political and economic status quo. Radicals turn for support to Church liberals, who support left wing causes in search of a more equitable social system. During the 1960s and 1970s, some Catholic leaders formulated the "theology of liberation". In 1979 this was repudiated by Pope John Paul II, in so far as it involved the Church in Marxist or other violent causes. The Pope supported the need to achieve a just social order by peaceful means.

The Liberation Theology grew out of the Church's involvement with the working poor, which began in the early

1960s with the promotion of the worker-priest concept in various South American countries. For the priests, this was a profoundly unsettling experience in consciousness-raising. They began to see religion and the social order through a different lens. The theology which emerged was an amalgam of Marxist social analysis and a reinterpretation of the prophetic tradition in Christianity. This came to mean interpreting the gospel within a framework of social conflict and exploitation rather than social harmony and consensus, and of demanding radical changes in the system itself. Secondly it came to mean radical community leadership and organization for the full participation of ordinary people in the shaping of their own lives. Such participation often took the form of terrorism or civil war, and priests who were committed to this theology have frequently become terrorists and, often, leaders. The theologians of the movement are emphatic that liberationists are not simply handing over the Church as an instrument of Marxist-Leninist revolution, but are creating something new. A major crisis seems to occur when such a revolution succeeds, as in Nicaragua. Some priests are unable to accept the reality of Marxism-Leninism and the injustice it creates: others, such as Nicaragua's foreign minister, Fr Miguel d'Escoto, appear able to reconcile their two loyalties. Overall, the liberal Church seems better disposed toward communism when the latter is in opposition than when it is in power.

D'Escoto is a product of the Maryknoll School of Theology in New York State, a stronghold of radical Catholic views. Missionaries and lay workers influenced by this and similar schools have often worked in Central American countries, reinforcing the liberation theology. The nuns who were murdered in El Salvador came from Maryknoll. Clearly, conservative regimes and their extreme supporters regard this movement as dangerously hostile. The division in the Church is restricted neither to Latin America nor to the Roman Catholic

religion. It runs through almost all the Churches of the West, and the network of Church meetings, publications, education activities, and messages from pulpits have often been tilted in favour of revolutionary movements. As in the countries concerned, this Western enthusiasm tends to close its eyes to the consequences of a Marxist takeover, shifting the focus to the next country in turmoil. We hear, for instance, very little about the persecution of the Church in Nicaragua in our Church magazines: the emphasis is on El Salvador and Guatemala.

### The Military

The military have been a salient feature of Central American politics, and militarism is endemic to the region. Only Costa Rica and, until recently, Panama have long histories of civilian government, and Belize does not share the Spanish historical legacy. Under militarism, the armed forces (often including the police) may influence the policy of civilian government, hold a veto over that government's actions, intervene in politics by temporarily removing a civilian government from office, or they may establish a long-term military regime. The last may either be under the control of a junta or a one-man dictatorship. The immediate causes of a military coup are either competition among the officer corps, the protection of the privileges and status of the military establishment, the desire to remove corrupt, incompetent, or otherwise unsatisfactory politicians from office, the need to restore law and order in a period of unrest, the removal of a leftist or even liberal regime or leader from office, or the desire to hasten the pace or change the direction of economic modernization.

Latin American militarism has been both strengthened and weakened by recent United States policies to the region. The Act of Bogota (1960) and the Alliance for Progress (1961) committed the U.S. to social reform there. Yet, because it

was felt that such reform could progress only in stable conditions, it also committed America to the strengthening of indigenous security forces. In an effort to resolve this dilemma, U.S. military training of Latin American officers has tried to show disapproval of military interference in government, to expose the trainees to democratic values, and to channel the military's energy into economically useful activities. This last ambition led to the promotion of the concept of "civic action" operations.

Civic action was also relevant to the emerging doctrine of counterinsurgency because it addressed the underlying social conditions of popular unrest. In the early 1960s, when the U.S. Army was plunging enthusiastically into counterinsurgency doctrine, America opened the U.S. Army School of the Americas, with the mission of training Latin American military in internal security. Soldiers from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama took courses. Others went to Fort Bragg. The International Police Academy was set up in the Canal Zone, to teach regional police officers operational techniques, riot control, etc. The OAS funded an Inter-American Defense College for more senior studies. However, the U.S. failure in Vietnam cast doubts on many doctrines and ideas, and the military in Latin America began to revert to less sophisticated methods. Police training was politically discredited and largely phased out. Recent developments in Central America, however, have revived U.S. interest in effective training schemes.

Today, the U.S. Army's Southern Command, located in Panama, operates three schools--the U.S. Army School of the Americas, a U.S.A.F. Center, and a U.S. Navy Training Center. These train officers and men from countries throughout Latin America, but the focus is on El Salvador and Honduras. Courses vary in length from two weeks to eleven months. For the Salvadoran army there is a special fourteen-week course

in infantry section leading, that vital level of counter-insurgency command that had previously been neglected. Training tries to discourage the atrocious behaviour that has characterized Salvadoran military operations and to encourage respect for human rights. During 1982, El Salvador planned to send 445 soldiers to the Panama school. Overall enrolment in 1981 was 1,535, compared to 704 in 1980.

Southern Command also despatches mobile training teams. These conducted 94 training missions in 1981, against 29 in 1979. Some 40% of the instructors at these schools are Latin Americans, a trend that may be expanded if the school eventually reverts to Panamanian ownership, currently planned for 1984. However, a 200-strong Argentinian training mission reportedly training anti-Communist forces in the region was pulled out during the Falklands war. These local training arrangements have been reinforced in 1982 by airlifting complete Salvadoran units to Fort Bragg for intensive training. But their performance since raises serious questions about the effectiveness of this program. However good the training may be, its overall effectiveness is likely to be limited by the politicized nature of many Central American military establishments. Professor Ernest Evans, of Catholic University, Washington, D.C., has listed three problem areas. First, in politicized establishments the criterion for promotion is not competence but political loyalty and reliability; second, reform is very difficult because it would upset too many people and risk another coup, so outside pressures for reform are unlikely to be heeded; third, a politicized military force is prone to disintegrate in crisis. For all these reasons, and because of the conservative nature of the military, the improved performance expected from U.S. training may not materialize. Instead of following a patient, coherent military strategy, military leaders may react to rebel challenges in the way they have



always reacted--with massive and indiscriminate force (Evans, "The Key Military Issues in the War in El Salvador," Conflict Quarterly, vol. II, no. 4 [Fredericton, 1982]).

The social and political forces which have led many Latin American countries to militarism are discussed by Robert Wesson in a recent study (Wesson, "The New Soldier-Ruler in Latin America," The Stanford Magazine, vol. 9, no. 1 [Stanford, 1981]). Wesson takes a more optimistic view than Evans. He says that educationally, the military elite stand well above any comparable civilian group and that morally, too, the armed forces consider themselves superior. The value system of the military is largely nonmonetary, there is training in patriotism, and soldiers see themselves as more dedicated to the national interest than either industrial capitalists, landed aristocrats, or workers.

This assessment sees modern Latin American militarism as quite different from the old-style caudillismo, or boss-ship, whereby an ambitious character simply used his influence in the armed forces to place himself in the presidential seat. In the new militarism, there may be a leader, but the movement is primarily corporate, representing the officer corps as a group. The military see themselves as the guardians of order, the bulwark against communism, and the leaders of national restoration. At the same time, they have often had to react to protect the economy from the ravages of populist policies: hence a conflict with politically "moderate" parties of the centre-left, whose wage and welfare policies, it is feared, bankrupt the country. For all their obvious shortcomings, Wesson considers it possible that the military in Latin America are the group best qualified to govern the state, although the need to find a better long-term arrangement is acknowledged.

So, while United States policies towards Central America are designed to weaken militarism while at the same time strengthening military professionalism, it is unclear

whether so complex a manoeuvre can be accomplished, particularly when a regime is under internal attack.

### Soviet Policy Towards the Region

Soviet policy towards Central America can be gauged from a study of official statements and of Soviet and Soviet-directed activities, and through an analysis of how the region fits into Soviet global strategy. In the end, the conclusions that are reached will depend as much on the perceptions of the analyst as upon empirical evidence, because the evidence is open to a wide range of interpretation.

The key question relates to Soviet imperial or ideological intentions. Leonid Brezhnev said in 1967 that "Experience shows that it is possible to defeat such a strong and perfidious opponent as imperialism only by confronting it with sober political calculation, cold-bloodedness and tenacity, as well as decisiveness and selfless preparation for struggle." He went on to assert: "The Communists are confronting this opponent with a strategy that is supported by a scientific analysis of the correlation of forces, both within countries and in the international arena" (Pravda, 4 November 1967). Was he merely playing to the CPSU gallery, or did he really intend to conquer the world for socialism? It is perhaps the question of our times, because if we get it wrong we may either wage an unnecessary protracted struggle, or find ourselves Sovietized and unable to redress our error.

Certainly events of the last twelve years confirm that Brezhnev was to be taken at his word when he wrote: "The CPSU has always striven to . . . support and develop the revolutionary struggle throughout the world" (L. I. Brezhnev, "The Communist Movement Has Entered a New Phase of Growth," in The Leninist Course [Moscow, 1970], pp. 427-447). In this respect the CPSU has become extremely bold in the 1970s and early 1980s--by direct action in Afghanistan, and

by proxy action in Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Caribbean Basin, as well as by more generalized propaganda and material support for rebels elsewhere.

Moreover, two new factors seem to have arisen. The first is an expression of confidence by Moscow in its ability to win quite quickly. This is different from the long-standing ideological commitment to ultimate victory, which is characteristic of all revolutions. The new confidence seems based on capabilities, rather than on vague historical or moral forces. Brezhnev put it thus in 1974:

"Having assessed the overall correlation of forces in the world, we came to the conclusion several years ago that there existed a real possibility of securing a radical turnabout in the international situation."

(Pravda, 15 June 1974)

This confidence may have been blunted a little since the Reagan Administration set out to improve the correlation of forces from the West's viewpoint, but in other respects, particularly through the serious failure of will in Western Europe and the strains in NATO, it may have grown.

The second new factor is the formal extension of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" to overseas socialist countries, notably Vietnam, Laos and Cuba, at the 26th Party Congress in 1981, confirming publicly what had been evolving through the 1970s. More recent statements have stressed the Soviet commitment to Cuba's defence, as well as claiming a sovereign right to do virtually anything they please by way of military cooperation with Cuba, in apparent disregard of the 1962 agreement. "The Soviet-Cuban cooperation of many years, dictated by the aims of Cuba's defence, comprises an inalienable right of two sovereign states. Any attempt to restrict this right is in crying contradiction with the accepted norms of international intercourse and is absolutely unfounded" (Pravda, 11 September 1979).

As though to show that those were no empty words, in 1981 the Soviet Union shipped three times as much

military supplies to Cuba as in 1980, so that they reached the highest level since the 1962 missile crisis. Cuba now has 227,000 men under arms, 175 MiG fighters, 650 tanks and 60 helicopters. In 1982 a second squadron of nuclear-capable MiG 23s was delivered. Soviet economic support for Cuba continues at the rate of \$US 9 million per day.

In a lucid and excellently documented analysis of Soviet aims in the region, from which some of the earlier quotations have been taken, Cleto di Giovanni Jr. and Mose L. Harvey conclude that Moscow's policy towards the region is based, first, on building up Cuban intervention forces for decisive action in due course, while at the same time trying to deter any U.S. reaction against Cuba (the bitter campaign against the Radio Marti proposal is indicative) and, second, on directly facing the U.S. with the new order and dimension of Soviet military power (di Giovanni and Harvey, Crisis in Central America [Miami, 1982]). These analysts see Soviet and Cuban assistance to the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions, and to the victorious Sandinistas, as evidence of the policy in action. They point to a frank article in the Soviet foreign affairs journal Novoe Vremia as evidence of a comprehensive regional strategy:

The strengthening of the Cuban socialist system and the growth of Cuba's international influence, the victory of the popular-democratic and anti-imperialist revolution in Nicaragua and the construction of a new society in that country in recent years, have given a powerful push to the revolutionary movement in Central America, directed against tyrannical military dictatorships set up and supported by the United States. In El Salvador the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front has unleashed a broad partisan war throughout the entire territory of the republic. In Guatemala four military-political organizations--the Insurgent Armed Forces, the Partisan Army of the Poor, the Organization of the Armed People, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Guatemalan Labour [Communist] Party have united; and having established the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, they are inflicting increasingly powerful blows against the government troops. The intensity of anti-government acts is growing in Honduras, where the

Francisco Morascan Liberation Front was born. Socio-political conflicts have become exacerbated in Costa Rica and Panama.

(Novoe Vremia, 19 March 1982)

"Domino theories" are usually attributed to the West. In this case, it seems to be the USSR that is promoting the idea. Another such source, the Director of the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, Georgi Arbatov, told Richard Feinberg that "the Central American region confronts the United States with a series of 'delayed-fuse land mines'" (Feinberg, "Central America: The View from Moscow," Washington Quarterly, vol. 5, no. 2 [Washington, 1982]).

Writing from Moscow, another analyst sees Soviet policy in Central America from a rather different viewpoint. In this scenario, the region has only a marginal place in Soviet policy, but two factors are important. One is Cuba, seen not merely as valuable leverage against the U.S., but as the source of surrogate fighters worldwide. The second is the revolutionary upsurge in Central America, which is welcomed in Moscow because of its economic and political side effects in Washington. Politically, it is felt, the presence of a large number of Hispanics in the U.S. has made American Latin American policy an increasingly domestic and divisive issue, and the issues also divide the U.S. from Europe (Dev Murarka, "Five Fetters on Soviet Policy in Central America," South [London, May 1982]).

The same analyst suggests that Cuba poses a particular problem for the USSR. Because of what it calls Washington's intimidating policies towards Cuba, the Soviets maintain a "protective presence" there. This is seen as a mixed blessing, since it provides ammunition for U.S. propaganda and complicates Soviet relations with other regional states. Furthermore, Cuba often acts on its own initiative, but Moscow gets blamed whatever the outcome.

These dismissive arguments may contain an element of truth. The Soviets must feel their military presence in the Caribbean is dangerously exposed. But they also clash with far more authoritative Soviet statements and, in a manner often practised by Soviet propagandists, they may be intended to provide ammunition for Western doves. For the committed Marxist-Leninist, the Soviet propaganda message is a clear call to arms; for the audience that might possibly act to upset such plans, the message is that no real danger exists.

This analyst fears that the di Giovanni-Harvey scenario is more accurate than Murarka's. It may, however, be in need of some softening, because Soviet intentions or hopes are not yet matched in the region by Soviet capabilities. This is a particularly important limitation for the USSR, whose policies are invariably cautious in circumstances of military inferiority. Jiri Valenta provides this softer assessment (Valenta, "Soviet Strategy in the Caribbean Basin," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings/Naval Review [Annapolis, 1982]). He believes that the Soviets continue to view the basin as being the "strategic rear" of the United States, and that they no longer believe the Monroe Doctrine to be viable in the area. Soviet strategy provides for support of guerrilla activities in countries having pro-U.S. and anti-communist regimes, and the pursuit of diplomacy in those nations friendlier to the USSR. Diplomacy had, for instance, been used towards Omar Torrijos' "progressive" regime in Panama and the "progressive" Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley until his defeat in 1980. Mexico and Costa Rica have received similar treatment. Using Cuba, and later Nicaragua, as guerrilla bases, the anti-Moscow regimes are dealt with one by one. Concerning Cuba, Valenta feels that although Castro's foreign policy is not totally subservient to that of the Soviet Union, it would be far-fetched to think of Cuba as an independent or even semi-independent actor. The financial subsidy and the supply of

arms are paid for by political support, massive intelligence, disinformation and subversive operations under KGB direction, the supply of proxy fighters in Third World wars, and the organization, training and operational control of guerrilla forces in the region.

Experience in Nicaragua seems to have changed Soviet ideologues' minds about the use of guerrilla-type warfare on the Cuban model to generate a revolution. They have for years condemned Che Guevara's ideas. Whilst not fully embracing the "foco theory", the earlier insistence on urban proletariat leadership has been reversed, at least for Latin American situations. The Soviet Latin American journal, Latinskaia Amerika, declared:

The experience of Nicaragua refuted previously existing distorted treatment of partisan actions, confirmed the correctness of the strategic directives of Che Guevara, embodied his idea of the creation of a powerful people's partisan movement.

(B. J. Koval, quoted di Giovanni and Harvey, op. cit.)

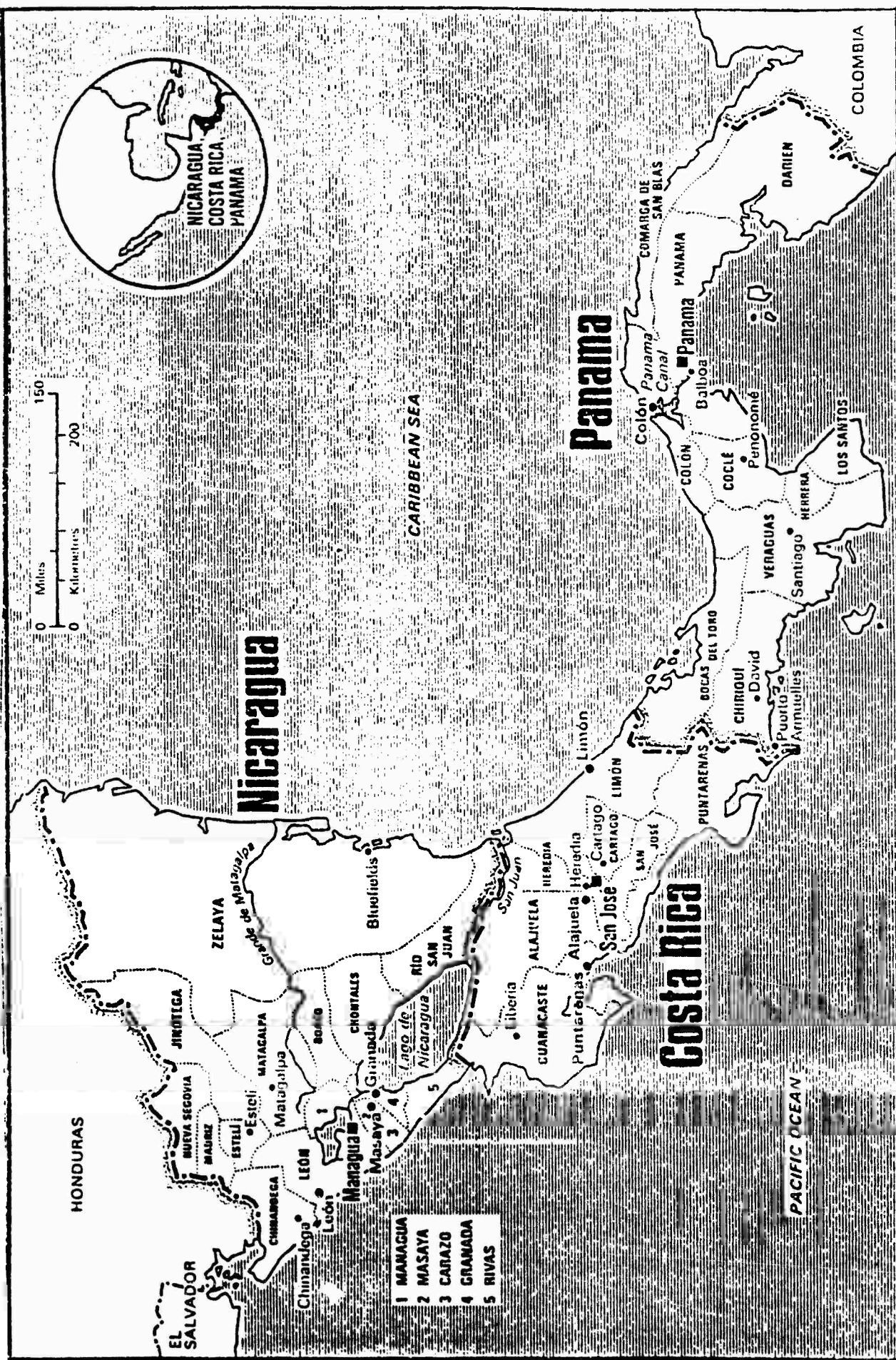
Viewed through Western eyes, this change of ideological stance may be seen as relatively unimportant, a dilettantish academic point for political scientists and sovietologists to mull over. But this may be to miss a key indicator of Soviet policy towards Central America.

For decades following Castro's victory, Moscow gave red or amber lights to Fidel's attempts to export his revolution. This was because the Soviets could not agree that a revolution could be conjured up by a small band of partisans, in the absence of appropriate "objective conditions", without the leadership of the "vanguard" (communist) party, without the close involvement of the urban working class. Approval of "the strategic directives of Che Guevara" amounts to a spectacular ideological somersault. How real is the change? This analyst does not for one instant believe that CPSU doctrine on something so fundamental to Marxism-Leninism has changed very much, if at all.

What has changed, and is changing, is the methodology of rebellion in Central America, compared to the Guevera adventures of rural Bolivia and the elitist terrorist campaigns of many other South American countries. The Nicaraguan revolution was in many respects fundamentally different from anything seen since the Cuban war. To be sure, it was Latin in character: the spirit of Guevera seemed to affect it. But at heart the strategy was far closer to Leninist, being based upon existing objective conditions, a near-communist "vanguard" party leading a mass "popular front", and the involvement of the urban proletariat. Also, it was successful. It would seem that Moscow has conceded a greater potential for what it calls partisans and we usually refer to as guerrillas. Beyond that, the stamp of approval probably implies recognition of changes in Central American methodology, rather than Kremlin ideology. The stamp also represents, after all the years of hesitancy, a green light. In this analyst's view, the Soviet Union is now openly and publicly committed to supporting Marxist-Leninist revolution throughout Central America.

This then is the political and strategic backdrop to insurgency in the Central American region. The study now turns to the analysis of the conditions of conflict in individual countries.





## CHAPTER THREE

### NICARAGUA

#### History

From independence in 1838, Nicaragua's small size, economic weakness and political divisions have subjected it to outside domination. Rival conservative and liberal political factions have traditionally fought for power. After three decades of conservative rule, a liberal revolution in 1893 brought General José Santos Zelaya to power. Zelaya ruled as an absolute dictator for sixteen turbulent years. The United States became increasingly involved in Nicaraguan affairs and by 1912, three years after the fall of Zelaya, it had become the overseer of Nicaragua's political and economic systems. Between 1912 and 1925 the U.S. kept the peace with a small detachment of marines. Between 1927 and 1933, a much increased marine force fought a protracted counterinsurgency campaign on behalf of the Nicaraguan government against an extreme nationalist of the anti-American left--Augusto C. Sandino. Initial U.S. success turned to frustration and failure as Sandino converted from conventional to guerrilla tactics. U.S. domestic opinion opposed the war. In January 1933 the marines were withdrawn to the States.

Within a month the Liberal Nicaraguan government had concluded a generous peace treaty with Sandino. However, one year later Sandino was taken from a state dinner in Managua and murdered by government agents. Some of his followers attempted a rising, but this was crushed. Counterinsurgency was now in the hands of the National Guard--formed with U.S. assistance to enable the U.S. Marines to be

withdrawn--and the director of this powerful body successfully campaigned for the presidency in 1936. General Anastasio Somoza remained in power until his assassination in 1956. His eldest son, Luis, succeeded him and was "elected" to his office in 1957. His term expired in 1963 when his Liberal Party successor, Rene Schick, was elected with opposition parties boycotting the election. The 1967 elections pitted Dr. Fernando Aguero, representing the opposition coalition dominated by the Conservative Party, against Luis' brother, Anastasio Somoza, Jr. The latter was overwhelmingly elected for the 1967-72 period. A three-man Junta ruled from 1972 until 1974, when Somoza again won the presidential election, this time with 90 percent of the vote.

Meanwhile, extra-constitutional opposition was rising in Nicaragua, reflecting the trend throughout much of Latin America in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution which brought Fidel Castro to power in January 1959. As early as June 1959, a force of 114 men led by Dr. Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the publisher of the principal Managua opposition newspaper La Prensa, invaded Nicaragua. Without much doubt, this was intended to reproduce a Cuban-style rebellion. Allegations of Cuban assistance were made at the time. However, the attack failed and Chamorro was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. A childhood friend of Somoza's, Chamorro was released after only one year, and returned to opposing the regime verbally, through his newspaper La Prensa. This was remarkable leniency, especially considering Chamorro's 1954 conviction of conspiring to overthrow the elder Somoza. The Somoza regime was indeed characterized by a fatal mixture of, on the one hand, extreme violence and repression and, on the other, a desire to appear constitutional, law-abiding and reasonable. Thus it was sufficiently vulnerable to international and especially American pressures concerning human rights to lower its

guard against subversive forces. It was not an airtight totalitarian state. But at the same time it dispensed seemingly gratuitous and arbitrary violence, sufficient to alienate its own people and other states.

The extreme and widespread unpopularity of the Somoza regime made it possible for revolutionary forces, some of them the survivors or heirs of the Sandino rebels, eventually to form a broad front of opposition. In 1962 Carlos Fonseca Amador organized the Nicaraguan Liberation Front in Havana and one year later the title was expanded to include the word "Sandino". The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), as this front was called, sent cadres to Cuba for training. The key positions were reserved for Sandinistas--Marxist revolutionaries of the Castro mold--while ideology was later temporarily subordinated to broadening the front. As early as 1970 a FSLN representative met high-ranking PLO members in Mexico City.

In 1972, an earthquake destroyed Managua. The ensuing corruption and profiteering on reconstruction contracts exceeded even the norm for Nicaragua under the Somozas. In 1974 the FSLN raided a Christmas party and captured several Somoza officials, whom they exchanged for political prisoners. Somoza instituted a wave of indiscriminate repression, under the cover of a "state of siege". In purely military terms, the government seemed to be winning.

In 1977 Government troops killed FSLN's leader, Carlos Aguero Chavarria. In spite of a spate of terror in the capital city following this death, the state of siege was lifted in September, apparently after U.S. prompting. One month later, Aguero's successor was killed. Somoza suffered a stroke in July, and subsequently his ability to govern effectively may have been impaired. A new U.S. Administration under President Carter moved in its first

year to curtail U.S. economic and military aid on grounds of human rights violations by the Somoza regime. Support for the revolutionaries was expressed by Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, Panama and Costa Rica.

In 1978 businessmen, students and the Church, under the leadership of Chamorro, pressed the regime to negotiate with the insurgents. Chamorro was promptly murdered by Somoza's agents. This event seems to have been a major turning point. Thenceforth, Somoza's only supporters were his National Guard. Virtually all other sections of the population strove in various ways for his downfall. The murder also set off widespread riots which in turn created repression, martyrs, and further alienation. Many Church leaders denounced the regime, while those already converted to "liberation theology" worked with the rebels. In August there was an abortive military coup, exposing opposition from traditionally conservative circles. In the same month FSLN guerrillas captured the entire Nicaraguan National Assembly, whose members they exchanged in return for political prisoners. In the fall of 1978 the FSLN launched a series of military attacks which failed through lack of preparation.

This first insurrection against Somoza evidently caught the Cubans by surprise. Castro remained cautious, advising the Sandinistas against an early renewed attempt at gaining full power. However, FSLN determination, evidence of the rebels' military prowess, and the willingness of other Latin American states to support the rebellion combined to convince Castro that Cuba ought to throw her weight behind the cause. Thereafter, Havana organized a massive arms lift for the second and final offensive against Somoza in mid-1979.

Although the 1978 rebel offensive failed, the brutality of the Somozist response, which included air attacks

against urban districts, achieved the final mobilization of the masses behind the FSLN. Such actions may also have inspired international efforts on the rebels' behalf. According to well-informed reports, there was a secret meeting in December 1978 between the social democratic president of Venezuela, Carlos Andros Perez, Fidel Castro, and Mexican representatives, in which roles were allocated according to capabilities. The Mexicans, the report says, agreed to secretly supply funds for the purchase of arms and for propaganda activities, Cuba would direct the military assets, and Venezuela would lead a diplomatic offensive to be backed up by a threat of an oil embargo to keep the United States neutralized. (Constantine C. Menges, "Central American Revolutions: A New Dimension of Political Warfare," The 1980s: Decade of Confrontation? [Washington, NDU Press, 1981]).

On 4 May 1979 Costa Rica hosted a worldwide gathering of the Socialist International and Nicaraguan rebel leaders in San José, and a decision was taken to undertake a "total offensive against Somoza". Mexico then broke off diplomatic relations with Nicaragua and terminated all sales to the Somoza regime. When the FSLN launched their June 1979 military offensive, American efforts to sponsor an inter-American peace-keeping force to supervise democratic elections in Nicaragua were effectively countered by Mexico and Venezuela, who carried the day in a public diplomacy offensive aimed, as much as any target, at U.S. opinion. On 13 June 1979 the Socialist International stated "In the midst of the tragic events now happening to the people of Nicaragua, the Socialist International repeats its previous condemnations of the Somoza family dictatorship and its approval in strongest terms of the legitimate battle which is led by the FSLN" (quoted Menges, op. cit.). Three days later the Andean Pact nations, led by Venezuela, conferred formal belligerent status to the FSLN and on 17 June the Sandinistas named a

five-member provisional government. On 23 June the OAS passed a resolution calling for Somoza's resignation, and the United States opened direct negotiations with the FSLN on 28 June, signifying a final withdrawal of U.S. support from Somoza.

United States policy throughout the Nicaraguan civil war was ambivalent and frequently self-defeating. Enlightened and yet burdened by the Human Rights ideology, embarrassed by Cuba's vastly increased role as Soviet proxy war-winner in Africa, and torn between loyalty to an old ally--Somoza--and revulsion at what that ally was doing to his own people, the administration fumbled its way towards the worst of all worlds: half-hearted support for the regime, followed by a boycott of military supplies which effectively ensured its defeat, followed by an attempt at a negotiated settlement leaving security in the hands of the notorious National Guard, followed by capitulation and recognition of the FSLN.

Out of office, the Republicans were able to criticize freely, although a more conservative policy would not have served American interests better. By no means was the Nicaraguan revolution "communist", even though communists were active leaders. It really was a broadly based movement. By no means could the criticism of Somoza and his National Guard be written off as hostile propaganda: too much was true, and the truth was totally unacceptable for any democratic nation to tolerate. The idea that America might have thrown its weight behind the status quo was never realistic.

Yet the radical alternative, of providing active or merely diplomatic support for the rebels from an early stage, could hardly have been realistic either. Until other Latin American nations came out in active opposition to Somoza such blatant interference in Nicaragua's internal affairs might have damaged American relations with those countries. How would domestic American opinion have responded to the administration siding with Cuba, at the moment when that country

was siding with the Soviet Union in Africa and elsewhere? The truth is that the Nicaraguan revolution put America over a barrel.

The only area where criticism is perhaps valid is the U.S. response to the Sandinista victory. In theory, it ought to have been possible for America to have stepped in as a new friend, to have eased Cuban and other Soviet bloc influence out, to have encouraged trade and cultural links, mended fences, and helped maintain the plural nature of the new regime and the democratic credentials of the revolution. This question will be debated for many years, just as it is still argued in respect of post-revolutionary Cuba. Only one point need to be made here: in practice it takes two to form a friendship.

The civil war in Nicaragua ended on 19 July 1979 when the FSLN occupied Managua and assumed power. Somoza had fled the country two days earlier. The revolution had left some towns leveled, about 600,000 persons homeless, and had cost about 45,000 lives. As the Somoza family had owned much of Nicaragua's wealth, the national debt stood at \$1.65 billion.

In spite of the plural composition of the new government, the Sandinista regime was viewed with misgivings in Washington when it nationalized insurance companies, banks and other industries, received the Vietnamese prime minister on an official visit, and refused to criticize the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At the 6th Summit of Non-Aligned countries, Daniel Ortega endorsed Vietnamese action in Cambodia, the Puerto Rican independence movement, the Polisario Front and the PLO. He condemned the Camp David accords and U.S. support for South Korea. Western fears were further increased in March 1980 when a government delegation visited Moscow. Besides arranging inter-governmental accords and the loan of Soviet specialists, it was reported that an inter-party deal was struck in which the CPSU agreed



to help reorganize the FSLN along more orthodox communist lines. Other events led analysts to fear a lurch to the left. Some 2000 Cuban advisors arrived, a figure soon to reach 5000, more than half of them teachers. They were to help run the crash literacy campaign, but it was thought that this programme contained a high level of Marxist indoctrination. Cuban security specialists meanwhile helped set up a grass-roots information system modeled on the Cuban "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution".

To counter-balance these apparently leftist tendencies, the regime paid considerable attention to its image as a law-abiding, moderate force. The crass and highly visible methods of several right-wing regimes--torture of suspects, murders by officially tolerated execution squads, etc.--were banned. The death penalty was abolished. The 7,500 prisoners, mainly from the National Guard, were to be accused of various crimes and brought to trial. By its appearance as a reformist, even liberal government, the Sandinistas succeeded in diverting Western media attention away from the excesses which marred its early performance. It now seems that some hundreds of Somoquist prisoners were killed, and many of the prisoners are still awaiting charges and trial three years after their arrest. There have been reports of "disappearances", especially among the Miskito people. Amnesty International, in a 1981 enquiry, criticized the Public Order Law. This "catch-all" legislation was introduced as a temporary measure in the aftermath of the civil war, but has since been incorporated into the ordinary penal code as a permanent measure. The Amnesty report also pointed to ill-treatment of Miskitos on the Caribbean coast. According to evidence given before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs (25 February 1981), this abuse was as violent as any meted out by Somoza.

The 1980 first anniversary celebrations gave fresh cause for Western concern. The keynote speaker was Fidel Castro, and Yasser Arafat received full Nicaraguan diplomatic recognition for the PLO. Managua was full of East bloc dignitaries. Yet, the celebrations had a negative aspect too: Castro apart, no Latin American heads of state attended. In August 1980 the Sandinistas stated that there would be no elections in Nicaragua before 1985. In the same month, the FSLN reorganized.

Misgivings were no longer limited to outside observers. As early as November 1979 there had been the first anti-FSLN demonstrations in Managua, as the promises of revolution were not fulfilled. The Roman Catholic Church, which had done so much to help the revolution, and which had started out in a kind of partnership with the new regime, now began to have doubts. The Bishops called upon priests to keep out of politics and not to accept government office. The honeymoon period between Church and state seemed to be over. The quasi-Marxist priests in key appointments refused to comply, including the Nicaraguan foreign secretary, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann. La Prensa, the newspaper which had boldly challenged Somoza, criticized aspects of Sandinista policy, and was frequently closed down for brief periods.

Within the government, the original five-man junta had included the Cuban-trained Marxist Daniel Ortega Saavedra--the overall leader, two leftist Sandinistas, the widow of Chamorro, and a businessman, Alfonso Robelo Callejas. This had been a "government of National Reconstruction", committed to the rebuilding of the economy with the help of a healthy private sector. But Violeta Chamorro and Robelo quit in disgust, the latter now heading the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN). The junta is reduced to three, dominated by Ortega. The key post of interior minister is held by Marxist Tomas Borge Martinez, the only surviving FSLN founder member.

In September 1980 the representatives of three political parties and two unions walked out of the Council of State, dissatisfied with anti-democratic tendencies. Five days later, the leading critic, Jorge Salazar, was murdered by government agents.

The Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights had been founded in 1977 to expose violations by the Somoza regime. After the Sandinista victory, José Esteban González, the founder, continued to receive complaints and therefore he kept his office open. In the first year of the new regime he recorded more than 2,500 complaints, including 520 "disappeared persons", upwards of 200 alleged summary executions, allegations of secret detention centres and other violations of human rights. However, the World Council of Churches, which had funded his Commission while he opposed Somoza, dropped its support and the international media, which had previously amplified his every report, now ignored him. On 11 February 1981 the FSLN suspended the Commission's activities, but this decision was reversed after Amnesty International intervened.

The legal opposition, principally the MDN, is still tolerated, although FSLN supporters have harassed and intimidated members. On 13 March 1981 a Sandinista mob caused the cancellation of a planned MDN rally in Nandaine, for which government permission had been granted. An MDN supporter and a Sandinista policeman were killed and the MDN leader, Robelo, had his house burned down. On 2 May, in an apparent effort to ease these internal tensions, the government announced the inclusion of all opposition groups in the Council of State, and FSLN planned to widen that Council's authority to include the initiation of legislation. In the same month, Libya made Nicaragua a \$100 million loan, and Mexico increased its aid by \$200 million.

In July 1981 the government announced the expropriation of undeveloped land for redistribution, and the nationalization of fourteen mainly non-profit-making companies, including the sugar industry and the exporters of rum and instant coffee. On 7 July the government suffered a severe embarrassment. Eden Pastora Gomez, the deputy defence minister and head of the militia, and Jose Valdivia, deputy interior minister, suddenly resigned and departed to Panama en route "to fight with guerrillas in other countries". Pastora, who as "Commander Zero" had led the 1978 seizure of the National Palace, was a great hero of the revolution. Caught by surprise, the government dissociated itself from his actions, emphasizing that the promotion of revolution abroad was not official foreign policy. One week later Fernando Chamorro Rappaccioli, the influential secretary for international relations of the Nicaragua Social Democratic Party and close guerrilla colleague of Pastora, quit Managua for Costa Rica.

On 5 September 1981, Leonel Poveda Sediles, the deputy trade minister, and eleven others were arrested for plotting. They were released after differences had been resolved between the staunchly Marxist sector of the government led by Interior Minister Tomas Borge Martinez, and the nominally Marxist or non-Marxist faction formerly clustered around Pastora. Five days after the arrests, the government announced a one-year "state of economic and social emergency" to deal with the economic crisis. With unemployment approaching 50 percent, crime on the increase, and inflation in the area of 40 percent, the government had to cope with a \$100 million trade deficit. The decree, which seemed to be the FSLN answer to press and MDN and COSEC criticism, makes strikes illegal, raises import taxes and provides for jail sentences of up to three years for "economic sabotage"--a provision vague enough to cover any needs.

In October 1981 the FSLN declared a month-long civil and military mobilization to prepare for a supposed Somozist invasion, which the Sandinistas claimed was being planned by the U.S. in Honduras. On 9 October the army commander, Ortega Saavedra, called on militia groups to prepare lists of "government enemies" whom he said he would "hang along the highway". There were repeated closures of La Prensa.

On 22 October 1981 the country's four leading businessmen were arrested under the emergency regulations because they had accused the junta of turning Nicaragua into a communist state and "preparing a new genocide". Apparently mindful of a pragmatic need to improve relations with Washington, the regime also arrested Communist Party leader Eli Altimirano and 21 other party members for violating the same laws. On 30 October both groups were sentenced to seven months in jail. On 25 October a Sandinista mob again attacked Robelo's home.

Towards the end of 1981 the U.S. accused Nicaragua of assisting Salvadoran rebels and Managua accused Washington of backing Somozist counterrevolutionaries. Relations cooled, and internal opponents of the FSLN rallied round the regime.

During 1982 the regime came under low-intensity but increased attack from dissident groups based beyond Nicaragua's borders. Internally, the struggle between Marxists and others intensified. This new pattern of insurgency and counterinsurgency is discussed in a later section.

April brought signs of a thaw in U.S.-Nicaraguan relations when Nicaragua accepted an eight-point U.S. plan as a basis for negotiations. One feature was a resumption of U.S. aid in return for Nicaragua's halting of arms supplies to Salvadoran rebels. One month later these talks were set back by Washington's misgivings over a \$166.8 million technical assistance agreement signed with the

Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. had shown great reluctance at incurring economic liabilities in the region beyond its present enormous subsidy to Cuba. However, American competition may have spurred her on. In August, the secretary of state for inter-American affairs, Thomas Enders, apparently made an offer to Nicaragua. Stop supplying arms from Cuba to the Salvadoran guerrillas, it suggested, and we will introduce legislation enabling the Florida police to close down the insurgent training camps functioning there. Enders reportedly also suggested that the U.S. and Nicaragua agree to a ban on all outside military advisers in the region.

Meanwhile, on the aid and trade front, the Nicaraguan regime in August 1982 blocked a U.S. initiative designed to strengthen the Nicaraguan economy and private sector without strengthening the FSLN regime. The U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) had offered \$5.1 million to the Roman Catholic Church, to the Superior Private Enterprise Council, and to other private groups. Edmundo Jarquin, director of the International Fund for the Reconstruction of Nicaragua, forbade these grants.

#### Current Data

Status. Government of National Reconstruction.  
Political control is in the hands of a FSLN Directorate.

Population. 2,465,000 (January, 1981).

Ethnic Divisions. Mestizo, i.e., European and Indian mix, 85%, of whom about a quarter are considered white, or of European origin. On the east coast, centred on Bluefield, there are 80,000 Caribbean blacks and three indigenous Indian tribes--Ramas (1,000), Sumos (25,000) and Miskitos (200,000).

Language. Spanish--the official and majority tongue.  
Native Indian languages.  
English, spoken on the East coast.

Religion. 95% Roman Catholic; 5% Protestant.

Literacy. 52% of population over 10 years old, prior to the recent literacy campaign. Increasing quite rapidly.

<u>Major Cities.</u>	Managua (capital)	500,000
	Leon	176,000
	Granada	48,000

Economy (1981). GNP approximately \$2.1 billion; inflation 27.5% (some estimates are as high as 50%); imports (mainly oil, capital goods, food) \$700 million; exports (mainly coffee, cotton, meat, sugar) \$500 million. The import figure includes \$200 million debt service. In 1981 Nicaragua received \$480 million in loans and donations but this source is drying up. Late that year, half a dozen government-owned businesses, including a 1000-worker textile plant, shut down. Unemployment is high, figures in the region of 40% being quoted. Sugar and cotton prices are low. The cordoba, officially pegged at 10 to the U.S. dollar, sells at 30 to the dollar on the black market. Friction between the private sector and the government undermines business confidence and efficiency, while the socialist enterprises set up by the regime tend to suffer from poor planning and control.

Geography. 174,900 km<sup>2</sup>; 7% arable, 7% prairie and pasture, 50% forest, 36% urban, waste or other. There are Atlantic and Pacific coastal lowlands. The mountains in the central region are lower than those in adjacent Honduras but rugged. The Eastern region consists of low hills and coastal plains covered by jungle, savannah and swamps. The Great Rift Valley and western highlands are composed of extensive plains, volcanic peaks, and isolated upland blocks (sierras). Climate varies between the tropical rain forest of the East, the tropical wet and dry areas of the West, and the mild tropical highlands. There is no road from the

"Spanish" central region to the Caribbean coast on the East. A Cuban construction team has built a four-wheel-drive road only as far as the village of Sinna, 150 km from the coast.

Status of Government. The Government of National Construction is headed by a junta. There is a 47-member Council of State--a quasi-legislative assembly pending elections due to be held in 1985. The junta is headed by Daniel Ortega, who is also leader of a nine-member Sandinista (FSLN) Directorate. It is said that this directorate is the real centre of power in the country, being the governing body of the ruling FSLN coalition. The Council is also stacked in favour of the FSLN and in any case acts only as a powerless sounding board for government policies.

#### Main Political Groupings

The Frente Sandinista de Liberation Nacional (FSLN). The Front is a coalition of leftist or radical political figures who were into the fight against Somoza relatively early. To widen the broad front necessary to unseat that dictator, the FSLN formed and manipulated additional and wider fronts, which dissolved with victory. Today FSLN is three-quarters of the way to being a party, with one-quarter continuing to show plurality. In this strange form it claims the position of "vanguard party" in the revolution and the leadership role during reconstruction. By its toleration of opposition parties outside the FSLN and of non-Marxist elements within, the Front keeps the appearance of being democratic. However, its refusal to hold elections before 1985 suggests, at least, insecurity and, at worst, a disrespect for democracy and an intention to retain power by all necessary means. The FSLN forged in 1980 formal affinity with the CPSU, which would never have been possible for a non-communist party before the new, flexible Soviet policy in Latin America was promulgated that same year (see Chapter Two). Sergo Mikoyan, editor of Latinskaia Amerika, then



observed:

Military-political fronts of the type of the July 26 Movement in Cuba and the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua have shown (and now one can consider have also proven) that they are capable in certain conditions of substituting for the political parties of the proletariat as the revolutionary vanguard.

(Quoted di Giovanni and Harvey, op. cit.).

This means that the Soviets are content to work through the FSLN exactly as though it were a communist party, and in due course to grant Nicaragua "socialist" status without a change of government.

The nine-member Directorate was initially composed of three men from each of the three factions, or tendencies, that once composed the guerrilla force. The protracted warfare group was headed by Thomas Borge Martinez and included Henry Ruiz Hernandez and Bayardo Arce Castano. The urban terrorism group had Jaime Wheelock Roman, Carlos Nunez Tellez and Luis Carrion Cruz. The third group was composed of Daniel Ortega Saavedra, his brother Humberto, and Victor Manuel Tirado Lopez. The junta has been dominated by Sandinistas. Originally there were three--Daniel Ortega at the head, Moises Hassan Morales, and Sergio Ramirez Mercado, but Hassan stepped down in March 1981. There were also two conservatives--Rafael Cordova Rivas and Arturo Cruz Porras, who had replaced the earlier defectors. However, Cruz stood down at the same time as Hassan. Sergio Ramirez, who is not a member of the directorate, acts as a roving ambassador to friends abroad. The Junta remains at its reduced level of three.

The directorate presides over an 80-member central committee, modeled on Soviet lines. Incredibly, only 900 people have been allowed to join the Sandinist movement and it is intended always to restrict membership to 5,000. There is a large party machine, particularly in the poorer districts.

Sandinista Front and Popular Organizations. To improve its control over the population and gain support from undecided elements, the Sandinistas have formed popular revolutionary groups under a Council of Popular Organizations. These fronts include:

1. Sandinist Defence Committees (CDSs). Modeled on the Cuban Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the CDSs guard against counterrevolutionary activity by spying and informing, and promote government programmes by face-to-face propaganda.
2. 19th July Sandinist Youth (JS-19). Mobilizes young adults and teenagers for the literacy campaign, and for indoctrination.
3. The Sandinist Children's Association (ANS). The FSLN equivalent of the Boy Scouts or the Hitler Youth, according to the eye of the beholder.
4. Luisa Amada Espinosa Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE). Runs a radio programme and a newspaper and aims to educate Nicaraguan women along Sandinista lines.
5. Sandinist Workers' Central (CST). A government-controlled, politicized labour organization designed to create an obedient labour force and to compete with and eventually eliminate the pre-revolutionary (but anti-Somoza) Independent Labor Federation (CUS).
6. Association of Rural Workers (ATC). The successor to the FSLN- and Catholic-organized revolutionary peasant movement, ATC now seeks to bind rural workers to FSLN policies.

The Sandinistas also run a newspaper, Barricada, and control several TV and radio stations.

Communist Parties. There are three such parties, all of them small:

1. The Socialist Party of Nicaragua (PSN). This is the Moscow-line party, formed in 1937. Its membership is about 250, some being linked to the FSLN. PSN had two deputy ministers in the new government.
2. The Communist Party of Nicaragua (PCN). An anti-Soviet group which split from PSN in 1967. Although it claims 1,200 members, the true figure is thought nearer 160.
3. The Popular Action Movement (MAP). This Maoist party emerged in 1967. Its membership is around 250. Its newspaper El Pueblo has a wide readership.

The Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN). The leading non-Sandinista party in the country, MDN represents moderate political forces which supported the revolution but have found themselves squeezed out since the victory. Under the leadership of Alfonso Robelo Callejas, who was a member of the original junta until he quit in disgust, MDN has some 60,000 members. Early in 1982 MDN's leadership moved to Costa Rica.

Democratic Coordination. Under Robelo's leadership, five opposition parties have joined together to form this coordinating front to oppose totalitarianism.

The Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP). An umbrella organization of the country's various business, commercial, industrial and agricultural chambers and federations, COSEP has also tried to enlist working-class people not attracted by the Sandinista mass organizations. Thus COSEP also represents a threat to the FSLN, and has been targeted. This was one of the bodies refused permission by the regime to accept U.S. aid.

The Independent Liberal Party (PLI). The old National Liberal Party through which Somoza ruled the country is the only party officially banned by the new regime. The

PLI is composed of liberals who splintered from Somoza during the civil war.

Nicaraguan Conservative Party (PCN). Stands for private enterprise, cooperation between Church and State, and traditional values.

Nicaraguan Social Christian Party (PSC). A pre-civil war party that remains on the fringe of political power.

Social Democratic Party (PSD). This relatively new party was officially accused of not having taken part in the armed struggle against Somoza.

Under the FSLN, the government bureaucracy has grown from 38,000 to 70,000.

### Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Organization. According to a newspaper report (Manchester Guardian Weekly, 5 September 1982), there are some twenty subversive groups operating inside Nicaragua, with a total of 2500-3000 men. Some groups are probably no more than half a dozen malcontents or petty criminals who enjoy hiding their unlawful actions behind an heroic smoke-screen. But others are no doubt politically inspired, disciplined and effective within the limitations of size and opportunity.

The main militant opposition forces are based outside Nicaragua, mainly in Honduras but some in Costa Rica. These are better trained and armed, apparently with American as well as Honduran help, and although they do not pose a severe threat to the nation's integrity, their raids place the regime under pressure and force it to deploy forces against them.

Some "contras" are ex-National Guardsmen, described derisively as "Somozists", whose patriotic and ideological credentials are rather easily discredited. Others are social-democratic supporters of the revolution, who consider the

revolution betrayed by the totalitarian leanings of the FSLN. These have a strong moral and nationalist base. Considerable efforts are being made to purge contra ranks of Somozist influence and to forge links between the various groups.

Another opposition group is centred on the Miskito Indians on the Caribbean coast. Only reluctantly have these people ever accepted Managua's rule, and this reluctance has been strengthened by arbitrary and often brutal actions by the FSLN.

Some of the groups are identified; they include:

1. National Liberation Army (ENL). Somozist militia operating from Honduras. Leader "Juan Carlos".
2. Nicaraguan Armed Revolutionary Forces (FARN). This militia is decidedly non-Somozist, although carefully screened ex-National Guardsmen have been permitted to join. It is commanded by a veteran senior Sandinista leader, Fernando Chamorro. FARN poses the most serious external military threat to FSLN. It has a political front, the Nicaraguan Democratic Union (UDN), which attracts students and labour leaders, as well as party activists. FARN numbers about 1000 fighting men, and has training camps and hideouts in Honduras, Costa Rica and Miami, as well as three camps near the Nicaraguan Caribbean coast. FARN is absorbing smaller groups opposed to FSLN. FARN's northern front is commanded by "Fabian", and the military commander is one "Sebastian".
3. 15th of September Legion. This group has an estimated 500-1000 members, committed to "struggling to rescue the people's revolution". It accepts recruits who "have rejected the terror of Somozism".
4. Miskito "Army" Misurasata. This is the Union of Miskitos, Sumos and Ramas, representing the largest Indian communities in the north Atlantic region of

- Nicaragua. Brooklyn Riviera is National Organizer.
5. Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN). In November 1981 Misurasata joined FARN and another exile group to form FDN. The new group was immediately involved in cross-border attacks, and there is firm evidence of Honduran army involvement.
  6. Sandinista communiques have mentioned other names, several probably being small internal groups:
    - Anti-Communist Revolutionary Brigade;
    - Nicaraguan Patriotic Alliance (APN)--formed in Miami in August 1981;
    - Armed Anti-Communist Forces of Leon (FAAL);
    - 19 July Christian Resistance Brigade;
    - Loma Azul.
  7. The Armed Democratic Forces (FAD) was a Somozist militia operating from Guatemala. Its leader, Carlos Garcia Solorzano, was jailed in August 1980, and not much is heard of FAD today.
  8. Sandinist Revolutionary Front. After his abrupt departure from Managua in July 1981, Eden Pastora Gomez, formerly the deputy defence minister and head of the militia, remained silent for nine months. It now appears that he was removed from Costa Rica by Cuban secret agents of the DGI and held in house arrest in Havana. After friends had intervened on his behalf he was finally released. In April 1982 he called a news conference in Costa Rica and demanded the overthrow of his old comrades, accusing them of being communists subservient to Cuba. He made a European tour, sponsored by sympathizers within the Socialist International, and formed his own group, the Sandinist Revolutionary Front. However, he evidently failed to attract full SI support and he dissolved his front in July 1982. It is

unclear whether his last action was to distance himself from Somozists (and the United States), or to lower his own profile as a potential assassination target. He remains a significant opposition figure, and in October 1982 it was reported that his Front was active again.

#### External Assets

The major external assets of the opposition groups are the partial cooperation of other non-revolutionary regimes which are under threat, notably Honduras; the small-scale help of the United States, whether this be in the turning of blind eyes to Florida-based training, the transit of men and arms, or covert assistance; and the increasing wariness of many actors who previously backed the FSLN but are now having second thoughts.

In terms of the "correlation of forces", it seems unlikely that the contras will ever outnumber or outgun the forces of the regime, but their strength may be sufficient to pose a credible threat and to provide bargaining leverage. This possibility, however, relies entirely on the provision of sanctuary. If all the opposition forces had to survive within Nicaragua's borders, they might be at the mercy of a determined government offensive, if not now, then later. Sanctuary in Honduras, Guatemala and elsewhere is therefore of real operational importance.

American assistance is an asset provided it remains low-key and discreet. The same may be said of Honduran help.

Assistance has not yet been forthcoming from any other country outside the region. However, the social democratic Venezuelan government that backed the revolution has given way to a Christian democratic successor which is unimpressed by the way things have developed in Nicaragua. Even the ex-president, social democrat Carlos Andres Perez,

objected to the Socialist International's plan to give the Sandinistas observer status. How far that body's attitude towards Nicaragua has been modified by three years of FSLN rule is unclear. Indeed, the SI's commitment to democratic principles may be well tested by their future stance. The SI did invite Eden Pastora to tour Europe, apparently at the suggestion of Portugal's former prime minister, Adolfo Saurez. It was after these meetings that Pastora dissolved his Front. It is certainly too soon to describe the SI as an asset for the contras, but any lessening of its enthusiasm for the Sandinists would help. Mexico may now be less committed to the junta, and the same may be true of Panama and Costa Rica. Whether this turning away from the junta can be converted into support for the contras remains to be seen. Much depends on the future course of Nicaraguan relations with those countries--as a "good neighbour" or as a base for subversion and destabilization.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The real strength of the Nicaraguan opposition lies in its commitment to democracy and to nationalism. Of these two, the second is probably more important, but it is unlikely that it can be harnessed unless firmly linked to democratic intent. Initially, the Sandinists held full nationalist legitimacy, and the heroic memory of the revolution keeps some of this in their hands. However, alienation of many social sectors has eroded this asset, so that it is passing to a degree into contra hands.

But no sizable body of Nicaraguan opinion wishes to link nationalism to the Somozist past. Therefore in so far as some of the contras are unreconstructed Somozists they are a handicap and an embarrassment. The same is true of American backing. It flies in the face of Nicaraguan nationalism. It may be accepted, and it may be effective militarily, but if it becomes visible it would undercut the nationalist base.



As for democratic intent, nothing can ever persuade a real Nicaraguan democrat that ex-National Guardsmen even understand the meaning of such words. In view of the U.S.'s long association with Somoza, the linkage lingers.

Clearly, the contras with powerful moral strength are those who backed the anti-Somoza revolution but have since rebelled against the totalitarian trends of the regime. They are nationalists and democrats. Many of these began by operating constitutionally, like Alfonso Robelo's Democratic Movement. In the long run, they may count for more than many of the armed groups. Robelo, however, went into exile in Costa Rica in April 1982. Another significant figure is Eden Pastora. He reportedly dissolved his front because of an unwillingness to associate with Somozists; there is no possibility that he has abandoned political action. Were he to gain power, he has stated he would hold assembly elections within six months and presidential elections after another six months. Pastora would probably seek a non-aligned foreign policy, one that would exclude Cuba, the U.S.S.R. and America from too close an influence over Nicaraguan affairs. The respected Central Bank president Alfredo Casar, who resigned in May 1982, supported Pastora's position. Potentially more important than any political figures, the Church, led by Archbishop Obando y Bravo, may sway popular opinion against the regime.

It is men such as Robelo and Pastora who may be able attract the full support of other regional powers. Overt American assistance of Somozist units could make this difficult. Yet, unless the real democrats and nationalists can gain control over contras-in-arms, their own prospects against a well-armed junta seem small. This is the central weakness of the opposition.

#### Level of Insurgent Activity

These figures give an indication of the level of

armed action inside Nicaragua. They are taken from open sources, mainly Nicaraguan communiques, and may therefore be incomplete:

Year	Period	Government Casualties	Insurgent Casualties
1981	March-May	23 killed 4 injured	
1981	June-August	13 killed 11 injured	54 suspects arrested
1981	September-December	5 killed 3 Cuban teachers killed Neuro Amanecer occupied for 10 hours	42 killed
1982	January-March	29 killed 6 injured Bomb at International Airport Two bridges destroyed	13 killed 25 captured
1982	April-June	32 killed	9 killed
1982	July	125 killed San Fernando briefly held by rebels Rocket attack on fuel depot	

Deaths inflicted on Miskito Indians do not seem to feature, and censorship from the Atlantic Coast region seems likely.

This level of action belongs to a subrevolutionary or terrorist phase of an insurrection. Compared to rebel action in Guatemala and El Salvador, it is small. It is akin to Northern Ireland in the early 1970s. However, the sudden escalation in July 1982 may be significant.

#### Government Response

Nicaragua emerged from its revolution with its ragged but effective guerrilla force intact, but with the former

National Guard in ruins. There was no regular infrastructure on which to build, and the new forces have had to be based on the FSLN's insurgent army. (The Sandinists are proud of the fact that they won their war without breaking the loyalty of the regular forces--an achievement they claim to be in excess of Leninist expectations.)

#### Organization

The new military apparatus is designed as follows:

1. Sandinist Popular Army. Commanded by Humberto Ortega, this regular force is today around 20,000 strong, but the Sandinistas announced in 1980 that it would be expanded to 50,000--three times the size of Somoza's National Guard. On a per capita basis, an equivalent regular force in Canada would contain half a million servicemen. The force is lightly armed. It inherited M-16 rifles and mortars from the National Guard. AK-47 assault rifles and Sam-7 missiles have been supplied by the Soviet bloc and organization and training is along Eastern lines. So far, the Soviets have delivered some heavy equipment--25 1950s vintage tanks, 700 trucks, 12 heavy howitzers, 12 armoured personnel carriers and some amphibian equipment--enough for training cadres in these specialities. To assist such training, there are about 75 Soviet military advisers. For the wider training of the active army, the Cubans have about 2,000 military men in Nicaragua.
2. Air Component. This consists of 3 Soviet transport aircraft, 2 large Hip heavy-lift machines, 2 new French Alouette III helicopters and 12 Soviet short-takeoff-and-landing transport aircraft, all with Soviet pilots.
3. Naval Component. Some patrol boats inherited from the Somoza regime are still in service.

Infrastructure for an increased force has included the construction of 36 new barracks, making a total of 49, and the improvement of airfields. This second activity has created anxiety in Washington. The fields at Managua, Montelimar on the Pacific coast, Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields on the Caribbean, are being lengthened and improved to accept modern jets. Fifty Nicaraguan pilots are reportedly being trained to fly MiGs in Bulgaria and Cuba. The possible use of these airfields by Cuban or Soviet fighter bombers, either in support of regional rebels, or as a direct threat to the United States, is a matter of concern. A more probable purpose in this analyst's view is to enable heavy transports to deliver arms and equipment, and possibly troops.

#### The Police and Militia

Information on the police is sketchy, but it is reasonable to suppose that this 5,000-7,000 man force is deployed in a conventional, dispersed manner. The Militia is a huge, loosely organized, highly political force of men and women supposedly dedicated to the Sandinist cause. It is both a Home Guard against external threats and a mobilizing apparatus which draws a mass of people into popular and armed support for the regime. The Sandinistas' talent for image-building is demonstrated by photographs of healthy youngsters mixing work, military training and nation-building, of good-looking women recruits wearing appropriate slogans emblazoned across their chests, and of weapons in the hands of the people, not of some sinister, helmeted authority. Yet this is a false impression, just as it was false in Italy and Germany in the 1930s and in China in the 1960s.

The Sandinists say they want to build up the militia to 200,000 (again, a Canadian equivalent would be two million). This is nothing but the private army of the tiny, elitist Sandinist ruling party, designed, as Borge explained to the Economist's correspondent, to enable them to hang onto power.

"In Nicaragua the armed forces have the power," he said, "and the armed forces are revolutionary." Unlike your ordinary Nicaraguan, militiamen receive a sugar ration.

During 1981 the Sandinista Directorate revitalized the Committees for the Defence of Sandinism. Originally set up late in 1979, they had been allowed to languish. Committees have since been maintaining block-by-block watches for "dissidents", i.e., people who criticize the regime, who consider emigrating, who hoard food, etc. As a result of denunciations, 10,000 Nicaraguans were brought in for questioning in 1981. Such questioning will only become fully efficient when conducted by experts. This is being taken care of.

#### The Secret Police

According to CIA Director William J. Casey, the German Democratic Republic--the nation invariably trusted by the Russians with this role--have between 50 and 100 security and intelligence specialists in Managua building an efficient secret service for the FSLN. No doubt this will have an internal and an external role, and the latter will be controlled by the KGB (U.S. News and World Report, 8 March 1982, p. 23).

#### External Assets

The regime has three general levels of external backers--the Soviet bloc, the social democrats and fair-minded people everywhere who helped them to power, and the international network of Soviet Fronts and dupes that attempts to influence opinion in the West and the Third World.

Of these three, the first and the last remain solidly behind the FSLN. Indeed, the closer the regime moves towards totalitarian Marxist-Leninism, the firmer will be their support. There are, however, tactical reservations, which will be considered shortly.

The middle group is having second thoughts. The shift has been described under a previous heading. Nicaragua

can no longer rely on automatic support from those regional powers who helped the FSLN to power. European socialists, further removed from the problem and anxious to score points against America, still seem willing to close their eyes to the totalitarian shift. But even here, there are some signs of anxiety.

The Western media, still under the spell of the anti-Somoza revolution and bitterly hostile towards reactionary regimes in Latin America, find it difficult to face up to the realities of FSLN rule. Many Churches remain firmly behind the Sandinists: there is an apparent unwillingness to listen to Nicaraguan churchmen who have gone through the revolutionary process and come out on the other side.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of the Sandinist regime lies in its firm grip on the military and security apparatus, and in the prospect of assistance from the Soviet bloc, particularly Cuba. Its location and ability to assist other regional revolutionary movements also provides some strength, because it increases its value to allies and provides bargaining power with the U.S.

The main weakness of the regime is its inability to govern efficiently, its consequent failure to satisfy the expectations of the mass or to balance its budget, and the necessary resort to rule by force. The abandonment of democratic promises is not a weakness, seen from the Sandinist viewpoint, but the problem of moving from a relatively free, pluralistic society to a full-controlled single-party state does expose it to many weaknesses. At the moment, the FSLN has neither the popular support necessary to rule by consensus, nor the fully developed instruments of control appropriate for totalitarian government. It is on a tightrope.

### Sovietization

The U.S.S.R. has always regarded the sovietization of captured territory as "a very important task for our political organs" (V. K. Triandafillov, The Nature of the Operations of Modern Armies, 2nd ed. [Voenizdat, 1932]). The doctrine explains:

The consolidation of the Soviet system and the Soviet political apparatus wholly depends on the tempo at which revolutionary social organizations can be formed, such as trade unions, Committees of the Poor in villages, etc., etc. The final consolidation of the Soviet system in conquered territories will only take place as a result of the formation of their own powerful Communist Parties.

The world saw the doctrine applied in East Poland in 1939, in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in 1940, in all of Eastern Europe in the years following World War II, and in Afghanistan since 1978. In all the earlier examples, and in Afghanistan since 1980, sovietization has been, as the Russians have it, "at the point of the bayonet". The Red Army makes the process possible in the first place and irreversible in the second. It would seem that Soviet ideologues had never contemplated sovietization without Soviet bayonets: the rise to power of Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1959 posed novel problems.

In the first place, Castro was not an orthodox communist. He had no Moscow training and his reliability, ideological and political, was suspect. In the second place, his exposed geopolitical situation made it highly unlikely that his regime would be allowed to survive by the Americans, and there was not a great deal that the Soviets could do to help him.

The first difficulty was addressed by efforts to coopt the revolution using the orthodox party, the PSP. The final attempt ended in 1978, when Anibal Escalante and PSP associates were tried on charges which included conspiracy to oust the Fidel leadership in favour of communists. The second difficulty was in part neutralized by the agreement that

ended the 1962 missile crisis. This guaranteed U.S. respect for Cuban sovereignty. In the early 1970s the Soviet leadership evidently decided it could live with Castro, and accept him as if he were a real communist. They took control of his secret service and gained considerable control over his foreign policy in exchange for economic and military assistance. If not fully converted, Castro was completely bought. Sovietization occurred without the help of the Red Army, using indigenous political organization and forces.

The loss of Chile and Portugal from near-Moscow control during the 1970s shocked Soviet leaders. While still speaking of the "peaceful road to socialism", they have subsequently stressed the vital need for a party that comes to power by such means to "be prepared politically and organizationally" to defend itself "arms in hand if necessary" by taking firm control over the military and police, preferably by building from scratch (di Giovanni and Harvey, op. cit. The quotation is Tkachenko, International Affairs [Moscow, November 1974]).

Experience in Cuba and Nicaragua evidently persuaded the Soviets to take a more flexible view of the role of parties in Latin American revolutions (see Chapter Two). The combined effect of all these experiences seems to be:

1. Any radical party capable of organizing, leading and winning an anti-capitalist, anti-American revolution is acceptable to Moscow,
2. After victory, that party's ideological and political outlook can be straightened out by education, persuasion and arm twisting. But its replacement by an orthodox party is no longer essential.
3. Sovietization remains essential.
4. Ways have to be found for indigenous forces and organizations to accomplish sovietization unaided by the Red Army.



Superimposed on top of these principles are pragmatic factors such as:

1. the Soviet Union's economic weakness which severely limits the aid it can provide to new socialist states, and which makes desirable a level of accommodation by that state with the West that will attract investment and grants;
2. the Soviet Union's military strength, which enables a rapid build-up of indigenous forces to take place; and
3. the availability of Cuba as a proxy force, which makes some measure of actual military assistance in a crisis possible.

In Nicaragua's case there may be a further complication. Urgent though the process of sovietization is, and vulnerable though the regime may be in the interim, there is a regional need to preserve the fiction of democratic intent on the part of the regime. The fronts in other countries, particularly Guatemala and El Salvador, appeal to wide domestic and international audiences through their pluralistic pretensions. If this myth is shattered in Nicaragua before these movements have achieved victory, the mobilization processes may be damaged.

#### The Process of Sovietization

The FSLN may feel relatively secure because of their firm grip on the major instruments of control. This, by Moscow's experienced advice, is the first and most essential requirement. Some other steps in the sovietization process are visible:

#### 1981

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 11 February | Suspension of Nicaraguan Permanent Human Rights Commission. Later reinstated after Amnesty International's appeal. |
| 14 March    | Sandinista mob prevented MDN rally; two killed.  |

- 16 May La Prensa reporter Abelardo Sanchez and wife arrested for "assisting anti-government rebels".
- Early July Government forbade Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo to speak on television as he had done since 1974, even during the height of the revolution when he frequently criticized Somoza.
- 19 July Unused land confiscated by government; 24 companies including sugar industry nationalized.
- 8 August Three members of MDN youth section arrested.
- 19 August La Prensa suspended for 72 hours.
- 10 September One year "state of economic and social emergency" declared: strict penalties for strikes and protests. It became a crime to voice criticism of the government.
- 2 October La Prensa closed down for 48 hours.
- 22 October Four leading businessmen and 22 Communist Party members arrested for criticizing government--sentenced to seven months.
- 24 October Passports of three opposition leaders confiscated at airport.
- 25 October Sandinist mob attacked Robelo's home.
- 21 November Government concocted "plot" by Somozists to assassinate Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo (a critic of the regime, and unlikely target for contras).
- 22 December Leading businessman Jaime Bengoechea sentenced to seven months' house arrest for "economic crimes".

## 1982

- 5 January Independent La Opinion and El Momento radio stations closed permanently for issuing "false information".
- 6 January Six day ban on news programmes on Radio Catolica.
- 10 January 20 injured in clashes
- 15 January 100 Sandinists occupied Joca-Cola plant to prevent the entry of company's legal adviser, who is leader of opposition Democratic Conservative Party.

- 16 January Radio Amor closed permanently and owner injured.
- 21 January Radio Mundial news programme closed for "broadcasting news harmful to the armed forces".
- 26 January Diez an Punto radio closed.
- 16 February Priest Moravo Higinio Morazan and 61 other Miskitos sentenced to 15 to 29 years' jail for "attacks on state security".
- 15 March 30-day State of Emergency declared (renewed regularly ever since).
- 24 June La Prensa editor Horacio Ruiz attacked.
- 21 July Sandinists occupied church protesting dismissal of FSLN priest Jose Arias Caldera. Bishop Viras Robelo assaulted.
- 9 August Regime deleted message from Pope John Paul II in La Prensa.
- 11 August In an obvious government set-up, Rev. Bismark Carbello, official spokesman for Managua's Archbishop, was forced to appear naked in the street in front of government photographers. This incident marked the extent of government hatred of the Church, which has turned anti-regime. In the public outcry which followed, three were killed and seven injured.

#### Symptoms of Disunity

Looking at the same period, the regime has had to contend with these problems, over and above the activities of the violent contras:

#### 1981

- 4 June Church hierarchy asked four priests to leave high government posts. These included Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann. All four refused.
- 19 June Nicaraguan ambassador to UN defected.
- 8 July Deputy Defence and Interior Ministers Eden Pastora and Jose Valdivia resigned from posts and left the country.
- 5 September Deputy Domestic Trade Minister and 11 others suspected of plotting against regime.

- 17 September Journalist Guillermo Navarrete sought political asylum in Costa Rica.
- 11 December Chamber of Commerce president Reynaldo Hernandez sought asylum in Venezuela embassy.

## 1982

- 1 January Two airforce men killed while attempting to hijack the junta's official jet to U.S.A.
- February Council of Nicaraguan Bishops issued a pastoral letter criticizing "grave violation of human rights" represented by the treatment of the Miskitos.
- 15 April Eden Pastora announced "struggle for political and social freedom".
- 29 April Police chief Miguel Urroz resigned, announcing his support for Pastora.
- 10 May Central Bank director resigned in dispute with regime.
- 11 May Two men hijacked domestic airliner to Costa Rica and requested asylum.
- 24 May Four army men stole military helicopter and flew to Honduras.
- 17 June Former Justice Minister Ernesto Castillo Martinez sought asylum at Mexican embassy.

## Outlook

This chapter has not dwelt upon Nicaragua's role in assisting rebel movements in other Central American countries. That she had done so is not open to question. The degree of such assistance is often difficult to assess and is discussed in the relevant chapters. Most analysts credit the Cubans with most of the organization and work behind such deliveries, with Nicaragua providing a convenient and more or less willing staging post on the isthmus. We are mainly concerned to analyse the new regime's internal policies and external relationships, and to assess the opposition to such plans from the Church, constitutional politicians, violent groups and outside backers.

Nicaragua probably hopes to have the best of all worlds--respect and friendship in Latin America, economic aid from the West, political and military security from Cuba and the U.S.S.R. The ideologues on the Directorate seek early sovietization: others wish to put economic and other factors first, and to go slowly towards a one-party state. Since these various objectives contain incompatibilities, the priorities that emerge will probably depend upon factors outside the control of the Sandinistas.

The Church retains the loyalty of the majority of Nicaraguans. It is probably true to say that Church leaders have shifted their position from close support for the regime to partial criticism and finally to outright hostility in step with the attitudes of most of their flock. As in Poland, the Church represents the Christian and national will of the people: it does not foment revolt. We know from experience in Europe that a strong Church does not prevent sovietization of material assets, but it can limit the sovietization of men's souls. It is possible that the Church's experience under the Sandinistas will influence the Church in Central America as a whole, and that, indirectly, pressures may be brought to bear on the regime. Later, perhaps, the Church outside the region will listen.

The struggle by democratic political forces within Nicaragua is the crucial battle. At present, it is being lost. Emigration of leaders is one factor, and public indifference in the West is another. With all the cards in Sandinist hands, the constitutional opposition is living on borrowed time. There are few grounds for optimism here.

Violent groups within and without the country may do as much harm to their cause by legitimizing the regime and its armed forces as protectors of the people as they do good by posing a threat. Revolutions almost always need sanctuaries outside the country, but they have to be firmly

rooted in the people, i.e., they have to be internal in character. For the most part, the violent oppositions in Nicaragua are playing at revolution. Their Somozist and American links discredit them. Moreover, experience after other great revolutions suggests that the bulk of the population often prefer to suffer under a newly imposed oppressive regime that ensures order, rather than face the anarchy and destruction of civil war a second time.

FSLN opposition to the emigration of the domestic opposition is a good indicator. The Directorate must be aware that massive exoduses of opposed elements was successfully used by Castro on three occasions as a counterinsurgency weapon. If the Directorate feels severely threatened, it will presumably use exile as a way of ridding itself of undesirables. Such an exodus would be an indicator of accelerated sovietization.

Outside assistance to the cause of democracy in Nicaragua can be important, particularly as an influence to slow the pace of sovietization and possibly reverse it. Regional influences are probably the most important. The Sandinists may feel that they can live without American respect or friendship, but that they would suffer without such assets from, for example, Mexico and Venezuela. These countries, in turn, may change the attitude of the Socialist International, or at least some of its members. Pressures for continued plurality from nations such as West Germany and France, coupled with aid, could strengthen the hands of the pragmatists within the Directorate. Just conceivably, such policies could become linked to schemes for the return of Sandinist exiles such as Pastora, who could help fashion a better future for Nicaragua. In their present isolated and vulnerable positions abroad, it is difficult to see a decisive role for these individuals. The West in general may contribute to continued internal restraint by keeping up a modest

level of investment, and linking this to a concern for democratic values. If Western investment dried up completely, there would no longer be an economic incentive to delay full sovietization.

Another outside influence that may be delaying the final push is Cuban and Soviet concern not to expose the "broad front ploy" while it is being used in El Salvador and Guatemala. Too overt a demonstration of the final destination of the Marxist-led broad front in Nicaragua could undermine domestic and international mobilization elsewhere.

The United States has the ability to negotiate deals with the FSLN that might be economic, political or military. Entering into a full settlement on the basis, say, of the U.S. ending support for the contras in exchange for Managua cutting off aid to other rebels would assist regional stability. But it would also help to legitimize the Directorate, both by the deal itself and by the betrayal of the opposition forces which such a deal would involve. It would commit the United States, in effect, to a policy of supporting continued Sandinist rule and of being content to try to maintain some plurality within that rule. Experience in a similar deal with Castro suggests that America observed her side of the bargain better than the Cubans. Nevertheless, there is room for constructive manoeuvre: the idea of excluding all foreign military advisers from the region has much to recommend it, provided any pact is properly monitored.

The Economist (8 April 1982) concluded its generally valuable assessment with an optimistic forecast:

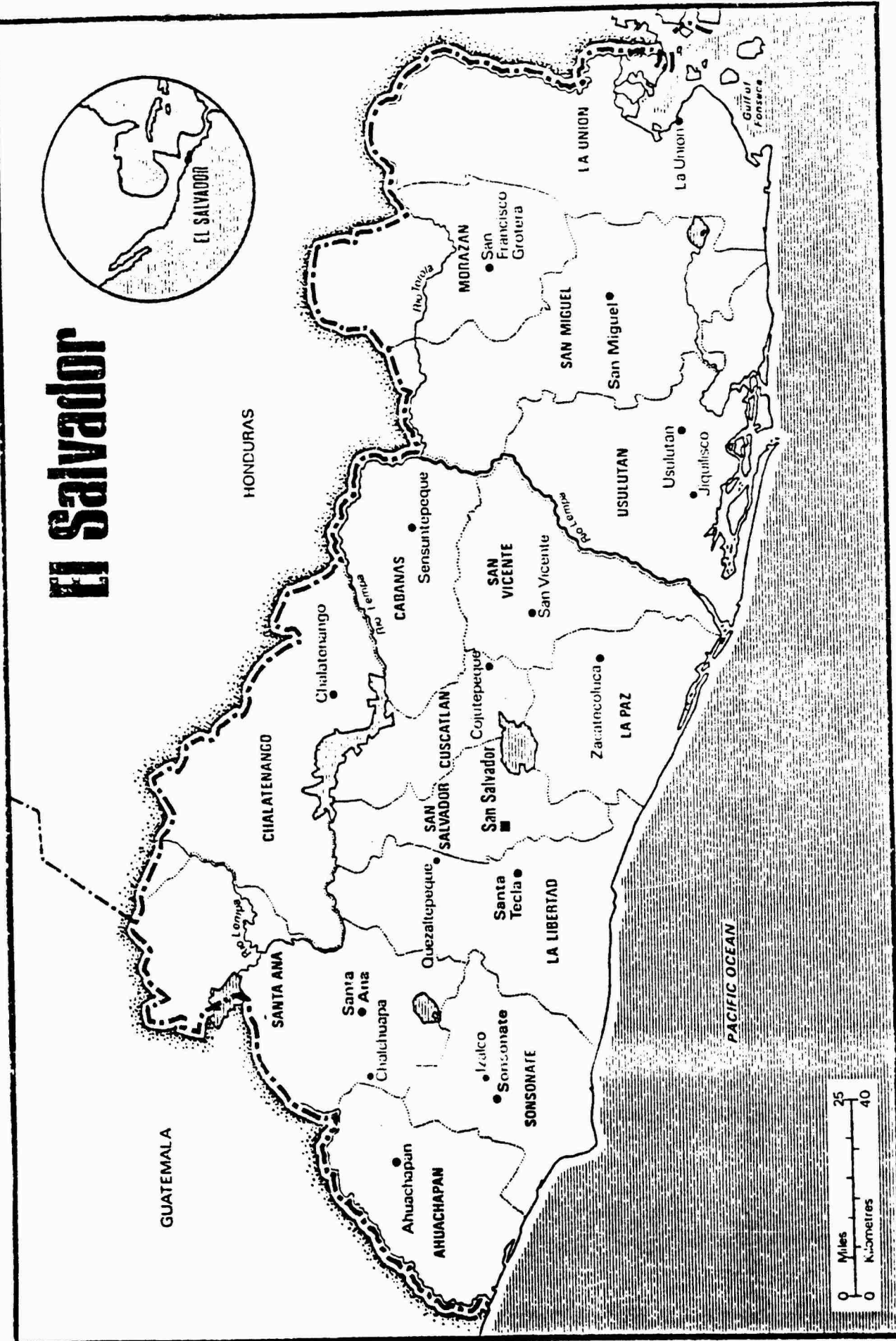
The ideologues cannot be certain that they will succeed in springing full-blooded socialism upon Nicaragua against the combination of a middle class . . . and a Church which has what popular support is left.

But similarly brave statements were being made about Poland up until December 1981. The combination of Solidarity and the Church was far stronger then than the Nicaraguan

opposition today, yet the totally discredited and hated Polish communist party, under the protection of the police and military, managed to regain control. The Polish example also proved that, when communist principle is at stake, economic considerations take second place. The struggle of democracy in Nicaragua is not yet lost. Imaginative initiatives by the West can still help the country's future. But without some vigorous external help, the outlook is grim.



# El Salvador



## CHAPTER FOUR

### EL SALVADOR

#### History

El Salvador became independent from the Central American Federation on the latter's collapse in the late 1830s, but the country's small size and relative poverty made it easy prey for larger neighbours, especially Guatemala. Los Catorce or the "fourteen families" (actually a few thousand people) came to dominate Salvadoran economic life early in the country's history. Their influence owed to their control of agriculture, the major industry and income earner. For decades, the "fourteen" have used their economic power to enforce a classical feudalism and to block substantive reform. They used the army as their strong right arm, while the Roman Catholic Church has tended to provide legitimacy. This coalition of wealth, power and spiritual influence has of course been the rule rather than the exception in most of Latin America, until shaken or overturned by radical forces.

Yet, in spite of its attachment to this ruling trilogy, the Salvadoran army gradually evolved from being an unquestioning partner to being at times a sophisticated, and at other times rather a crude mediating force between the increasingly diversified elites in the newly industrializing society. It has adjudicated between the oligarchs and the labour movement, the campesino (peasant) organizations, the educated elite, and the entrepreneurs.

The first 30 years of this century were a period of calm in El Salvador. Then the Great Depression sent coffee prices tumbling and caused economic disaster. A major

communist-led peasant revolt broke out, under command of Augustin Farabundo Marti. General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez led the army's brutal but effective response, which crushed the rising at a cost of some 30,000 lives.

In the following years the officer corps split into two factions, a division that survives to this day. One group remained aligned with the oligarchs; the other favoured reform. The process of change began in earnest in 1948, when reformist officers seized power and announced a revolutionary strategy for the country. They built a new political party--the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unity (PRUD), which became a major force during the 1950s. Nevertheless, the "fourteen families" successfully defended their privileges, particularly their land. The government sponsored dams and hydroelectric plants, highways and economic innovations, including the Central American Common Market, but there was no real change in the social and economic structure inside the country. Meanwhile, population increases tended to counteract any improvements to the general standard of living, and political pressures from below increased.

New factors also began to influence events. A middle class emerged and demanded a bigger political role. The rural Union Communal Salvadorena sought AFL-CIO assistance in drawing up a land reform programme. The Catholic Church produced a new breed of intellectuals infused with the social gospel and encouraged by more radical counterparts from North America. Some priests followed the revolutionary path; others, including those from the Maryknoll order, emphasized consciousness-raising among the campesinos, which inevitably meant radical politicizing.

The Salvadoran Communist Party (PCES), like the military, was split between reformists and extremists. The former wished to work within the constitutional system, using alliances with social democrats to gain power. The

extremists, including one Salvador Cayetano Carpio, favoured violent revolution. These eventually quit the PCES and began to form terrorist groups which in turn created their own political front organizations. The present violence in El Salvador can be traced to the terrorism of the 1970s, and the counterwave of government repression.

In the mid-1970s President Arturo Molina began a reformist programme, including land reform backed by the Inter-American Development Bank, but these measures proved inadequate. By 1978 the influence of anti-Somoza revolutionary actions in Nicaragua encouraged Salvadoran terrorists to increase their attacks. The two main groups became far more active in attacks on public installations and kidnappings, though they were still incapable of uniting. They were also assisted by growing attacks on the regime by the Church, whose leader, Archbishop Oscar Romero, became an outspoken critic. Massive sums were secured in ransom money through the kidnapping of foreign businessmen, including Japanese, Dutch and British. Rural agitation increased, and on the right the reaction mounted.

As the Nicaraguan situation developed into the 1979 civil war, violence in El Salvador increased further. There were frequent assassinations, Romero's denunciations of authority became more strident, and international attention began to focus on the conflict. In May, 23 people were shot on the cathedral steps. Foreign personnel, businesses and capital began to depart. The government, now under General Carlos Humberto Romero, sought to alleviate the situation, lifting the state of siege in July and announcing an amnesty for political exiles in August. Massive demonstrations were now the order of the day, and right-wing terror groups became more active. Romero's attempts to defuse the situation by concessions failed, and order began to collapse. On 15 October, Romero was deposed in a bloodless coup headed by

Colonels Jaime Abdul Gutierrez and Arnaldo Majano, officers of the moderate group in the army. They called for an end to violence, promised free elections, and invited civilians into the cabinet. After a brief interval, the terrorists of the left rejected the new government and stepped up their activities. Right-wing groups responded accordingly.

The new junta was backed by the Carter Administration, as it seemed to offer a moderate, reformist future. But despite land reform, the abolition of ORDEN, a rightist militia, and the nationalization of the banks, the acute polarization created by the years of terrorism made the junta's task impossible. Early in 1980 the civilian members of the government resigned, claiming that the armed forces were blocking change. One who quit was Guillermo Ungo, head of the Social Democratic Front (FED), and with him went the support of the Socialist International (SI). Another defector, Education Minister Salvador Samoyoa, joined the terrorists of the left. Unknown to most members of the government, the two military members of the junta had been negotiating secretly with the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) to form a new government in which Christian Democrats would play a major role. Within two days of the government's collapse, a new junta was announced with the PDC leaders in it--Hector Dada and Antonio Morales Erlich. The two officers remained, as did Colonel Jose Guillermo Garcia, the hard-line defence minister, who represented the conservative military tradition. Many Christian Democrats became disenchanted with the new regime's performance and defected to the opposition. One such was Hector Dada, who declared the junta to be "without popular support". Dada was replaced by Jose Napoleon Duarte, freshly returned from exile, who in November 1980 became president.

The second junta was soon made the target of leftist forces. A mass demonstration on 22 January 1980 ended in a

massacre by government forces. Moreover, there was mounting evidence of an impending coup by the right. Several plots were foiled, and the U.S. did its best to support the junta, believing it to be better than any likely alternative. On 6 March, the junta decided to implement the long-awaited land reform programme. Twenty-five percent of arable land was seized. The eventual aim was that no individual should own more than 100 hectares (about 250 acres), an incredibly far-reaching ambition. However, no proper inventories were prepared, nor was there any plan explaining which peasants were to benefit. The far-left Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) tried to up-stage the government on land reform. They called a general strike and implemented land seizures. This was repressed by the army, with some 60 deaths. On 23 March, Archbishop Romero was shot and killed, probably by the far-right White Fighting Union (UGB). Four days later there was rioting and shooting at his funeral in which 40 died and 450 were injured.

These events shocked the country and world opinion. There were cabinet resignations in the Salvadoran government. Violence increased throughout 1980; hundreds of people were killed weekly. Duarte's appointment as president was a sign to encourage moderates, but the weakening influence and eventual dismissal of Colonel Majano--widely seen as the most reformist of the military--indicated the continuing power of the rightist extremists in the junta.

Early in 1981 the guerrillas launched a "final offensive", aimed at creating a civil war situation on the Nicaraguan model. By March the Defence Ministry claimed victory, with 2,200 rebels dead at the cost of 146 troops killed. By then the death squads were killing an average of 15 people a day. Efforts by the Socialist International to mediate failed, but Mexico and Panama reportedly warned the U.S. against intervention. The new U.S. Administration

viewed El Salvador as a vital test of its will to oppose communist infiltration of the isthmus, and placed the struggle there squarely in the context of East-West conflict. While still seeking a political solution, the Administration backed President Duarte with economic and military aid, including a small number of military advisers. In November 1981 it was reported that some 32,000 people had died since October 1979, the great majority being "non-combatants".

1981 saw more progress for the revolutionaries on the political front than in the military struggle. During the August visit of President Francois Mitterand of France to Mexico, he and the Mexican president jointly announced recognition of the revolutionaries as "representative political forces" in El Salvador. They were soon followed by the Netherlands. The Duarte regime became increasingly discredited. The United States Senate imposed conditions on the granting of U.S. aid: the President was required to report at six-monthly intervals on the human rights situation. Even the announcement by the junta of parliamentary elections in March 1982 failed to satisfy international and media criticism. The elections, it was generally said, would be a fraud and would not attract public support.

Early in 1982 the insurgents launched another large-scale offensive. The international media, and especially the American, covered this event along Vietnamese lines, showing the rebels to be invincible and the government to be not only corrupt and brutal, but militarily incompetent. In fact the offensive was limited in scope and staying power. It did not succeed in halting or disrupting the elections, which attracted a far larger turnout--some 1.5 million voters--than the most optimistic regime spokesman had dared predict. The Western media was stunned. The massive, overwhelming public support for the violent opposition that they had been reporting seemed suddenly to have been a mirage.

Although Duarte's Christian Democrats received 41 percent of the votes--more than any other party--this did not enable him to form a new government in the face of a coalition of smaller conservative parties. Major Roberto d'Aubuisson emerged as the new power in the land, although the right appointed Alvaro Alfredo Magana, a little-known moderate, as president. The last leader of the 1979 reformist coup, Vice-President General Jaime Abdul Gutierrez, was removed from his post as armed forces commander-in-chief, and on 18 May the assembly voted to suspend certain aspects of agrarian reform. True, the key "land to tiller" law, benefitting 80 percent of Salvador's peasant families, was suspended for "one crop year" only, but since the crop year for sugar is four calendar years, the suspension was tantamount to cancellation. Archbishop Rivera y Damas, the relatively conservative successor to Romero, deplored the move, and the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee indicated that U.S. aid was in doubt. General Garcia, still the defence minister, voiced armed forces support for land reform, no doubt because he was aware that neither the military nor the economy could survive a total U.S. cut-off.

This concern was almost certainly the outcome of a U.S. State Department telegram dated 22 May, which advised the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador of the direction the U.S. Administration wished the new Salvadoran regime to take. President Reagan, who was required to certify to Congress by 28 July 1982 that the Salvadoran government was making progress on reforms, called for early acceptance of a human rights programme, structural changes in El Salvador's armed forces (transfer of intelligence duties from the National Guard and Treasury Police to a single national intelligence force run by the army), and a seizing of the diplomatic initiative by offering a dialogue with less extreme factions in the opposition. The instruction also urged the Salvadoran



government to remain committed to agrarian reform. Modifications to the assembly vote were made, and the American President felt able to certify that Human Rights in El Salvador were still in caring hands, but the procedure must have strained Senate and Congressional credibility.

June saw heavy fighting. With the return from specialist training in the U.S. of some 1,000 troops, the army adopted more aggressive tactics and carried the war into the guerrillas' areas. A major drive with nearly 5,000 troops was launched, apparently with the aim of pushing the guerrillas towards the Honduran border, where it was anticipated the Honduran army would be waiting for them. In Chalatenango 135 rebels were killed, several camps broken up, and FMLN food and medical supply lines disrupted. In Morazan, however, the boot was on the other foot. On 5 June the rebels overran the strategic garrison of Perquin, which the army was unable to recapture in its counterattacks. Guerrilla strength in the town and its surrounding area was about 1,000. In what may have been a change of tactics, FMLN seemed prepared in this instance to challenge the army in an open fight on its chosen terrain. Government casualties were heavy, including two colonels whose helicopter was shot down. One, Colonel Adolfo Castillo, was reported to be a prisoner in rebel hands.

Autumn 1982 brought no signs of any reduction in the level of violence. The rebels continued their sabotage and guerrilla campaign, mainly in rural areas. The capital was relatively calm in September. The army's sweeps proved expensive. On 1 September General Garcia reported 1,073 soldiers killed and 2,548 injured over the previous 12 months. Three hundred civilians were reported massacred in San Vicente in August, allegedly by the army. There has been no diminution in the scale or ferocity of the insurgency. Disastrous floods added to the people's misery,

leaving hundreds dead and tens of thousands homeless.

The shift to the right by the new government meanwhile alienated the Christian Democrats, providing an opportunity for the rebels' front organization to make overtures to ex-president Duarte to bring his party into the opposition camp, a move that might have considerable repercussions.

On 3 September, Costa Rican foreign minister Fernando Volio held talks in Sal Salvador with President Magana concerning possible negotiations between the regime and the rebels. The Costa Ricans, who had led this peace initiative, had earlier held talks with the leader of the rebel front. Magana subsequently established a multi-party commission to consider possible negotiations with the rebel leadership.

#### Current Data

Status. Republic. There are separate parliamentary and presidential elections.

Population. 4,879,000 in January 1981, compared to 1.8 million in 1950 (319% growth).

Ethnic Divisions. Mestizo, i.e., European and Indian mix--92%; Indian and White minorities--4% each at most.

Language. Spanish.

Religion. 98% Roman Catholic.

Literacy. In urban areas--50%; in rural districts--30%.

<u>Main Cities.</u>	San Salvador (capital)	380,000
	Santa Ana	172,300
	San Miguel	132,000

Economy. Agriculture is the dominant sector of the economy, accounting for 75% of export earnings and employing some 30% of the population. Coffee and cotton are the most important crops, but successful attempts have been made to

cultivate sugar and maize. With the rapid expansion of the individual sector in recent years, there has been a rapid growth in the middle and industrial working classes. El Salvador is probably the most highly industrialized of the Central American states. Manufacturing industries account for about 17% of the gross domestic product. The most important industry is textiles: others include shoes, furniture, chemicals and fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, construction materials, cement, food and drink processing, rubber goods. A small quantity of petroleum products, including asphalt, is also produced. Exports of manufactured goods, mostly to other Central American countries, used to account for some 24% of foreign exchange earnings.

El Salvador has small deposits of gold, silver, copper, iron ore, and other minerals. Hydroelectric projects began to reduce reliance on oil-fired power plants. Hostility with Honduras since 1969 affected El Salvador's exports to Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras. This, however, was nothing compared to the damage inflicted by the civil unrest of recent years.

The country's gross domestic product has fallen by about 20% since 1979. Urban unemployment has risen to a third of the work force. Coffee earnings, which usually generate about half El Salvador's foreign exchange, have fallen by a third because of disruption in the countryside and poor prices abroad. Growers' fear of land reform was another negative factor. From a 1979 trade surplus of \$500 million, El Salvador posted a 1981 deficit of \$120 million. Since 1978, around \$1 billion in capital has fled the country, and the country's foreign debt stands at \$550 million. Consequently El Salvador is now heavily dependent on outside aid. In 1981, it received \$200 million from the U.S.; in 1982 it was expected that aid would total \$400 million, \$250 million of it from America.

Geography. 21,400 km<sup>2</sup>; 32% cropland, 26% meadows and pastures, 31% nonagricultural, 11% forest. El Salvador is the smallest, most densely populated Central American republic. All the national territory is occupied and developed, despite the fact that most of the country is volcanic upland. Highlands are surmounted by two more or less parallel rows of volcanoes. The highest is Santa Ana (2,365 metres). Lowlands lie north and south of the high backbone. Land boundaries are 515 km: coastline, 307 km.

Status of Government. Following the parliamentary elections on 28 March 1982 El Salvador has been ruled by a so-called Government of National Unity. The provisional president is Alvaro Alfredo Magana, a banker with no party connections. He was backed for the appointment by the army, which was concerned that the new government's image should not be perceived as too far to the right. The rightist swing has occurred anyway, because the Constituent Assembly is dominated by a coalition of four rightist parties which between them have 36 of the 60 seats. Moreover, the most powerful of these parties, ARENA, had placed its leader--Roberto d'Aubuisson--as president of the assembly and gone on to increase his powers at the expense of the national president's. No governing role has been allotted to the Christian Democratic Party, even though this party with 41% of the votes and 24 seats had emerged as the single most popular. Its leader, Jose Napoleon Duarte Fuentes--the former president--is also in the political wilderness.

#### Main Political Groupings

The four parties which formed the governing coalition are as follows:

1. National Republican Alliance (ARENA). Major Roberto d'Aubuisson's party, which gained 19 seats in the 1982 election. Extreme right alignment.

2. National Conciliation Party (PCN). This party ruled El Salvador for 18 years until 1979, and won 14 seats in 1982. It is a right-of-centre, strongly anti-communist party supported by traditionalists in the Church, by the military, and by many peasants. PCN has nevertheless advocated social and economic reforms.
3. Democratic Action Party. A smaller centre-right party, possessing two seats.
4. Popular Salvadorean Party (PPS). With one seat, the PPS is the junior partner in the coalition. The party is right-wing conservative.

The major opposition party within the constitutional process is--

Christian Democratic Party (PDC). This party contested the parliamentary elections in 1961 as part of the United Democratic Party--an alliance with the (moderate) Revolutionary Action Party and the Social Democratic Party--but gained no seats. With other opposition parties, PDC boycotted the 1962 presidential elections, but in those of 1967 its candidate achieved second place. It took part in the 1972 legislative and presidential elections and also in the 1979 presidential election as the leading party in the National Opposition Union. Its president was a member of the ruling junta set up after the overthrow of President Romero's PCN government. The PDC is a left-of-centre party with mainly middle class support. It has backed land reform and "social justice". In March 1980, PDC members who decided to back the rebels formed the Popular Social Christian Movement (MPSC).

Other opposition parties have merged with the violent opposition groups or have gone out of business and for the time being are absent from constitutional politics. They

include:

National Democratic Union (UDN). UDN contested the 1972 and 1977 presidential elections as part of the (unsuccessful) National Opposition Union (UNO) and was still part of this Union when, in 1978, the UNO boycotted the parliamentary elections. UDN is a left-wing party which had been supported by the illegal Salvadoran Communist Party.

Salvadorean Communist Party (PCES). A pro-Soviet Communist party prepared in the past to work with centre-left parties, even at the cost of losing important members to the violent opposition.

Although the party remained illegal, one of PCES's leading members became Minister of Labour and Social Security in the government formed in the immediate aftermath of the October 1979 overthrow of Romero. PCES subsequently became a violent group.

National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Under the leadership of Guillermo Manuel Ungo, MNR is a Democratic Socialist party with affiliation to the Socialist International. Since the early 1970s the MNR took part in the National Opposition Union (UNO). Following the overthrow of Romero in 1979, Ungo was briefly a member of the revolutionary junta established under moderate military leadership.

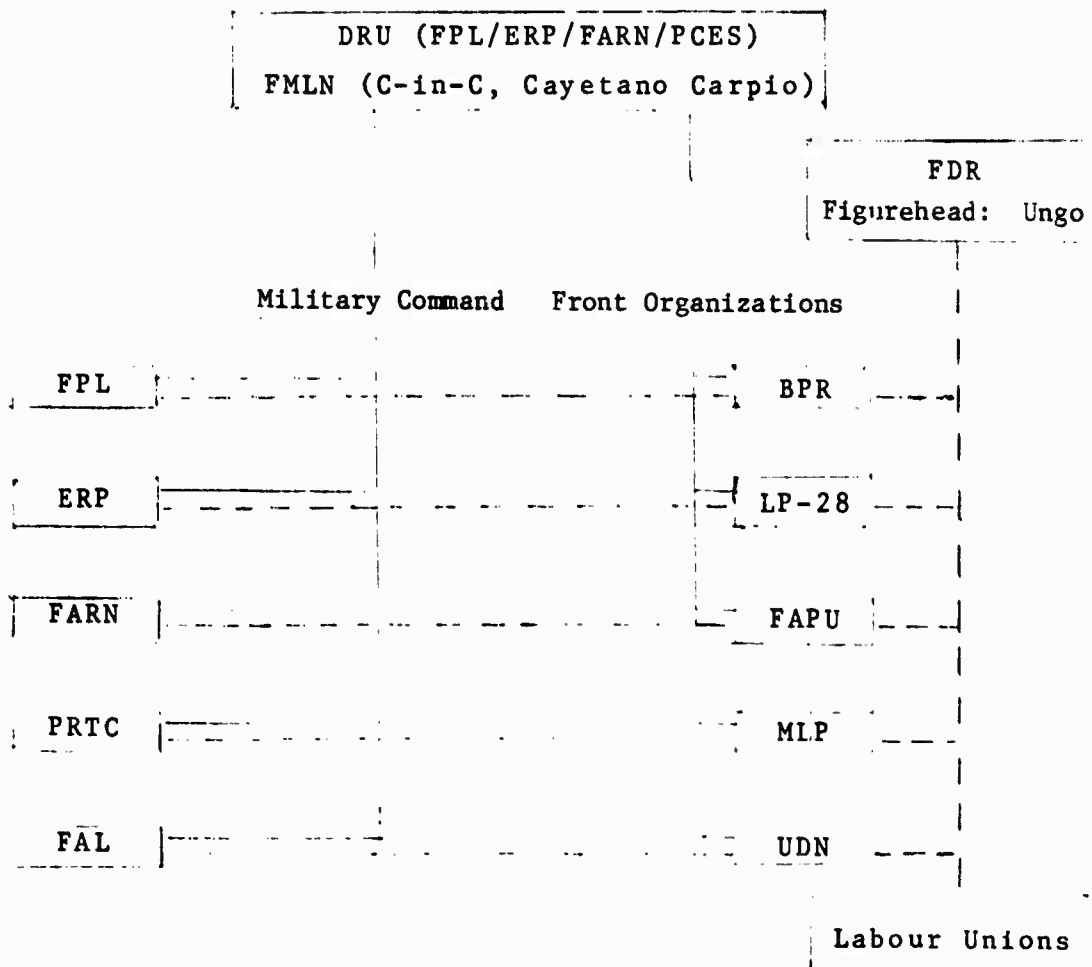
National Opposition Union (UNO). A left-of-centre electoral alliance involving the PDA, MNR and UDN, and supported by communists, UNO fought the 1972 and 1974 parliamentary elections and the 1972 and 1977 presidential elections. Its 1972 presidential candidate, Duarte, was officially declared to have been narrowly defeated, but he claimed to have won. Following an abortive coup in which he was reportedly involved, Duarte went into exile. UNO's 1977

presidential candidate also appealed for the elections to be annulled, claiming that his loss was due to fraud, and he was deported to Costa Rica.

### Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Organization. Although the rebel groups retain separate identity and frequently disagree over policy, they have been drawn together to form a unified opposition, as set out below. The abbreviated titles are explained in the narrative which follows.

#### High Command



If the credit for the creation of this formidable force can be given to any one man, he is Salvador Cayetano Carpio. Ironically, the history of recent Salvadoran revolution was influenced at its outset by Soviet meddling, but this had precisely the opposite effect to that intended.

According to a well-informed source, Cayetano Carpio's "deviationism" offended the CPSU's International Department (ID), which is responsible inter alia for relations with non-ruling communist parties. Cayetano Carpio was at this time Chairman of the Central Committee of the PCES, and his fault was exposed in an article he wrote for Problems of Peace and Socialism in which he implied a need for autonomous Latin American communist regimes. This was in 1968, before Castro had been brought under full Moscow control, and long before the current flexible policy concerning revolutionary leadership had been conceived in Moscow.

Cayetano Carpio was invited to holiday at a Black Sea resort where his views were discussed. Since he adhered to "polycentric communism", a heresy in Moscow, the ID decided that he had forfeited his trust and must be replaced as PCES's leader. He was detained in Russia and when at the end of 1968 he returned to El Salvador he found that Shafik Handal was now in the chair. The latter owes his first name to Lebanese descent, but is a Salvadoran. He has a brother, Farid Handal, also an influential figure in PCES (Robert Moss, "Salvador's Communists," Daily Telegraph, 6 April 1981).

Loss of leadership freed Cayetano Carpio from the need to accept at face value the Moscow-inspired PCES policy of the "peaceful road" to power, with its tactical liaisons with the UDN and other bourgeois parties. He argued for a switch to violent opposition but was overruled on the Central Committee. In 1970 he and his supporters split the PCES and formed their own organization. It was from this split that the Salvadoran revolution was born, with Cayetano Carpio an important leader,



and it was through the Cuban-inspired unification ten years later that he emerged as the overall leader, with Handal's PCES incorporated under his control. Thus Moscow's intentions had been thwarted: the wrong man was at the top. Time, however, has changed the Kremlin's tactical method, and Soviet leaders are now prepared to embrace all successful radical revolutionaries, even heretics.

The violent groups that emerged after the 1970 split are as follows:

Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL). Sometimes described as the Farabundo Marti FPL, this is the group formed by Cayetano Carpio in 1970. It is the largest and most powerful of the guerrilla groups. It publishes El Rebelde and has its own radio station--"Radio Liberation". In 1975 it formed a front organization:

Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR). The front was formed by three of FPL's central command, Juan Chacon, Facundo Guardado, and Julio Flores. A fourth member led a subsidiary front:

Association of University Students of El Salvador (AGEUS). He was Oscar Bonilla, who became secretary-general of the Association, which had an office in BPR's building in the National University. Over time, a number of other groups have come under BPR's general direction:

The Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (FECCAS)

The Union of Workers of the Countryside (UTC)

The National Association of Salvadoran Teachers (ANDES)

The "June 19th" Revolutionary Students (UR-19)

The Movement of Revolutionary Secondary School Teachers (MERS)

In 1972 further rebellious PCES members quit the party and formed a second major group:

People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). Led by Joaquin Villalobos, ERP is a Castroist guerrilla or terrorist group, considered the most extreme in its viciousness. Like the FPL, ERP established close links with the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, the Guatemalan Army of the Poor, the Chilean MIR and other violent Latin American groups. In 1977 ERP formed a front:

28th February Popular Leagues (LP-28). Leader: Leoncio Pichinte. In 1975, after ERP had murdered one of its own members, a splinter group broke away to form:

Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN). The original leader was Roque Dalton, who criticized ERP for random violence. The current commander is Ferman Cienfuegos. FARN specialized in kidnapping. Needing a front, FARN took over the existing:

United Popular Action Front (FAPU). Leader: Alberto Ramos. This had originally been formed in 1974 by ERP and two Catholic priests, with the theme "armed struggle today, socialism tomorrow". Early in 1979 FAPU announced a tactical alliance with BPR.

Workers' Revolutionary Party of Central America (PRTC). Leader: Roberto Roca. This is a regional guerrilla group of Trotskyist colouring. It has a front:

Movement of Popular Liberation (MLP). Leader: Fabio Castillo.

Meanwhile, in 1979, the PCES joined the violent opposition and formed a guerrilla force:

Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL). FAL in turn used

the UDN, with which the communists had previously cooperated in elections, as its "respectable" revolutionary front.

### Unification

In 1974 the Junta for the Coordination of the Revolution was established by Havana, with orthodox communists and underground leaders from the various Latin American countries playing important coordinating roles. The 1979 Sandinista victory gave the Junta new vitality. Havana now believed that El Salvador was ripe for full-scale revolution. The first requirement was a unified front and a single operational command.

During the summer of 1979 Fidel Castro invited various Salvadoran rebel leaders to Havana, making clear that unity was a precondition for support. His terms were accepted. In January 1980, the first umbrella group emerged:

Revolutionary Coordinador of the Masses (CRM). This incorporated BPR, FAPU, LP-28, MLP and UDN--the old constitutional National Democratic Union which had by now taken the violent path.

Three months later, the MNR and MPSC united in opposition to the regime to form:

### Democratic Front (FD).

Both CRM and FD were short-lived, as they united later the same month, April 1980, to become:

Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). This coalition of the FD and CRM was formed under multimillionaire Enrique Alvarez Cordoba to unite the Marxist-Leninist and non-communist elements of opposition. After Cordoba was assassinated along with six other FDR members, the front moved to Mexico City, becoming an embryo government-in-exile. Although in many respects an international propaganda organization, the FDR does have one important body--the

Political Diplomatic Commission. This was responsible for the policy paper referred to later and reproduced at Appendix. FRD's president is Guillermo Manuel Ungo and vice-president is Eduardo Calles. Ungo is chairman of the Commission, on which also sit Mario Aguinada (UDN), Salvador Samayoa (BPR), Jose Napoleon Rodriguez Ruis (FAPU), Ruben Ignacio Zamora Rivas (MPSC), Ana Guadalupe Martinez (LP-28) and Fabio Castillo (MLP). FDR maintains the "broad front" fiction, mainly for foreign consumption.

United Revolutionary Directorate (DRU). The DRU is the pinnacle of political power in the rebel camp. It is the committee of Marxist-Leninists responsible for political, military, logistical and propaganda policy. Represented on DRU are the FLP, under Carpio, ERP and FARN, both Marxist-Leninist albeit of unorthodox shades, and the Moscow-line PCES, which finally took the violent plunge in 1979, presumably at the time when Havana and Moscow decided that revolution in El Salvador was a safe bet. Since FPL/BPR are the largest and best organized of the groups, Carpio's voice has the most influence. However, Handal, as Moscow's man in DRU, has doubtless gained in stature in view of the crucial importance of outside support. Since Moscow unseated Carpio as leader of the PCES, policy has changed: the Soviets may now be perfectly prepared to leave the more dynamic man in charge, although they doubtless plan to bring him under effective control in the aftermath of victory. Notably absent from DRU is any representative of the Trotskyite PRTC: evidently Moscow's toleration of heretics has its limits. FAL, of course, is represented by PCES. Predictably absent is any representation of non-communist parties or fronts. Cuban liaison officers concerned with intelligence and supply are believed to attend DRU meetings. As the top level, DRU needed to distance itself from the day-to-day conduct of operations. It therefore formed:

Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

This is commanded by Salvador Cayetano Carpio and coordinates all guerrilla actions. FMLN publishes Barricada and controls "Radio Venceremos".

Background to the Insurgency

By the late 1970s, many analysts believed that terrorism, while posing a severe nuisance threat, was not a technique that had much real utility as a revolutionary instrument. These individuals may have forgotten the de-colonization experiences of Britain and France, and how important terrorism had been in Palestine, Algeria, Cyprus and a host of other countries seeking independence. In all these cases, terrorism had been but one among many instruments and its role had never been the decisive one. However, in its place, it had proved invaluable to rebel strategy. Never did a terrorist campaign drive the colonial forces out of the country: it forced a change of perception in the minds of the colonial government and electorate and eventually achieved the "asset-to-liability shift". Once the colonial power came to view its once valued colony as a liability, it was only a matter of time before it withdrew.

When terrorists in the Argentine, Uruguay, Brazil and other Latin American countries attempted to overthrow their regimes by strategies of prolonged urban guerrilla war, they failed. They possessed neither the means of achieving physical victory nor the psychological leverage that depends upon dealing with an alien force. Governments responded in kind, and destroyed the terrorists. Democratic principle and the rule of law were injured, but the insurgents were killed. Carlos Marighella, a Brazilian terrorist leader killed in 1969, had written how the urban guerrilla "is not afraid of dismantling and destroying the present . . . economic, political and social system, for his aim is to help the rural guerrilla and to collaborate in the creation

of a totally new and revolutionary social and political structure, with the armed people in power." He also stressed the polarizing potential of urban terrorism: how it forces the regime to respond brutally, which in turn provides recruits for the rebellion (Carlos Marighella, "Minimanual of the Urgan Guerrilla," quoted Robert Moss, Adelphi Papers no. 79 [1971]). In both these assessments Marighella was perfectly correct. But his own campaign was too elitist, the peasants were not mobilized, and terrorism did as much to legitimize government repression as to glorify the cause.

In the early phase of the Nicaraguan revolution the FSLN used terrorism in a selective manner. They tried hard to build a Robin Hood image so as to attract widespread support. They concentrated on spectacular hostage-takings which humiliated the regime. And their activities brought about atrocious government counter-measures that mobilized people in what has been called a "national mutiny". Terrorism, as a segment of a far wider strategy, was effective. The lesson was learned anew.

#### Salvadoran Guerrilla Strategy

Cayetano Carpio began his campaign at about the same time that the Sandinists were intensifying theirs. It is clear from what has occurred and been written since that he appreciated the mobilizing and polarizing value of terrorism, and he also heeded Marighella's words about dismantling the country's economic system. El Salvador, by its tiny size, large population, freshly developed hydroelectric and communications systems, and absolute reliance on foreign investment and trade, was particularly vulnerable to economic sabotage. Moreover, through its partial political and economic dependence upon American goodwill, the regime was vulnerable to indirect psychological leverage. In Marxian terms, El Salvador was neo-colonial, and in this respect the old "asset-to-liability shift" might be made to work on

the United States government and people, just as it had worked over Vietnam.

Carpio never intended to confine his revolution to the towns or to terrorism. He visualized a nationwide urban-rural guerrilla war. But he did realize that to start the violence in some remote urban area, conveniently far removed from the army and police, but inconveniently distant from the international media, the mass of the population and the centre of government--in the Guevara manner--would be useless. His description of the early days is interesting, and is available from two authoratative documents--El Salvador: The Development of the People's Struggle and Revolutionary Strategy, published in 1980 and 1981 respectively by the Tricontinental Society, London.

Carpio rejects the full Foco theory, but accepts the argument that, provided there exists "an acceptable level of consciousness and commitment", and provided there is "a serious revolutionary organization", the armed struggle and political indoctrination of the masses can work together. He felt in 1970 that there had been so much talk of revolution in El Salvador and so little worthwhile action that his new movement, the FPL, had to test itself and demonstrate credibility before so much as announcing its name, never mind its political platform. Thus, the classical prescription demanding a party structure with political cells as a precondition to armed action was set aside in favour of a simple guerrilla structure. But Carpio stresses "the first armed commandos were formed with the dialectical conception that they should at the same time reach out to the masses and work with them. . . . That conception took us far away from the idea that the guerrilla on its own can make a revolution." The technique is far closer to Mao than Guevara.

Although Carpio does not quote Mao's remark about power growing from guns, he clearly accepts its truth. At every level, the emerging Marxist-Leninist party has developed within guerrilla ranks, with guerrillas in all positions of power, before being diffused more widely amongst the people.

Also in Mao's footsteps, Carpio has selected the strategy of prolonged people's revolutionary war as his central thesis. This rejects any notion of a compromise settlement, of cooperation within a bourgeois regime, of accepting social democracy (which "hardly represents an alternative for Central America"), or any of the hoped-for settlements of Western liberals. "They," the class enemies, "must be defeated not only at the ideologized and political level, but fundamentally at the military level." The policy calls for a correct balance between the violent and peaceful, illegal and legal, economic and political, armed and unarmed, but throughout it stresses the primary of armed struggle. It also sees the need to involve all of Central America, so that regimes in the region are unable to assist one another, and the United States cannot respond effectively in so many places. During a long struggle, the rebels slowly change the correlation of forces in their favour, while depriving the regime of domestic and international legitimacy. When eventually the time is ripe, the government forces are destroyed in a decisive battle. But there is no timetable. When things go badly for the rebels, the revolution can slip back into an earlier phase. The FPL do not spell out the phases, but traditionally these are listed as "survival", "protracted guerrilla warfare", "mobile warfare", and "conventional war". If the period 1970-1978 were years of survival, the subsequent period is clearly one of protracted guerrilla warfare, now with increasing mobility. Given the nature of the country, the opposing forces and the small



scale of action compared, say, to China or Algeria, it is unlikely that the two final phases need ever be far different from the second, except that the guerrillas would move more freely, be able to concentrate, and would finally break the armed forces of the regime rather in the manner demonstrated by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Essential preconditions for success are listed as follows:

1. At the political level--
  - a. Incorporation of the working class into the revolution.
  - b. Consolidation and extension of mass organizations.
  - c. Forging the worker-peasant (urban-rural) alliance.
  - d. Development of new methods of struggle at all levels, operating within and without the "system".
  - e. Developing class warfare (hatred) to identify the "enemy"--whatever group or force or party or alliance, domestic or international, which for the time being prevents the revolutionaries from achieving their goal. The United States is included in this class enemy, for obvious reasons.
  - f. By a combination of 'b' and 'e', depriving the enemy of its social base.
  - g. Deepening the political and ideological struggle within the broader revolutionary movement to ensure party domination and control.
2. At the military level--
  - a. Developing guerrilla warfare, urban and rural.
  - b. Expanding the guerrilla army by arming the masses.

- c. Strengthening the party's grip on all military units.
- d. Weakening, confusing and dispersing the enemy's paramilitary forces (i.e., the "death squads". ORDEN, etc.).
- e. Exposing such organizations, and the army and police, to the masses, as enemies to be hated.
- f. Developing the psychological war.

Considerable importance is attached to the correlation of world forces. The strategy relies on the one hand upon outside assistance from friendly regimes, and on the other upon non-intervention by powers supportive of the Salvadoran government. The Soviet Union's increased military power relative to the West is a positive factor, as is the help given by Cuba and Nicaragua. "Peoples such as those of Socialist Cuba do not hesitate in giving their support and even their lives in the common struggle of the oppressed peoples." Help for the enemy is to be prevented, in Carpio's words, because "we are certain that the solidarity of the anti-interventionist governments of the continent, as was the case with Nicaragua, will stop the bloodied fist of imperialism. We are also certain that our people will receive the powerful, determined support of all the peoples of the world who will do all they can to prevent any kind of armed intervention in El Salvador." This is a frank revelation of a vital aspect of revolutionary strategy, one that has been implemented with great skill and determination.

#### Political Objectives

The form of government to be set up after a successful overthrow of the existing regime is discussed at length. It is not to be "socialist" (in the Soviet meaning of the word) in its initial stages, but will be a "Popular Revolutionary Dictatorship". It is explained that "the dictatorship of the proletariat means the alliance between the

working class and the peasantry in the first place, and secondly with the rest of the workers. The characteristic of this alliance is that the proletariat holds hegemony. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the instrument that the workers use to transform the economy of the country, to bring terror to the bourgeois and to destroy all attempts at counter-revolution." Which is as close an approximation to Marxist-Leninist socialism that one can imagine.

However, the distinction is valid. Carpio does not intend to repeat mistakes made elsewhere by the total nationalization of all property, large and small, and the absolute control by the State of every enterprise, large or small, from the very beginning. Socialism is to be applied by stages, in the hope, first, that non-communists will not be frightened away from his coalition, and non-communist backers outside the country will believe in his democratic intentions and, second, that the country will not go bankrupt in the initial months of his presidency. However, the following measures would be introduced immediately:

1. Destroy the existing socio-economic structure, particularly at the top and at international levels.
2. Nationalize the basic means of production, banks, factories, land, transportation, electric power, refineries, foreign trade, coffee, cotton, sugar, shrimp and others. Introduce centralized economic planning.
3. Improve the standard of living, health, education, housing. Provide jobs for all, and relieve workers from paying taxes.
4. Utterly destroy the army, police and paramilitary, forming a new People's Army based on the guerrillas, completely under party control.
5. Conduct intensive Marxist-Leninist indoctrination.

6. Form mass "defensive" militias, to enforce party discipline at all levels.
7. Draft a new constitution. Dissolve all existing organs of government.
8. Enforce party control over a nationalized mass media.
9. Join the "non-aligned" bloc; improve relations with the Soviet bloc; reduce them with the U.S.
10. Punish all those guilty of "crimes against the people".

There is no discussion of plurality, of the toleration of political parties other than the "vanguard" party. There is not one word about elections. The party's statement says: "The more effectively, radically and swiftly these initial tasks are carried out, the more efficient and rapid will be the transition to socialism" (Marxist-Leninism).

#### The Revolutionary Military Forces

Initially, the "commandos" were in fact terror'st cells. FPL operated in competition, and sometimes in cooperation, with the major rival terrorist groups, FARN and ERP. In May 1978, the first foreign businessman, a Japanese, was kidnapped and murdered in San Salvador by FARN. There followed a spate of similar crimes, which resulted in massive funding for the groups concerned, as international corporations strove to save executives' lives, huge publicity for the revolutionary cause, paid for in the world's media by the companies involved, and the rapid withdrawal of foreign capital, businesses and confidence. From 408 Japanese residents in the country in 1978, less than 40 remained two years later. This seriously undermined the Salvadoran economy, created unemployment, and therefore made the government more vulnerable to extremist pressures and more reliant on outside assistance. It set back the expansion of the middle class, which of course would have imposed a great obstacle to far-left ambitions.

Terrorists turned their attention to domestic ministries and foreign embassies, both to demonstrate in spectacular terms the power of the revolutionaries, and the incompetence of the security forces, and to gain further international publicity. The FPL led the field in this form of action, using its front organization, the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BRP) as foot soldiers. Early in this campaign, the Swiss Embassy and three Latin American embassies were seized simultaneously. The tactic was repeated many times. In one attack, the South African ambassador was kidnapped and later murdered. The FPL had sought the advice of South African terrorists before committing this crime. There were two attacks on the United States Embassy, the first in September 1978, the second in October 1979. The latter was a full-scale affair, of great interest to students of revolutionary technique. This was an ERP attack, backed up by its front, LP-28.

The "peaceful demonstrators" provided by LP-28 filled the street outside the Embassy, carrying banners. When level with their objective, they tore off the banners to reveal five ladders carried horizontally. They were used to scale the fence. Meeting tear gas from Marine guards, ERP terrorists concealed in the LP-28 crowd produced sub-machine guns, while a sniper opened fire from across the street. A fierce battle ensued, and several attackers and marines were wounded but the Embassy defence was well conducted and successful. It occurred only five days before the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was overwhelmed by a "student" mob.

FARN terrorists, concentrating on kidnapping, forced huge ransoms from international corporations. Late in 1978, several Dutch and British executives and a replacement president for a Japanese murder victim were kidnapped by this group, being released some seven months later for \$20

million. The gang amassed some \$60 million, and was able to make a huge grant to the FSLN regime in 1979.

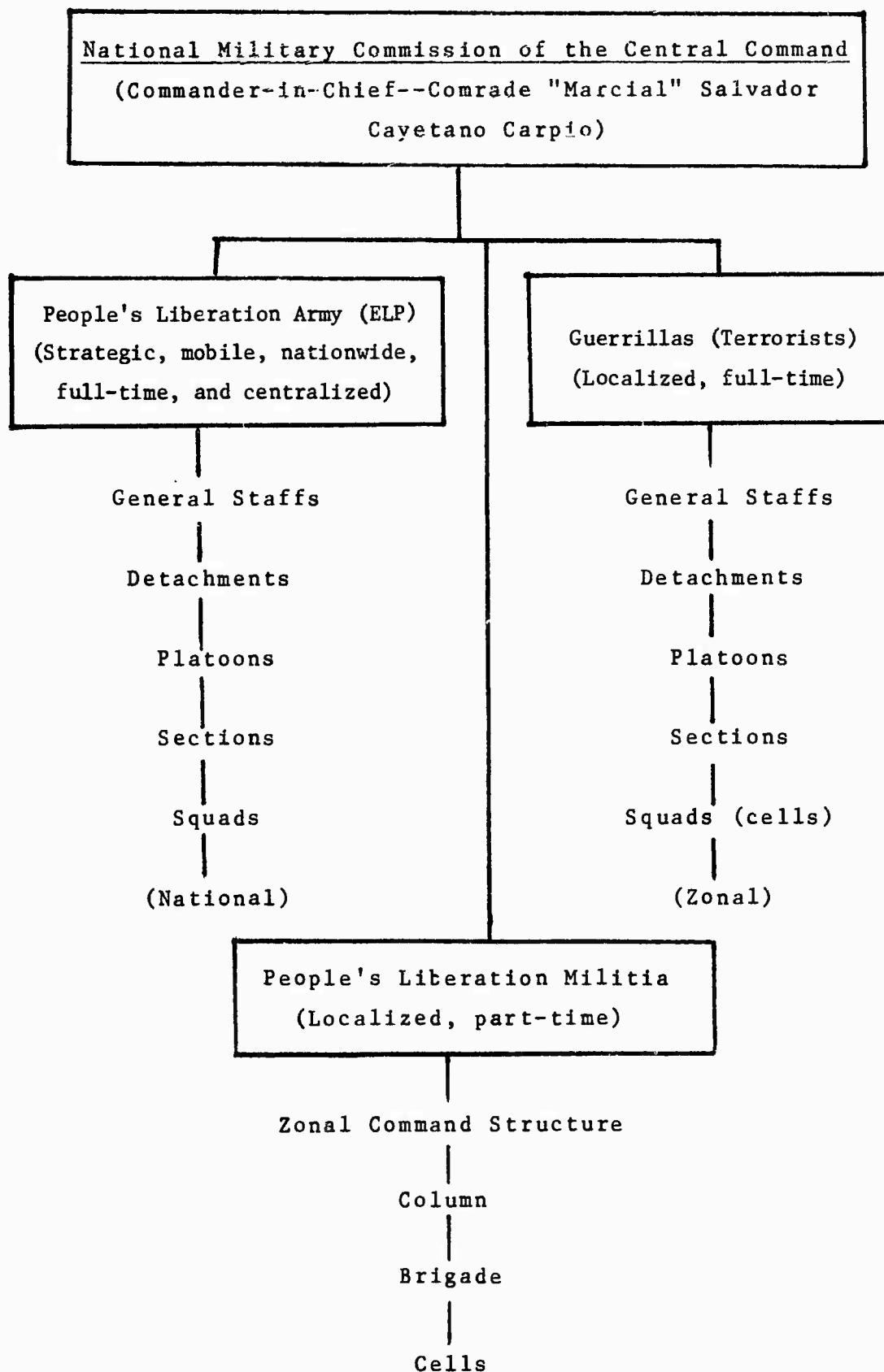
Both FPL and ERP dressed themselves in military uniforms for some of their attacks on businessmen and corporate assets, intending to cast doubt on the loyalty of the army and hasten the collapse of business and investment confidence.

These and many other terrorist acts achieved several revolutionary objectives:

1. The regime and its supporters reacted brutally, thus polarizing society and eroding the government's "social base".
2. The national economy was seriously undermined, reducing greatly the regime's ability to govern without massive external assistance.
3. Internationally, as well as domestically, both the credibility and the legitimacy of the regime were brought into question. A "climate of collapse" prevailed.
4. The terrorist groups gained credibility and legitimacy at the government's expense. The fatalism, born of years of repression, began to leave the people, who were therefore ready to join the rebels.

On the other hand, this phase set certain counter-revolutionary forces in motion, which will be discussed later.

Although FPL is only one among several guerrilla organizations, its greater size and the overall command position of its leader mean that it is likely to become the template for the FMLN. This is the framework of command:



### Tasks

The role of the ELP is to fight prolonged guerrilla warfare and to merge into Phase III--mobile warfare. Eventually, its role will be to defeat the regime's armed forces in a Phase IV decisive battle.

Typical tasks include:

1. isolating remote areas by blowing bridges, mining or ambushing roads, destroying communications;
2. attacking economic targets such as power sources and the grid, dams, mines, hydroelectric projects and transportation--effectively preventing export of crops;
3. occupying towns and villages to demonstrate credibility, terrorize the authorities, and force the security forces to react; and
4. inflicting casualties on the security forces in actions at times and places chosen by ELP.

Clearly, the ELP has to remain intact, and the need not to offer early victories to the regime is overriding. Moreover, it is Carpio's unique policy that the guerrillas will not seek asylum in neighbouring countries. They have to evade, or fight it out on Salvadoran soil.

The urban guerrillas (terrorists) have a continuing task of making El Salvador seem ungovernable, by constant acts of terror in main cities, particularly San Salvador. They can also be used for special operations, such as assassinations and kidnappings.

The Militia is the party rank-and-file in arms. It is also an embryo state security system such as the DGI, together with an embryo "block committee" information-gathering device on classical totalitarian lines. The Militia's principal role is "punishing the enemies of the people", that is to say, killing suspected government informants, sympathizers or, indeed, anyone who is not



100 percent behind the rebels. The Militia collects "war taxes" from villagers and travellers, commandeers accommodation, food, livestock, transport and other guerrilla needs. The organization is the "eyes and ears" of the urban terrorists, and directs the fronts for mass actions such as attacks on embassies. The Militia is responsible for "armed propaganda", a kind of teach-in at the point of a gun, which has always been a feature of Castro-style and Marxist revolutionaries.

Militiamen and women play one more important role. In the villages, they provide a screen of light defence and early warning beyond the ELP's hideouts. Guillermo Ungo, interviewed by La Republica (Italy) on 24 March 1981, explained:

Guerrilla activities concentrate in the centre of an area of popular support, which is in turn surrounded by a larger area of sympathizers or "potential supporters. The army must kill large numbers of people in these circles of pro-guerrilla sentiment before it can strike at the guerrillas themselves.

The additional propaganda benefits of such delaying tactics are obvious.

### Military Operations

While the rebel reorganizations described earlier were taking place, the guerrillas attempted to expand the areas under their control outward from the unpopulated zone along the Honduran border. The plan was to assume military control of the mountain range which divides the eastern region of El Salvador from the Central and Western zones. The attempt failed because the 6,000 guerrillas could not match the army's strength and firepower.

Fearing a change of administration in Washington and a harder U.S. line, FMLN at the end of 1980 decided to launch a "final general offensive". Contradicting the policy of prolonged struggle, this decision may have been

forced on Carpio by his impatient colleagues on DRU, the leaders of ERP and FARN. D-Day was set for 10 January 1981, but the offensive was a dismal failure. Apparently the supply system had not delivered sufficient weapons, and some of those which did arrive were too sophisticated for the rebels. More importantly, FMLN's call for a general strike and uprising was ignored by the great majority of Salvadoreans, and their own rebel ranks included too few seasoned warriors.

Since that failure, it would seem that the revolution slipped quickly back into Phase II, although recently there are signs of Phase III--mobile war. The guerrillas have certainly improved their weaponry, tactics and mobility, and the combination of daring "propaganda of the deed" type operations, conducted it would seem for the benefit of the international press and, through them, world opinion, and more serious economic sabotage kept up pressure on the government and kept alive hope of victory.

#### Fighting and Negotiating

The combination of armed conflict with political dialogue is now a well-developed technique, but one which is better understood by Marxist-Leninists than by the West. Indeed, communists rely upon the relatively open society of their opponent to make the system work. With our "either/or" outlook on peace and war, and our refusal to accept the existence of "permanent struggle" between the two social systems, we in the West are easily tempted to see negotiations as a welcome substitute for conflict, while the opposition is using them merely as an additional weapon in the conflict.

A captured memorandum dated February 1981 exposes the sophistication and tactics of the negotiating and fighting strategy developed in the aftermath of the 1981 failed offensive. This deserves careful examination and is reproduced at Appendix. It was published in Cleto Di Giovanni, Jr.,

"El Salvador's Political Path," Memorandum (Washington, D.C., Council for Inter-American Security Educational Institute, 1981). The memorandum shows that the main purpose of the diplomatic offensive was to halt the flow of supplies to the Salvadoran forces and remove the U.S. military training team. Other objectives were to isolate the right, fragment the centre, demoralize the armed forces, permit the rebels to reorganize and rebuild mass support, and thus prepare the ground for a return to violence, this time with a favourable correlation of forces. By insisting on "mediation" between the FMLN and the United States, cutting out the Salvadoran junta, the rebels hoped to achieve the status of "provisional government".

The tactics outlined in the memorandum were evidently modified, but the same general objectives seem to have been sought. The Socialist International played a part, despatching its Canadian vice-president, Ed Broadbent, on a tour of capital cities, and expressing "solidarity with the Frente Democratico Revolucionario (FDR) of El Salvador, which we regard as the legitimate representative of the Salvadoran people and a valid interlocutor for the peaceful settlement we are advocating." The SI went on to condemn United States training of Salvadoran troops and her "interventionist policy" there. The plot unfolded further when, on 28 April 1981, France and Mexico issued a joint communique recognizing the FDR (and implicitly the FMLN) as "a representative political force", in other words, a government-in-waiting. Propaganda carried out in the United States tried to show that the war could never be won by the junta, and that, far from being a political asset, the Duarte regime was now a liability which should be abandoned at once. The technique of the "asset-to-liability shift" was at work in Central America. However, the "mediation" strategy failed to bring about direct FLMN-American negotiations, and it did not end American assistance to the regime.

### Renewed Offensive

In spite of its failure to deprive the junta of American military help, FMLN launched a new offensive in the fall of 1981. On 14 October rebels destroyed a key bridge, the Punto del Oro. They went on to capture three towns and they held the San Vicente volcano within easy media view of San Salvador against repeated government attacks. Overall, the rebel military performance seemed better than the army's, but their strength was limited, and so were their military gains. As propaganda of the deed, to impress the West through media interpretation that this was another Vietnam, hopeless of rescue and undeserving of support, the rebel offensive was excellent. It continued at a lower pace into the spring of 1982. American television viewers had Salvadoran horror stories as constant diet, thrust at them as lead items almost every day. Then in March the elections seemed to prove that the media had been ignorant fools. The reporters packed their equipment and left, and, overshadowed by the wars in the Falklands and Lebanon, El Salvador appeared to fade from the screens and minds of the world.

The huge turnout for the elections cost the FMLN more credibility in one day than in any previous period. The rebel alliance came under severe strain. Not only had the people demonstrated their refusal to be intimidated from voting, but the rebels had been unable to disrupt the elections except in isolated instances.

Nevertheless, FMLN seems to be holding together. The situation at the fall of 1982 was that the armed rebel strength was about 5,000 or 6,000, mainly concentrated in the north and east of the country, particularly in Morazan and Chatatenango provinces. Lately, the guerrillas have extended their control to take in parts of Usulután in the south-east and northern Santa Ana in the west. American and Salvadoran attempts to cut off the arms supply through

Honduras may have been effective, because it was reported that a new route had been developed from Nicaragua via Belize and Guatemala. This involved flights by helicopters and light aircraft. Rebel ammunitions expenditure in clashes with the army suggests that this commodity is not in short supply.

During a period of apparent regrouping by the main guerrilla forces, the specialists among them have conducted a spectacularly successful economic sabotage operation aimed at the nation's communications system. There have been renewed kidnappings, suggesting a need for funds. Overall, the level of violence in the country in the summer of 1982 was the highest ever, although media attention in the West remains low ever since the March elections.

#### External Assets

Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan assistance to the FMLN has been proved beyond reasonable doubt. The unanswered questions remaining are: how much gets through, and is it continuing at a high rate? In February 1981 the State Department published evidence of such assistance which showed from captured documents that the FMLN had sent Shafik Handal on an arms-collecting mission in Moscow, Vietnam, Libya and Ethiopia and that subsequently 200 tons of such arms were delivered through Cuba and Nicaragua, in time for the failed January offensive. Radicals in the U.S.A. and Europe tried hard and successfully to discredit and ridicule the report, but Robert E. White, the former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador (no supporter of the Reagan Administration) said in a Progressive interview (September 1981) that there was no doubt whatever that the arms did come through Nicaragua, that the captured documents were genuine, and that he believed the Cubans had trained some 1,000-2,000 Salvadoran revolutionaries in Cuba. He went on, for good measure, to describe the FMLN as "totally dedicated revolutionaries who, if they came to power, would reject the

United States. Their program would be to eliminate all U.S. power from the area and counter the United States by bringing in Cuba and perhaps the Soviet Union."

Considerable American diplomatic effort was expended in 1981 and 1982 in attempting to halt the flow of arms. If this is successful, the FMLN may find itself in difficulties. Having expanded their forces and scale of operations, their logistic needs are considerable. A cut-off might create a crisis and possible return to Phase I--survival. Thus the outcome may hang between the two quasi-diplomatic offensives --the FMLN's bid to halt U.S. help and the American attempts to persuade Nicaragua and possibly Cuba to cease their supplies. The correlation of forces remains, as the Marxist-Leninists accurately point out, the key to success or failure.

The external assets that have supported the FMLN abroad are far wider than the Soviet bloc countries and clients. The roles of Mexico, the Socialist International and countries such as Holland, France and Sweden have been vital in isolating the regime and embarrassing America. The senior Salvadoran communist, Farid Handal, has been active in the United States and elsewhere drumming up support. In July 1981 Guillermo Ungo attended the Canadian New Democratic Party's national convention.

Everyone from folk singers to guerrilla spokesmen has been thrown into the propaganda battle. In 1980 a European film company even made a "drama-documentary" film, El Salvador--Revolution or Death--which happens to be FPL's slogan--which was hawked around the universities, clubs and airwaves of the West.

The overseas networks are impressive. In America, the U.S. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; in Canada, the Committee of Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; in England, the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign. Every Western country has its counterpart.

Each receives backing from the spectrum of left-leaning organizations, parties and groups that huddle around revolutionary causes. At a London rally, Michael Foot and Judith Hart of the Labour Party and Alan Sapper of the TUC spoke for the rebels; in Canada, events were organized in conjunction with the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, United Auto Workers, Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Ontario NDP, International Women's Day Committee, Body Politic, Oxfam Canada, Toronto Clarion, Organized Working Women, Latin American Working Group, and many others. The American list includes similar groups, as well as Black organizations, the Socialist Workers' Party, the Maryknoll Order, Young Socialist Alliance and the Inter-religious Task Force on El Salvador.

Through the indirect influence of these groups, whose members are often active in the media and the arts, a climate of opinion was created that discouraged rational discussion of El Salvador and its problems. By directing attention to the evils of the regime, which was never hard to do, the evils of the alternative were obliterated. The black-white mindset, by which the public is encouraged to believe that the removal of something bad must automatically be followed by something good, enabled these fronts to present the FMLN as heroes in pure white hats. Consequently, when on CBS's Sixty Minutes television show a Salvadoran refugee explained that she had fled her country because both her sons had been murdered by guerrillas, the anchor man was too stunned to comment.

Amnesty International has tried its level best to present an unbiased account of human rights violations in El Salvador. Considering the government record, it is neither surprising nor unreasonable that this organization should have condemned the regime in the harshest of terms. Nevertheless, the rebels saw the importance of this respected

international body for its campaign to isolate the regime. The terrorist group ERP infiltrated Amnesty's Salvadoran affiliate, the Salvadoran Commission of Human Rights (CDHES), by promoting one of ERP's members, Norma Guevara, to a leadership position in CDHES. After Archbishop Romero's assassination, CDHES moved to Mexico City. Two staff members had been murdered; the San Salvador office had been bombed and raided on frequent occasions. It is, perhaps, hardly surprising in the circumstances that Amnesty International's 1981 Report should have lost some of its objectivity.

The Report suggested that all violence had come from the government and its supporters, that all the 12,000 people estimated as killed during 1980 were victims of such violence, and that organizations such as BPR, FED and ANDES were legitimate "parties" free of violent involvement. The United States was condemned for providing military assistance. Amnesty International's cause might have been better served had it recognized that rebel communiques had claimed responsibility for the deaths of about one-third of the victims. An expressed concern for peace would have seemed more sincere if Cuba and Nicaragua had been urged to withhold arms, as well as America.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

One does not have to look any further than the Appendix to this chapter to see the FMLN's main strength. Leadership is extremely able. The depth of understanding of revolutionary warfare, with its mix of political, military, economic and psychological elements, is impressive. Moreover, the leaders have demonstrated staying power, inflexible resolve matched by flexibility in tactics, and the will to dominate events and men. The rebels seized the initiative and held it at least until the March 1982 elections. Current military action seems to show a determination to recover it. A second strength lies in the demonstrated fighting qualities



of at least a part of the guerrilla forces. On several recent occasions rebels have fought the army to a standstill.

External friends compose the third strength. Cuba is easily the most important, but the U.S.S.R., Nicaragua, Mexico and the Socialist International are significant assets, as is the worldwide liberal-left support network. The vital input from this strength is arms supply, and the isolation of the regime. The conditions attached to U.S. aid to the regime represent an important guerrilla strength.

Perhaps more valuable than all these advantages combined, the record of the regime represents a strength for the opposition. As a mobilizing force, it is equalled only in Guatemala. The FMLN's whole political and psychological strategy is founded upon the assumption that the regime cannot and will not change its spots.

The major weakness of the FMLN is a lack of grass-roots popular support--the fully mobilized base of peasants and workers necessary for a levee en masse. This weakness distinguishes the Salvadoran insurgency from the final two years of the Nicaraguan. It is probably attributable to the starkly totalitarian nature of the rebel leadership.

The absence from El Salvador's geography of an Atlantic coastline is a second weakness, making resupply by Cuba a difficult process. Also, Carpio's rejection of sanctuary notwithstanding, the land borders with Honduras and Guatemala do not, at present, provide safe havens.

#### The Government Response

Organization. In 1970, when Cayetano Carpio formed his insurgent group, El Salvador's regular defence forces consisted of:

The Army. 6,000 men. It was primarily an infantry force but included small elements of artillery, armoured cavalry, and supporting services. The main combat component was a five-battalion infantry

regiment, an artillery group, and an armoured group. The rest of the force comprised support elements--engineers, signals and medical. In reality, each "battalion" was closer to a company.

The Active Reserve. 2,000 men. Widely distributed throughout the country in small, separated detachments, meeting weekly to train.

The Territorial Service. About 75,000 men. A manpower pool involving no reserve activities--the equivalent of reserves.

The Navy. 200 men. The successor to the Coast Guard, the Navy had three YP-type patrol boats and some smaller vessels.

The Air Force. 1,000 men. In reality, army aviation, the Air Force had 35 planes for support and supply of ground forces.

In addition, the nation had Security Forces consisting of:

The National Guard. 2,500 men. A constabulary-type force for rural police duties.

The National Police. 2,000 men. An urban force providing police protection in the larger cities.

The Treasury Police. 500 men. A small corps organized for customs duties and control of contraband activities.

These three organizations were paramilitary, usually commanded by army officers, and subordinate to the minister of national defence. Each force worked in close coordination with the others, and with the Army.

The Chileans had made a significant contribution to the professional development of the Army and their influence is still strong. After World War II, however, the U.S. Army became increasingly influential, under various training and aid schemes designed to prepare Latin America to defend itself against communist insurgency. Under the constitution,

the president's military policies are implemented by the minister of national defence through the military chain of command. The senior military officer is the Chief of the General Staff, who also serves as chief of the army. All forces, armed and security, come under his jurisdiction.

Faced with a severe insurgency challenge, the armed forces have been increased in size. Their strength, however, is still quite small, nowhere near sufficient for the task facing them:

Army. 14,900 men. 5 infantry "brigades" = 2 x battalions  
 2 artillery battalions  
 1 armoured cavalry regiment  
 1 engineer battalion  
 1 anti-aircraft battalion  
 1 parachute company  
 2 commando companies

It is equipped with 12 French light tanks, 30 armoured personnel carriers, 30 artillery pieces and lighter weapons. The 14,900 figure includes the product of a recent recruiting drive which reportedly introduced some 4,000 teenaged raw recruits to the service.

Navy. No change from 1970.

Air Force. 1,000 men. Equipped with 4 Ouragan, 4 Super Mystere, 7 Magister, 6 Rallye COIN, 11 transports, a dozen helicopters and training aircraft. Many of these aircraft were destroyed on the ground by guerrilla attacks. The air force remains of small operational value. However, the U.S. has recently supplied 6 A-37 Dragonfly fighter-bombers.

Security Forces. The combined strength of the National Guard and the other forces is put at 7,000. The National Guard is some 3,000, the National Police little changed at 2,500, and the Treasury Police has increased to 1,500.

All this represents a very modest increase considering the level of insurgency. Because it soon became obvious that the armed forces lacked a proper intelligence system and the numerical strength to cope effectively, anti-communist civilians formed their own paramilitary organizations to fill the gap.

ORDEN (Organizacion Democratica Nacionalista). ORDEN was established in 1968 by General Jose Alberto Medrano as the non-communist equivalent of Castro's Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. As such, it would provide an informer network against insurgency and, in Medrano's words, "make a barrier to the attempts of the communists to provoke subversion in the countryside." By its rural orientation, ORDEN supported the National Guard rather than the National Police. Because it was set up with government approval, ORDEN's members were allowed to carry arms and they worked in collaboration with security forces. The first civilian-military junta formally prohibited ORDEN by Decree Law 12, in 1980, but its members are reported as still active.

When the rebels began their terrorist offensive in the towns in 1977 and 1978, non-communists who considered that the security forces were ineffective or too tightly controlled began to form additional paramilitary groups similar to those that came into existence in Protestant areas of Northern Ireland in 1972. These included:

White Warriors' Union (UGB). Formed in 1977 with an announced intention to execute Jesuit priests who aided the communists, UGB has links with the Eastern Region Farmer's Front, a landowners' organization.

Anti-Communist Armed Forces of Liberation (FALANGE). Composed of retired security force officers and men.

Organization for the Liberation from Communism (OLC).

A more recent group, anti-communist in character.

The Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Brigade. Named after the president who crushed the 1921 rebellion, the Brigade was responsible for assassinating the FDR leadership in November 1980.

Eastern Anti-Guerrilla Bloc (BAGO). Formed in 1980, BAGO has carried out executions and bombings.

New Death Squad (EMN). With a claimed membership of 3,000, EMN appeared in September 1980.

Anti-Communist Political Front (FPA). Founded in 1979.

### Command and Control

Counterinsurgency calls for a coordinated response on the diplomatic, political, social, economic, psychological and security forces fronts. This can be orchestrated only if the government leadership has effective control over all these activities. Ideally, this leadership should be civilian, democratically elected, and the military should submit to civilian rule.

In El Salvador there has been civilian government (often of questionable legitimacy), but it has not been able to exert full control over the armed forces. The position of defence minister, which ought to be in political hands to ensure civilian policy direction, has been held by an army general. The forces have therefore become a law unto themselves. Moreover, the National Guard and the police forces, which ought to report to a minister responsible for justice, have been placed under military command. General Garcia, who does not belong to the reformist faction in the officer corps, is the real power in the land. The anti-communist paramilitaries, which ought never to have been listed as government assets in a properly organized society, fall neatly into place as a back-up force.

At least until the March 1982 election, no government has been able to construct or implement a rational counter-insurgency strategy because the police and army have insisted on running their side of the war in their own way, and because there was no control whatever over the paramilitaries. Whatever Duarte tried to do on the diplomatic, political and psychological fronts was brought to instant ruin by the armed forces, the paramilitaries, or both. It remains to be seen if the Magana/d'Aubuisson regime can manage things any better, given a closer affinity of views. The basic dichotomy remains, however, and is unlikely to lie dormant for long.

With Garcia in independent control of security forces strategy, his mind uncluttered with the many other, equally important aspects of counterinsurgency (particularly on the international front), the army, national guard and police have gone about their business as though this were a civil war rather than a revolution. The term civil war is often applied to El Salvador, perhaps because of the military's behaviour, but in fact it is inappropriate. There is no internationally recognized alternative government; no area of the national territory under full rebel administration. In the circumstances, the security forces should be acting to uphold the law, to bring offenders to justice, and to protect the people from wrong-doers. It is unnecessary to explain that this has not been the case.

To be sure, the level of rebel activity, the ruthless insurgency methods employed, the fear, the harsh conditions and generally inadequate size and training of the army imposed severe handicaps: with the best leadership and will in the world, the government forces would have had to be tough and sometimes harsh to cope with the problem. Latin America has never been noted for its humane treatment of enemies. If the challenge was to be met, a lot of people were going to die whatever the government and whatever the

strategy. But this does not excuse the routine use of torture, the random killings, the apparent urge to meet terror with super-terror, the condoning of paramilitary murders, and the whole spectrum of illegal and immoral activities that have dishonoured the Salvadoran army, National Guard and police. Properly controlled, ORDEN might have proved a legitimate and invaluable intelligence agency, just as the hatred of communism which filled the paramilitary ranks might have been disciplined and turned to massive political and psychological advantage. Instead, these groups have provided the opposition with the legitimacy which they desperately needed, particularly before international audiences.

#### Doctrine and Tactics

Although the Salvadoran army was once immersed in "civic action" programmes, these are of the distant past, leaving no imprint upon the military mind. The army and guard suffered at the outset of the emergency from a politically motivated and professionally weak officer corps, and rank and file composed of illiterate peasants. Counter-insurgency doctrine was firmly rooted in 1932, and consisted of killing insurgents, suspected insurgents, together with their families and friends. The obligation to have actually to fight against armed bodies of rebel troops was unwelcome, and the army performed badly in such encounters, preferring to operate where opposition was weak. When forced to engage guerrilla bands, units operated in mass, with little conception of such elementary techniques as patrolling, infiltration, ambushing and surveillance. That delight of the bankrupt military mind--the sweep--has been much in evidence. Only the matching incompetence of the enemy saved the army from defeat and severe casualties.

During 1981 the Atlacatl Brigade--a large battalion--was trained in the United States. On its return it was thrown into action under unfavourable conditions and its performance was disappointing. The Americans have felt frustrated because although they have given sound and relevant training to junior officers, NCOs and men, they cannot influence the tactical decisions made by senior officers. Nevertheless, they have persevered. In 1982 the entire 500-strong staff of the Salvadoran Military Academy, 477 officer cadets, plus some 1,000 soldiers, were trained at Fort Bragg. Others went to the OAS schools in Panama. Slowly, the quality of junior leadership has improved. Today, also, analysts are prepared to rate half of the country's top 14 military leaders as aggressive and fit to command, a remarkably high proportion, considering the circumstances.

Giving evidence before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July 1982, Lieutenant General Wallace Nutting, the senior American military man in Panama, described Salvadoran military morale and motivation as good, there being no serious desertion problem. On operations, he testified, the army faces deficiencies in command and control, tactical intelligence, tactical mobility and logistics. The general noted that poor intelligence made it difficult "to apply force with discrimination."

#### External Assets

El Salvador's chief external asset is the support, however conditional, provided by the United States. This takes the form of economic aid, military aid, the provision of a training team of 50-60 specialists, and the training of Salvadorans in the United States.

The tentative support of Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay--all of whom criticized France and Mexico



for backing the FLMN--is valuable. Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru are at least understanding. Whether or not new leaderships in Mexico and Panama will also return, at least, to neutrality, is yet to be seen. Honduras has gone farther than the others by deploying troops on the Salvadoran border near Morazan province, to deny the rebels sanctuary and to engage them. Honduras has also restricted the flow of arms across her territory to the best of her ability.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The regime's chief strength, if it can be called one, is the bloody-minded and often brutal rejection by the majority of its people of Marxist-Leninist claims to power. Properly harnessed and disciplined, this could still be the key to survival.

The armed forces are both a strength and a weakness. As the only defence against a rebel take-over, they are an important if fragile strength. By their methods and their toleration of paramilitary atrocities, they undermine the willingness and ability of their country's friends to go on providing the assistance which alone can maintain a favourable correlation of force.

The new government is not yet tested, but it seems likely to be in the same compartment as the army, both strength and weakness. The strength may lie in decisiveness and confidence, and in a possible ability to bring the army under control within an overall strategy that the army approves. Weakness, possibly fatal weakness, may arise out of a willingness to see the Christian Democrats, Duarte's party, as enemies, thus isolating the right, alienating Latin America, and losing American support. A further liability may be a willingness to tolerate paramilitary atrocities. But the regime's most obvious weakness, deliberately created by the terrorist tactics of the opposition, is its ruined economy and departed investors. This condition renders it totally reliant on outside economic aid.

The second weakness is related. Having no arms industry or money to buy on the open market, El Salvador must rely on U.S. military aid to continue the struggle. Moreover, she relies too on U.S. diplomatic and other efforts to halt or reduce the flow of Soviet and Cuban arms to the rebels. If either falters, she is lost.

### Outlook

The situation in El Salvador is as grim in the fall of 1982 as at any earlier period. The estimate of deaths since the emergency began is 33,000, and there is no end in sight. The new regime has upset its external backer, the U.S., by overturning part of the land reform programme, by failing effectively to discipline its security forces and control the paramilitaries, and by threatening the Christian Democrats. In consequence, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended in July that aid to El Salvador be restricted to \$66 million, one-third the sum requested by President Reagan.

The rebel infrastructure offensive is effective and costly for the government. While the guerrillas lack the strength to win an outright military victory, they seem capable of maintaining their present measure of control and level of activity, at least so long as a trickle of supplies reaches them. The army cannot dislodge them from their rural hideouts, nor protect the country from terrorist and sabotage attacks. Time will be on the side of the rebels if they can make real progress in mobilizing mass popular support while retaining unity and discipline in guerrilla ranks. Their best hope is that d'Aubuisson will become another Somoza and do the job for them.

Time will favour the regime if the government can improve its image, so that American support continues, while controlling and progressively reducing the level of violence in the country. Their brightest hope is that America will

succeed in halting arms supplies to the rebels, perhaps by a deal at the source.

The level of violence is appallingly high, but it is accomplished by unsophisticated weaponry, mainly rifles, pistols, light machine guns and mortars. This was also the case in the Nicaraguan revolution, although there the regime had more aircraft. A glance at the recent conflicts in the Lebanon, Dhofar, Angola, Somalia, Indo-China and Afghanistan makes a vivid contrast: in all these internal wars the Soviet-backed sides employed heavy weapons such as long-range rockets, shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles and light artillery. Against a Salvadoran military of questionable quality, even a modest injection of this type of equipment into the battle might prove decisive. Once the rebels demonstrated an ability to defeat the army in open battle, collapse might be rapid.

The new regime's interest in negotiating with the rebels is an interesting development, implying an understanding on d'Aubuisson's part of fighting and negotiating tactics. Cayetano Carpio is reported to be opposed to any talks, which is hardly surprising, given his understanding of such tactics and his insistence on total victory. But if others in the guerrilla camp can be lured into talks, this might split the opposition broad front and isolate the Marxist-Leninists. If the so-called moderates refuse, then the regime gains legitimacy for having tried. According to one report, the FDR is no longer insisting on army reform as a precondition to such talks.

Negotiations appear now to be favoured by the United States. Indeed, d'Aubuisson may be acting under pressure from this quarter. We may be seeing a shift of emphasis in Washington from a military towards a socio-economic response to Central American insurgency. But how far the d'Aubuisson regime will go along with such a policy remains to be seen.

If it does, and provided the rough balance of force is maintained, there is hope that the Salvadoran political centre may return to constitutional politics and that fresh elections may lead to a fully representative government, the isolation of the extremists of left and right, and a lessening of violence. This is a valid hope, but it is slim.

The alternative is an irrational "go-it-alone" response by the present regime. This could involve the exclusion of what is left of the moderate centre (mainly, the Christian Democrats) from politics and their likely defection to the opposition camp, massive government violence in an attempt to crush or intimidate the left, and the alienation of the masses. The Nicaraguan situation could be repeated, American support would almost certainly be withheld, and Cayetano Carpio would triumph.

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- \* On 6 April 1983 the second in command of the FPL, Melida Anaya Montes was murdered in Managua, where she was on a FPL/FNLA/FDR mission. Nicaraguan police arrested 6 Salvadorans and it appears that the murder was planned by Rogelio Bazzaglic Recinos, a member of FPL Central Command. Cayetano Carpio attended the funeral and then, on 12 April, "committed suicide" out of distress at the treachery of a trusted aide. Later, Salvadoran and U.S. sources speculated that Carpio as well as Montes had been murdered, possibly on the order of Joaquin Villalobas, leader of the ERP, in an attempt by ERP to assume control over FNLN.

Memorandum on Negotiations

(The following is an English translation, supplied by the U.S. Department of State, of a captured Salvadoran communist guerrilla document on negotiations. It was printed in El Diario de Hoy, San Salvador, on April 27, 1981. One of the signers of the document, Ruben Zamora, has vouched for its authenticity [see "Is El Salvador Negotiable?" by Stephen S. Rosenfeld, The Washington Post, May 15, 1981.] )

MEMORANDUM TO: General Command. FROM: Diplomatic Political Committee (CPD). MATTER: Proposal for International Mediation. DATE: 3 February 1981.

1. INTRODUCTION. We now enter a new phase of the international aspect of our war. We already have completed in a positive manner the first phase of the diplomatic offensive. Despite it all, and in view of the nature of the objective situations therein, our actions have not been (sic) limited to political deeds which tended to delay diplomatically the military strengthening of the enemy.

Five fundamental features define, in our opinion, the entering to a new stage:

1.1. The vacuum following the first phase of the military offensive and the intense imperialist pressures have elicited some skepticism, weariness and fear among friends and allies (especially Latin Americans).

1.2. As result of the above, it is becoming more evident that we will be pressured to "negotiate" with the junta. Since the talks with Pema Gomez (17 January), who acted as spokesman for Torrijos and Carlos Andres Perez, other actions have clearly revealed this tendency (talks with Carazo, Turbay, PRI Relations Secretary Madrazo).

1.3. The TIAR threat pends over our heads.

1.4. The pressures against Nicaragua are becoming more forceful.

1.5. There (sic) has been a considerable increase of military aid to the junta making possible a great control of the logistic flow to our fighters, further hindering our forces' military action. This situation can only be relieved through diplomatic activity.

2. ALTERNATIVES. We visualize only three possible means of general reaction to this new situation.

2.1. To abandon as an objective the dialogue with the United States designed for the objective posed in the previous period. This decision would be based on three uncertain suppositions: A) that we could win militarily even though the enemy is becoming stronger in arms, communications, logistics, and leadership capacity; B) that we could be absolutely sure of our friends and allies despite the pressures being endured by them; C) that limited foreign military invasion could not affect us seriously.

2.2. To wait for the North Americans to open the doors again. This, however, is only a possibility, and we cannot have our strategy depend on it as this would mean (sic) losing our initiative and surrendering politically to the enemy's will.

2.3. The third alternative consists in adopting an initiative of mediation, which is not the same as a dialogue and cannot be readily considered as a negotiation. This alternative implies the official involvement of several governments in the process and permits a more or less extended handling of time, according to our convenience.

### 3. PROPOSAL.

3.1. General Layout: The FMLN-FDR expresses to a group of governments (the procedure is explained further on) its willingness to find a political solution to the conflict, tactically stating its disposition to reach a negotiation with the junta.

It notes, however, that the main obstacle to reaching this objective is the U.S. policy of military aid to the junta. The FMLN-FDR would accept, therefore, an international mediation if: A) the group of mediating governments obtains from United States a commitment to withdraw its military presence from El Salvador; and B) it arranges a dialogue between the U.S. government (sic) and the FMLN-FDR on the steps and confirmation of an effective military withdrawal.

The time factor is essential. The success of this maneuver to a great extent depends on carrying it out at the right time and pace. We start from the supposition that it is an auxiliary maneuver of the major operation, which is war. Therefore, its timing must strictly depend (sic) on the military war plan.

#### 3.2. Objectives of the maneuver.

3.2.1. It allows us to maintain the initiative in the politico-diplomatic terrain, since we choose the mediating team, determine the steps to be taken and the time they should be taken.

3.2.2. It provides our friends and allies with more opportunities for mobilization and reaction in the face of the U.S. pressures, and permits them to assume a more active and legitimate role.

3.2.3. It allows the involvement of Latin American governments which so far have remained outside the conflict (Colombia, Peru, Brazil, for example).

3.2.4. It contributes decisively to maintaining the problem outside the OAS or, in the case of it being brought up before it, to count on a number of countries (seven, as a minimum) which would oppose the implementation of TIAR. (Note: TIAR is the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.)

3.2.5. It helps us gain (sic) time to improve our internal military situation in relation to the enemy's might.

3.2.6. It would allow (in its second phase) a softening of the repressive conditions in the interior of the country, with which our masses could have a breather, recover from the blows, and renew action positively.

3.2.7. It would give us the opportunity to renew a more direct contact with the people.

3.2.8. It would help us to improve and reach agreements with "democratic" military sectors.

3.2.9. It could allow us to establish an international medical organization (of the group of countries chosen by us) to relieve fighters and communities in the most affected areas.

3.2.10 It would permit us to increase contradictions among the enemy ranks.

3.2.11. If the proposal (which in principle is most reasonable) fails to prosper, we would be in a most favourable position internationally.

### 3.3. Maneuver risks.

3.3.1. Danger that our leadership should interpret the maneuver as "surrender" or capitulation.

3.3.2. It means a change of position concerning not to hold a dialogue with the junta. By the manner in which the proposal is presented, however, the FMLN-FDR will not sit to dialogue with the junta, but instead would accept the good offices of the international mediating team. This will permit us to continue handling publicly - should we choose to do so - our refusal to talk with the junta.

Stages. A) We speak with Nicaragua and get together concerning the aspects of the maneuver.

B) Nicaragua (or any other close country) would approach groups of governments stating the convenience of adopting a mediation initiative and propose it to the Salvadoreans.

C) The group (four or five) makes (in private or in public, whatever is most convenient) the proposal to the FMLN-FDR.

D) The CPD answers accepting but with the following conditions:

D.1. Commitment for U.S. military withdrawal.

D.2. Dialogue between the United States and the CPD to agree on the withdrawal.

D.3. Mediation should be conducted outside the OAS.

D.4. We want the cooperation of a larger number of countries (Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Grenada, Guyana, Nicaragua, Peru, Brazil, Panama).

D.5. If that group agrees with the mediation proposal we would choose from them a three-nation committee.

E) The three-nation Committee is elected.

F) The mediating committee satisfies the conditions (D.1. and D.2.)

G) Mediation begins.

The first proposal on our part would be the need for both parties to make certain concessions so the mediation may have possibilities for reaching solutions in the future. This would be preceded by a delaying period.

G.1) Discussion of the nation's situation. Exchange of positions (via mediators) which could be more or less extensive, according to the convenience as recommended by the leadership.

G.2) Freedom (with or without trial) for all political prisoners.

G.3) Lifting of the state of siege and martial law.

G.5) Guarantees for entry for the CPD.

C.6) Respect for the military areas under our control.

Note: We must define what concessions we could offer in exchange for the above. Logically, we would be asked for a cease-fire.

D) (sic) End of mediation.

At this point of the discussion, we foresee the conclusion of the mediation. If we have accomplished our objectives, then we should "withdraw," in view of any repressive action or evidence of ill feeling, which surely will be produced.

If the military situation should be desperate at that point of the process, we would be forced to continue.

#### 4. CONTINGENCY PLAN.

We must foresee the political and publicity uses, in case the Yankees obstruct the mediation in its first phase.



5. CONFIDENTIALITY. It is absolutely necessary for no one to learn of the nature of the maneuver of this initiative. This is indispensable for the maneuver to be successful.

UNITED TO FIGHT UNTIL FINAL VICTORY

REVOLUTION OR DEATH: WE SHALL WIN

Submitted by Ruben Zamora, Salvador Samayoa, Mario Aguinada, Guillermo Manuel Ungo. February 1981.

#### OBSERVATIONS ON MEDIATION PROPOSALS

1. These must be expanded in order to organize the negotiation, its presentation and discussion with Sandinist and Cuban companeros has been authorized.

Guillermo Ungo, Mario Aguinada and Pancho are authorized to go to Havana on Monday, 9 February, for this purpose.

2. The possible participants in the negotiation are: Abdul Gutierrez, Morales Ehrlich, Majano, FMLN-FDR.

Mediators: Nicaragua, Mexico, Belize, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras. The USA-PTD-Commanders' dialogue would be held using a single communication channel which would be Mexico.

3. We must define the objectives more clearly, both in our foreign and domestic policies. We must keep in mind that the foreign policy includes the prevention of intervention, and domestically a breather for the masses. We must keep in mind the current circumstances and Nicaragua's participation.

4. Section C 6 which appears in page 7 must be eliminated.

5. The cease-fire, is to be used not as a defensive tactic but as a tactical instrument within the maneuver. Do not use it in the case of mediation but during the negotiation, if necessary.

6. Be sure not to show the maneuver before our democratic allies (Mexico, Panama and others). It is best to speak in terms of our foreign policy rather than in terms of maneuver.

7. Collateral Activities.

A. In the United States we must develop to the maximum the initiative of the group of congressmen in favor of the "dialogue yes, military aid no" which would be directed at the State Department.

B. Development of activities with European social democratic leaders to pressure the United States in particular and Haig directly, so that he will accept the proposal and at the same time, get these leaders to seek a joint policy with the European Christian Democracy which would consist of supporting the proposal publically (sic) and privately.

C. Implement activities with the European Christian Democracy so that they support our proposal, pressuring Washington, the Salvadoran Democracy and COPEI. (Note:

COPEI is the Social Christian Party of Venezuela, the currently ruling party there.)

D. Establish direct contacts with Monsignor River (sic) and the Vatican to obtain their support for the proposal, and a positive support by the Church for the same. With Rivera we can explore the possibility of a statement of the Episcopal Conference favorable to the proposal.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### GUATEMALA

#### History

Along with Honduras, Guatemala was one of the centres of the Mayan civilization. The Indians of Guatemala, who make up more than 40 percent of the present population, trace their heritage directly to the Mayan period. But, as elsewhere, the Mayan culture had long since vanished by the time of the Spanish conquest. The colonial period was one of stagnation, with little social or technological progress, but it was the formative period for Guatemalan social, political and religious institutions. It also made Guatemala the power centre of the Spanish Central American empire. Under Spanish administration the social classes were rigidly and distinctly defined. Native Spaniards and Spaniards born in the colony were at the top of the social strata, while Mestizos, Indians and blacks were at the bottom. The economic system was equally stratified--the higher classes raised crops and cattle for export while the Mestizos and Indians lived at a subsistence level.

Following a period of liberalism in Spain in the early 19th century, Guatemala declared independence in September 1821. The next 17 years were characterized by instability--the failure of the Central American federation and civil insurrection in Guatemala itself. In 1839, the Conservative Party took over, setting the pattern of autocratic rule for the next hundred years. The period up to 1944 was dominated by four major strongmen, supported by the landowners, the military and the Church, who ruled with a mixture of paternalism and despotism. Even Liberal

presidents upheld the tradition. The first great Caudillo, Rafael Carrera, ruled for 26 years. His successor, Justo Rufino Barrios, was a progressive dictator. Where social and economic progress had languished under his predecessor, Barrios modernized the economic base and encouraged immigration, but he also turned against the Church, reducing but not eliminating completely its political power. The end of the Barrios regime in 1885 also brought the end of normal party politics. The traditional labels of liberal and conservative remained, but the parties became vehicles for personalities rather than for political ideals. In 1898, Estrada Cabrera succeeded to office, which he held until 1920. He raised a large standing army and continued the practice of encouraging foreign investment, especially American and German. It was during this time that the United Fruit Company was established in Guatemala. Following a period of relative tranquillity and progress General Jorge Ubico Castaneda was elected in 1931. Ubico skilfully centralized power in his own hands and granted lucrative economic benefits to the United Fruit Company. Under him, UFCO gained control of the ports, railroads and large land grants. Political activity was limited under his rule, censorship enforced and unions banned. At the same time he cultivated the loyalty of the Indian population. The Second World War proved his undoing. The internment of Germans, who made up a significant proportion of the foreign business community, removed the counterbalance to American influence. Guatemala was drawn even more into a dependency relationship. Repression, corruption and the contrast with the ideals for which the Allies were fighting produced dissatisfaction. Students, army officers, middle class professionals and business men rebelled in 1944, bringing in a "revolution" which deposed the last Caudillo.

A new election followed and a democratic constitution was adopted in 1945. Party politics began again and the government under Juan Arévalo proceeded on a moderate reformist course. It took and supported actions to restrict the power of the United Fruit Company, while simultaneously increasing the power of the unions. But Arévalo was soon caught in the classic dilemma of third world modernization: conservatives felt he was moving too fast, conceding and reforming too much, while radicals did not feel he was going far enough. Nonetheless, he outlasted 32 attempted coups d'etat, to finish his six-year term of office in 1950. Until 1949 the main contenders for the succession were Francisco Arana, Chief of the Armed Forces, and Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, a radical leftist. But Arana was assassinated before the election, leaving Arbenz as the only prominent candidate.

Arbenz won 65 percent of the popular vote and became President in 1951. Although not a Communist himself, Arbenz had the support of the Party and the Communist-dominated unions. While committed to modernizing Guatemala within a capitalist framework, Arbenz set about this in a manner which appalled the Americans, then in the throes of the McCarthy "Red Scare": in particular, through the agrarian reform law of 1952, which effectively "Nationalized" the holdings of the United Fruit Company. The measure was popular amongst the common people of Guatemala, but it (and other nationalizations and apparently "socialist" gestures) further polarized the political élites. The government seemed eager to promote an anti-capitalist and anti-American atmosphere--in spite of its declared intention to use the nationalized lands to build a capitalist agricultural and industrial base. Relations between Guatemala and the United States deteriorated rapidly, with UFCO lobbying heavily in the U.S., demanding that its Guatemalan holdings be restored. Internationally, Guatemala took an increasingly anti-American stance. Eventually, with support from the United States

(via the CIA and UFCO), neighbouring regimes, and conservative elements in Guatemalan society and the military, a small force of exiles invaded from Honduras and toppled the regime; Arbenz fled.

A settlement negotiated under American auspices placed Castillo Armas, leader of the exile army, in power at the head of a junta. He set the pattern for Guatemalan politics for the next 30 years. The 1945 constitution was abolished, all leftist parties were banned, and expropriated lands were returned to their owners. Castillo was assassinated in 1957 and, after a period of instability, a traditional style military leader was elected. He ruled with a firm hand until 1963, when he was deposed by a coup. For the next three years Guatemala was ruled by a military junta, whose chief preoccupation was counterinsurgency. The revolutionary left, forced underground since 1954, began to make its presence felt in the mid-1960s. Urban and rural violence became widespread. The 1966 election was won by the moderate left, under the terms of a new constitution (1965) which provided for civilian rule. This government was succeeded in 1970 by another military leader, who was elected amid widespread terrorist activity. Although the new constitution provided for elected officials and an assembly, real power resided in the President--so long as he had the support of the military.

The 1974 election was marred by charges and counter-charges of fraud. Initially, it appeared that the Christian Democrat-supported candidate, General Efraín Ríos Montt, had won by a healthy margin. But the government declared its own candidate, General Kjell Laugerud García, the winner and the Conservative-controlled congress upheld the verdict. Laugerud tended to use government power to strengthen the centre, rather than the right, and carried the army with him. The country experienced economic growth, but by 1978

it was clear that the traditional power structure would not be able to maintain the status quo indefinitely. Escalating insurgency, increasingly effective organized labour and pressures for social change were becoming too strong to be ignored. The 1978 election was a virtual repetition of the previous one, with allegations of fraud and threats of violence. The National electoral council eventually ruled that the centre-right candidate, General Lucas Garcia, was the victor. In the four years that followed, Lucas Garcia presided over a crumbling economy and rapidly escalating political violence from the extreme left and right. The government countered with severe repression and widespread violations of human rights, alienating not only its own people, but the reform-minded Carter Administration in the United States. The coup in March 1982 that brought Rios Montt to power has changed little. Guatemala is suffering an incipient civil war.

Ironically, perhaps, nature may have played a role in stimulating political crisis. In February 1976 Guatemala was rocked by a major earthquake which killed tens of thousands of people. In the social dislocation that followed two things occurred. First, rural survivors flocked to the major towns and cities to benefit from international aid. Barrios (shantytowns) flourished as the immigrants outstayed both the aid and the temporary boost to the economy initiated by the rebuilding and recovery program. Second, the earthquake forced people to organize in order to rebuild. Community and social assistance groups emerged or moved in to the cities, barrios and rural areas. Exposed for the first time to the ongoing political struggle, many became "politicized". These two developments helped provide the framework for renewed political activity by the population.

#### Current Data

Status. Military dictatorship.



Population. 7,200,000 (1982). Average annual growth rate: 2.9%.

Ethnic Divisions. 58.6% Ladino (Mestizo and westernized Indian); 41.4% Indian.

Language. 40% speak Indian languages as primary tongue. Spanish is spoken universally.

Religion. Predominantly Roman Catholic.

Literacy. Estimates for Guatemala as a whole vary from 30% to 50%. Urban areas--65-70%.

<u>Main Cities.</u>	Guatemala City (capital)	1,500,000
	Quezaltenango	65,733
	Puerto Barrios (port)	31,000

Economy. GNP: \$6.96 billion (U.S.). Growth rate (1982): 0%; (1976-78) 6.7%. Inflation: 13-17% average (1975-80). Exports (1981): \$1.3 billion. Imports (1981): \$1.7 billion. Budget deficit (1981): \$560 million. Balance of trade deficit (1981): \$592 million. Principle products: coffee (about 30% of export earnings in 1980), cotton, bananas, sugar. Major industries: food processing, textiles and clothing, tourism, furniture, chemicals, metals and non-metallic minerals. Major imports: petroleum and petroleum products, manufactured products, machinery and vehicles, textiles, wheat, flour, chemicals. In 1979 agriculture produced 25% of GNP, industry 16%. At the same time agriculture employed 57% of labour force, industry 20%, and the service sector 23%. The United States is the principal trading partner and main source of foreign aid (\$179 million, 1967-79).

Once one of the strongest in Central America, the Guatemalan economy is in a shambles. It has been hard hit by a world slump in commodity prices. Exports of coffee, the number one cash crop, fell from \$465 million in 1980 to

\$295 million in 1981. Cotton, the second largest export crop, is being produced at a loss. Acreage has been falling since 1979 and the yield has declined 18% per acre. One estimate suggests the current harvest will be down 35% overall from the previous one. Tourism, once the third largest cash earner, fell 50% from 1980 to 1981 and had declined a total of 80% by the end of last year. Although that may be due in part to increased travel costs worldwide, it is believed the political climate, and the violence in particular, is the main reason for the collapse of the tourism industry. Business bankruptcy and the flight of investment capital have accelerated in recent years. New construction has all but stopped. Copper and nickel mining, which seemed promising a few years ago, has been shut down owing to low world prices and high fuel costs. Foreign bankers have withheld \$600 million in credit since 1979. Corruption, involving bribes and kickbacks of 5 to 30 percent, is endemic to all business undertakings.

Geography. Area: 108,780 km<sup>2</sup> (42,000 mi<sup>2</sup>).

Guatemala is a mountainous country, predominantly forested (57%). Most of the population lives in the central highland region. Twenty-four percent of the land is cultivated or pasture and the remainder urban or waste. It has 400 km of coastline, most of which is on the Pacific. Guatemala is bordered on the north and west by Mexico, on the east by Belize and the Caribbean, and on the south by Honduras, El Salvador and the Pacific Ocean. There are 25,500 km of roads, of which 2,750 km are paved (connecting Guatemala with Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador). Guatemala City is the hub for Central American air traffic, and there are seven other airfields with permanent surface runways. The Pacific plain is a narrow belt between the coast and the mountains, while the Caribbean lowlands have fertile river valleys. Parts of eastern Guatemala are semi-desert.

Rainfall is heavy from May to October in central and southern Guatemala. Temperatures in the highlands are moderate.

Status of Government. Military dictatorship. A military junta, under the leadership of General Efraín Ríos Montt, seized power in a bloodless coup in March, 16 days after fraudulent presidential elections. Guatemala has been under virtually continuous military rule since 1954. Governments established by election have had to defer to the armed forces in the real exercise of political power. Although Ríos Montt has a record as a moderate, his performance since entering office suggests that extreme rightist policies will prevail for the foreseeable future.

#### Main Political Groupings

Partido Democracia Cristiana (Christian Democratic Party (PDC). Founded in 1968, the PDC is described as a liberal reformist party--in fact, it is only moderately conservative. It has a membership of 80,000. In 1974, it was part of the National Opposition Front whose candidate, Ríos Montt, was denied the presidency. In 1977 the PDC joined with two smaller parties to form the National Unity Front (FUN), a rightist coalition. Its candidate failed to win the 1978 elections and in 1981 the FUN endorsed Alejandro Maldonado, the former leader of the MLN (which see below) as candidate of the Opposition Union, which the PDC supported in the 1982 campaign. The Opposition Union won about 24 percent of the vote in the 1982 election.

Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Movement) (MLN). The MLN is an extreme right-wing anti-communist party, with close ties to the military and the more conservative elements of the Catholic Church. The MLN traces its origins to the so-called "liberation movement" of Castillo Armas in 1954. It has a membership of

about 95,000. The party first came to power in the 1963 coup, but was defeated in 1966. MLN returned to power in 1970 and stayed in until 1978. Under leader Mario Sandoval Alarcon the MLN won about 24 percent of the vote in the 1982 election, then played an instrumental role in the coup two weeks later. The MLN is also virulently anti-British and may have been responsible for several acts of political violence in Belize, which the MLN regards as part of Guatemala. Estimates suggest that the MLN may have as many as 3,000 members in its "underground", but it is not known how many of these are armed insurgents.

Partido Revolucionario (Revolutionary Party) (PR).

The PR first came to power in 1966, on a moderate-left platform of land reform, administrative change and increased national development. But the party was subjected to pressure from right and left and lost the 1970 elections. Most of the party supported the centre-right candidate, Lucas Garcia, in 1978, but a more radical faction supported the Christian-Democrat/FUN candidacy. The radical faction's leader, Alberto Fuentes Mohr, was assassinated in 1979. The PR is currently led by Jorge Garcia Granados.

Frente Unido de la Revolución (United Revolutionary Front (FUR)). The FUR is the successor to a break-away group from the PR that supported the National Opposition Front in 1974. The FUR was established in 1977 as a social democratic movement, but supported Lucas Garcia in the 1978 elections (although FUR had not yet been registered as a party). In March 1979, the FUR joined with 72 other parties and organizations to form the Democratic Front Against Repression (FDCR). A few days later the FUR's leader was assassinated. The FDCR is now the principal overt opposition front.

Central Auténtico Nacional (National Authentic Central) (CAN). Formerly the Organized Aranista Central, the CAN is a rightist group. It joined with the PR to support Lucas Garcia in 1978, and demonstrated considerable grassroots strength in municipal elections in 1980--CAN candidates captured 35 mayoralty seats, more than any other party.

Partido Institucional Democrático (Institutional Democratic Party) (PID). Formed in 1965 as a vehicle for conservative business interests. Cooperated with MLN in 1970 and 1974, and supported Lucas Garcia in 1978. A leading PID contender for the 1982 presidency, the Army Chief of Staff, was assassinated in 1979. Led by Jorge Lamport Rodil, the PID has 60,000 members.

Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (Guatemalan Labour Party) (PGT). The PGT is the Guatemalan Communist Party. It has been illegal and underground since the fall of Arbenz. The PGT has no national electoral constituency, but retains considerable support amongst students and intellectuals. In 1981 the U.S. estimated that the PGT had 750 members. The PGT endorses the strategy of the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR--which see) and supports its own covert "action group", the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR--which see).

### Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Causes. Guatemala is ripe for revolution. The pre-revolutionary situation is much worse than the comparable periods in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Although much can be made of the extremes of poverty and wealth, failures of land reform, and foreign economic exploitation, in the final analysis it is the performance of the Guatemalan

government that lies at the heart of the problem. In spite of relatively regular "elections", a self-perpetuating hierarchy has held almost unbroken power since 1954, and has consistently abused that power through corruption and repression. When the grave economic disparities and the failure of democratic procedures produced dissent, the government's only recourse was to violence. It has been estimated that between 1954 and 1981 35,000 Guatemalans died in political violence, much (but not all) of it attributable to the security forces and rightest pro-regime terrorists. That engendered terrorism by the left and since the mid-1970s the levels of violence have been increasing. Under the administration of Lucas Garcia, all pretense of law and order crumbled as extremists of both sides took to the streets and the hills in an orgy of violence. Massive violations of human rights by the Guatemalan government are now a matter of record: imprisonment without trial, torture, summary execution and "disappearances". Leftist guerrillas have also been merciless. But whatever the source, the targets have been the same: public opinion leaders--such as political leaders and candidates, journalists, teachers, lawyers and trade union activists--as well as common people, Indians and other peasants. Thus, even without interference by "foreign subversive agents", Guatemala has long possessed the ingredients for revolution. The first attempts at armed opposition, beginning in 1960, were completely indigenous. And although Cuba was involved at an early stage and has been implicated since, it would be a mistake to overemphasize that point. More, in any case, will be said about that later.

Special Factors. The Indians of Guatemala may prove to be a key factor in the insurgency. Although they make up nearly half of the population, the Indians have suffered discrimination and repression. Partly through their own inclinations and partly by government neglect, they have remained culturally and linguistically separate from the rest of the population. Politically isolated and unsophisticated, they have remained at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, unable to improve their lot or to oppose effectively encroachments by the ruling class: forced conscription into military service or unskilled labour, and land seizures. Yet, in spite of discrimination and persecution, the Indians remained apolitical for decades, refusing to be drawn into opposition to the government. The revolutionary left, however, recognized in the Indians the potential for a mass-based rural movement if they could be convinced to support the rebels. By the mid-1970s the guerrillas' efforts (undoubtedly a mixture of persuasion and coercion) were beginning to bear fruit, and since that time they have received increasing support from the Indian population. Belatedly the government recognized the importance of the Indians as a political force, but it is hard for them to erase generations of neglect and persecution. Consequently, the government's efforts have met with hostility and little success; unable to win the hearts and minds of the Indians, brutality is once again the order of the day. Given the size of the Indian population, a mass defection to the insurgents could tip the balance of power in their favour.

Insurgent Challenge. Guatemala has experienced three distinct periods of insurgent violence. The first, from 1963 to 1968, was characterized by a Castro-style rural guerrilla campaign. It was defeated by a combination of ideological bickering within the rebel movement and

effective counter-guerrilla operations by the government. The second period, 1968 to 1971, consisted primarily of urban terrorism. It too was defeated, this time by more repressive methods and a measure of "unofficial" terror. The current phase began after the election of 1974. It has involved increasing levels of violence by left- and right-wing extremist groups--each responding to the other's atrocities. Many para-military organizations are involved and the violence is both urban and rural.

### Organization

The Guatemalan Revolutionary Left. On 8 February 1982, the four main leftist rebel groups announced the formation of a unified command structure--the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). Nine days later, in Mexico City, a loose coalition of 26 prominent Guatemalan exiles announced the establishment of the Guatemala Patriotic Unity Committee to mobilize foreign support for the fight against the government. The process of creating a "broad front" revolutionary movement--on the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran model--is thus well advanced in the Guatemalan conflict.

The committee is led by Luis Cardoza Y Aragon, an aged (80 years old) but respected art critic. Educators, labour and peasant leaders, politicians and priests of diverse political backgrounds make up the membership of the committee. They hope to bring about the union of two existing coalitions: the FP-31 (which see below) and the Democratic Front Against Repression (FDCR). The latter, a coalition of some 160 leftist and non-leftist political and social action groups, was formed in March 1979 and has collaborated with the guerrillas. The FUR (described under Main Political Groupings) and the small Social Democratic Party are members of the FDCR, as is the largest trade union (CNUS) and many small labour and student groups, professional organizations and Church associations. The FDCR has links to the Socialist International. Although it



claims to have no direct link to the guerrillas, the unity committee has adopted the guerrillas' political program and has endorsed "popular revolutionary war" as the "only path" to Guatemalan liberation. This "double blind"--denying ties while endorsing the strategy and objectives--is the classic revolutionary technique. It gives the guerrillas a respectable, moderate "front", democratic in appearance, which can speak for the guerrillas while keeping its hands clean. And past experience, especially in Nicaragua (but going back as far as the Spanish Civil War), suggests that the technique works.

Previous attempts to unify the guerrilla forces (May and November 1980, February 1981) had failed, even with Nicaraguan intercession. It may be too soon to pronounce on the ultimate fate of this effort, but the URNG has lasted much longer than previous arrangements. The guerrillas finally may have realized that without a united approach to armed struggle they may yet be defeated by the Guatemalan Army. The four groups making up the URNG are:

Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP)--Guerrilla Army of the Poor. Founded in 1972 in the jungle of Western Guatemala by a small group of men (12-16), with the objective of recruiting the Indians for a revolutionary war. They emerged as an organization of some 300 members at the end of 1975. In mid-1982 they were estimated to have about 4,000 guerrillas under arms. Cesar Montes, former member of the PGT Central Committee and one-time leader of FAR (which see below), is believed to be the leader of the EGP. Other leaders come from the middle class--students and intellectuals--but the bulk of the movement consists of peasants, predominantly Indians. At the lowest level the EGP is built upon the "familial nuclei": the husband is the soldier, the wife a

"collaborator"--carrying supplies, providing food--and the children carry out their instructions, even to the point of harassing the security forces with homemade grenades. In each local area there are irregular forces who provide intelligence and assist the guerrillas. The EGP as a whole is divided into four "commands"--three in the countryside and an urban branch in the capital. The movement is strongest in the northwest province of El Quiché, but is active in many other parts of the country.

Organizacion del Pueblo en Armas (ORPA)--Organization of the People in Arms (or Armed People's Organization). Founded in the late 1970s as a breakaway from a Communist trade union. Formally established in September 1979 and increasingly active since. Led by Joaquin Ventura. Little is known of its membership and organization, although some estimates suggest that it may have as many as 2,000 activists. The group suffered major setbacks in 1981, including the death of its leader. But like the EGP it has considerable popular support, especially amongst the Indians. ORPA is active in El Quiché, Guatemala City and elsewhere.

Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR)--Rebel Armed Forces. Traces its organizational roots to an unsuccessful military revolt in 1960. The FAR was formally established in 1963 as the armed branch of a broad front involving the PGT and non-Communists opposed to the government. Factional infighting, effective counterinsurgency operations and the election in 1966 of a reformist government defeated the FAR in the countryside by 1968. An attempt to carry the struggle into the cities met with greater repression and a second defeat. By 1973 the FAR and the PGT

had split completely and the former lay dormant for about five years. Re-emerged in 1978, but only a shadow of its former strength. It was estimated in 1981 to have less than 100 activists and only a few hundred supporters. FAR is active mainly in the rural areas of the north.

PGT (see under Main Political Groupings). The PGT has its own covert armed branch, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR)--Revolutionary Armed Forces, separate and distinct from the FAR above. This group is also very small--less than 100 members. There is reason to believe that the leadership of the PGT has reentered the violent arena reluctantly, being forced into it by their Military Coordinating Committee who, in May 1980, accused the Central Committee of cowardice and defeatism. It is quite possible that Leninist ideologues on the military committee, watching the growth and success of the EGP, feared that the PGT was losing control of the Guatemalan revolution. They may have felt that a higher military profile on the part of the PGT could place the party in a position to reclaim the leadership of the revolution. Thus far it is not clear whether this has occurred, although the establishment of a united front provides the necessary framework for a Leninist takeover from inside. The Party's slavish adherence to Soviet views is worrying, but it may also be self-defeating.

#### Other Leftist Groups.

Fuerzas (or Frente) Populares de 31 Januar (FP-31)--January 31 Popular Forces (or Front). Formed in February 1981 in honour of the 39 peasants and others who died during the suppression of the Spanish embassy occupation in January 1980. Little

is known of its organization and leadership. It is believed to be a coalition of six small leftist groups, with a total membership of several hundred at most. It is strongest and most active in and around Guatemala City. FP-31 may have links to the EGP--perhaps acting as the EGP's urban armed branch.

Frente Voluntario de Defensa (FVD)--Voluntary Defence Front. A small leftist guerrilla group that appeared in July 1980. Nothing else is known about this group.

Frente Yuxa Shona--Yuxa Shona Front. A small Marxist-Leninist group that acts in sympathy with EGP, ORPA and FAR. Named for the murdered survivor of the Spanish embassy siege.

Gruppa d'Accion Populares (GAP)--Popular Action Group. Leftist group active in 1981. Nothing known of organization.

The Extreme Right. Political violence by the extreme right in Guatemala is characterized by the operations of Escuadrons de La Muerte (Death Squads). The origin of these groups can be traced back to the mid-1960s when, in response to the activities of the FAR, the government armed right-wing civilians to assist the security forces. As many as 20 vigilante groups, some under government control and others not, flourished in the late 60s when the leftist rebels brought their campaign to the urban centres. When the challenge from the left resurfaced in the mid-1970s, so did the reaction from the right. Membership in the groups tends to come from the lower-middle classes and many groups are thought to include off-duty members of the security forces. That in itself may indicate a lack of confidence on the part of the security forces in their own ability to defeat the insurgents by conventional and more acceptable means. Links to the government notwithstanding, the right-wing extremists are not unified under central direction. There may be

cooperation between groups and overlapping membership, but on the whole these groups operate individually.

MLN (see Main Political Groupings). The oldest of the right-wing extremist groups, the MLN is a legalized political party. The MLN may have been instrumental in establishing the vigilante groups in the 1960s. Today the MLN underground is thought to have about 3,000 members, drawn mainly from the small farmers of eastern Guatemala. It is not known how many members are armed, but the group remains active in political violence. In view of its central role in the March 1982 coup, the MLN may be assumed to have close ties to the Guatemalan armed forces.

Ejército Secreto Anticomunista (ESA)--Secret Anti-Communist Army. Formally established in June 1977, the ESA is the most active and effective "Death Squad". It is thought to be an outgrowth of the older MANO Blanco group (which see below). It also may be linked to the MLN underground. No figures available on strength or organization. Like the MLN, it may include serving or former members of the security forces.

Movimiento de Accion Nacionalista Organizado (MANO)--Organized Movement of National Action. Also referred to as MANO Blanco (White Hand). Formed by military officers in 1966 as an adjunct to the official counterinsurgency campaign. Has been active since. No details available on the organization.

Milicias Obreras Guatemaltecas (MOG)--Guatemalan Workers Militia. Emerged in March 1978. Probably a small group.

Fuerzas de Accion Armada (FADA)--Armed Action Force. Emerged in January 1979. Active since. Believed to be a relatively small group.

Juventud Organizada del Pueblo in Armas (JOPA)--  
Armed People's Organized Youth. Execution squad,  
 first appeared in March 1980. Has been active since.

Other Right-Wing Groups.

Many of the right-wing groups are very small, making only occasional appearances in the political arena. Almost nothing is known about them. They include the following:

1. Organizion Cero (Organization Zero).
2. Orden de la Muerte (Order of Death).
3. Commando Anticomunista del Sur (Southern Anti-Communist Commando) (CADS).
4. Frente Anti-Communist del Nororiente (North-eastern Anti-Communist Front) (FANO).
5. National League for Protection of Guatemala (or Protection League for Guatemalans).
6. Dalton Commando.

Methods

Political violence by the extreme right has followed a consistent pattern for at least the past five years. Death squads have concentrated almost exclusively on kidnapping and murdering those suspected of opposition to the regime or of any vaguely defined leftist sympathies. Targets include: university personnel, teachers and students; professional men, such as lawyers and doctors; trade union leaders and members; journalists (including foreigners); moderate politicians and local administrators; priests, nuns and lay-workers; and Indian peasants. As opposition to the government increased after the 1978 elections, rightist terrorism grew in scale. By 1981, it was occurring at a level vastly out of proportion to leftist violence, and was characterized by excessive brutality, including torture and mutilation. In 1977, it was estimated that 105 murders were carried out by the extreme right. In 1980 the number

exceeded 3,000, and probably tripled in 1981. The right is believed to have been responsible for most of the 11,000 deaths due to political violence in that year, but it is not possible to fix the blame for each individual murder--most went unclaimed by either left or right. Through 1981 and the first quarter of 1982, political murders were averaging 30 to 40 per day. Rightist terrorism fell off markedly after the coup of 23 March and for the second quarter the level of violence was considerably reduced. In the first six months of 1982, some 2,000 people succumbed to political violence--much of it by the right, but an increasing amount by the left, especially in rural areas.

From 1977 through 1979 the operations of the revolutionary left tended to mirror those of the right, although on a smaller scale. Kidnapping and murder (or assassination) were central to the leftist strategy. One critical difference in the campaigns was the left's early use of bombing--a tactic the right virtually seems to have ignored. Murder and kidnap targets include: members of the security forces (serving and retired), their friends and relatives; politicians, especially moderates; businessmen and landowners; civil servants; farmers and Indian peasants; and suspected traitors and informers within their own ranks.

It is now clear that the bombing campaign, which increased substantially in 1981 and 1982, is directed primarily at disrupting the economy. In this they have achieved a considerable degree of success. By early 1982 the disruption caused by bombing was beginning to have severe economic repercussions. Bombing targets include: power supplies (generating stations, pylons and pipelines); transportation (bridges, petrol stations, airlines, railways); communications (telephone system, radio stations, newspaper offices and personnel); large corporations and small businesses; restaurants and other parts of the tourist

industry. The economic sector has also been targetted as a source of financing for the leftist insurgents--they have kidnapped local and foreign businessmen for large ransoms (sometimes amounting to millions of dollars) and have forced many commercial vehicle owners to pay a "revolutionary tax" (protection money) to guarantee their safety.

Until 1980 leftist insurgents tended to avoid clashes with the security forces, undoubtedly because they did not feel they could match their firepower and fighting ability. But in the past three years attacks on the security forces--ambushes, raids and other forms of attack and clashes--have increased dramatically (35 recorded in 1980; 105 in 1982 to mid-August). Casualties have been heavy for the insurgents and the security forces, but on the whole the insurgents have fared better. They are better armed than the army and invariably have the advantage of surprise.

Between 1980 and 1982 the guerrillas extended their influence throughout Guatemala. By early 1981 the four principal groups were operating regularly in the capital as well as in the countryside. By the end of June that year they had expanded their activities to 19 of Guatemala's 22 "Departments" (districts). Since early 1982 they have been able to deny certain areas of El Peten, El Quiché and Huehuetango departments to the security forces--creating, in effect, "liberated areas". Late in 1981 EGP guerrillas even managed temporarily to seize control of the department capital of Solola, barely 60 miles from Guatemala City.

On the political front the guerrillas have framed a political program that is intended both to have mass appeal inside Guatemala and to gain international approval. The program, endorsed by the Patriotic Unity Committee, calls for: an end to repression; social and economic changes, including land redistribution; free elections; freedom of political and religious association; an end to forced



recruitment into the army; and non-alignment internationally. Of course, this is exactly what the Nicaraguan Sandinistas promised and have yet to deliver. The Marxists in the Guatemalan revolution may be expected to perform in a similar manner--giving lip service to democratic ideals while they need Western sympathy for their struggle, then abandoning them in favour of Leninist dictatorship as soon as they take power.

### External Assets

The Guatemalan government has made much of alleged Cuban and Soviet support for Guatemalan insurgents. The public record, however, is sketchy. Some insurgents are thought to have received training in Cuba, Nicaragua and the U.S.S.R., but it is not possible to document this. American small arms known to have been left in Vietnam have found their way into insurgent hands, but they may have been purchased on the international black market, rather than directly from Vietnam. Various American and European leftist groups, some associated with the FDCR, sponsor propaganda outlets and information sessions, but invariably they are preaching to small groups already converted. Havana radio has also acted as a voice for the insurgent groups. In June 1981 one such broadcast predicted the beginning of the offensive against economic targets. The most concrete assistance rendered by Cuba seems to have been aiding the attempts to unify the revolutionary groups. Very little is known about this. In 1980 the Sandinistas acted as the "middleman", possibly at Cuba's request. An agreement was reached, but fell apart when ORPA reneged for ideological reasons. Cuba made a second attempt in the autumn of 1981, becoming directly involved by inviting the leaders of the four main groups to Havana. Although we do not know what transpired, a united revolutionary front was established a few months later and it seems to be holding. When weighed

against arms shipments or training it might not appear significant, but if Cuba was instrumental in creating a workable alliance, it may have provided one of the most vital ingredients for a successful insurgency.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The main strength of the leftist insurgents lies in their ability to mobilize the Indian peasant population. Without them the movement would be very small and might have been destroyed some time ago. But the sheer brutality of the Guatemalan regime is another insurgent asset: poverty, neglect and then repression politicized the Indians and drove them into the arms of the only organization ready and willing to provide them with assistance, protection and a political voice. The insurgents are gaining strength in other areas--the external political front and the internal united revolutionary front are vital assets so long as they continue. The former may, in time, gain the credibility of a government-in-exile, while the latter should ensure the coordination of the military struggle in such a way as to defeat the regime. The insurgents now have numbers sufficient to challenge the government's ability to control the country--indeed, as noted earlier, they have created "no go" areas in some of the more remote provinces and are able to bring significant firepower to bear in encounters with the security forces.

Weaknesses lie in their infrastructure. The united front is fragile and could come apart for ideological reasons. Although Cesar Montes appears to be a competent leader of the EGP, he has not yet become a national symbol or a household name. Much of Guatemala's population remains politically unaware and, as the scale of right wing activity demonstrates, they can be mobilized effectively to support the status quo. In the urban areas the insurgent movement remains dangerously exposed: ORPA has not yet recovered

from a major setback in 1981--the discovery of 11 of its safe houses in the capital. The security forces captured large quantities of weapons, supplies and propaganda literature, as well as making arrests of suspected ORPA members.

The strength of the insurgent right lies in their ability to sow sheer terror. They can enforce complicity, in a limited fashion at least. Beyond this, however, the extreme right is politically weak. In spite of their links to the government and security forces, the Death Squads seem to have little influence on the new president, General Rios Montt. At the same time it must be admitted that he has not demonstrated an ability to stop them from operating--the lull from April through June 1982 owed to the Right's assumption that Rios Montt was their man, and that he would be able to defeat the insurgents. Since that time, doubts have crept into rightist circles. Moreover, the extreme right lacks both a political program and a leader who could win over the peasant population, not to mention the educated middle class. By themselves they are unlikely to be able to defeat the insurgents and even with the security forces fully mobilized for the struggle, it seems to be "a near run thing". All that the extreme right seems able to do at present is to contribute to the creation of a state of civil war.

#### Achievements

The Guatemalan insurgents have made considerable progress since 1976, and especially in the past three years. They have won over a large sector of the population, contributed to the polarization of politics, undermined the economy, and inflicted losses on the security forces. Moreover, they seem to have created a genuine and workable broad front capable of exploiting the violence and instability. In short, they have destabilized the Guatemalan regime to the point where its future is very uncertain indeed.

## Government Response

### Security Forces--Organization

The security forces of Guatemala are diverse, although not large in number. The armed forces, totalling 18,550 men, are the largest single element, with a budget (in 1981) of \$90.7 million (U.S.). Officers are professionally trained, as are some of its NCO's, but the ranks consist of conscripts.

Army: 17,000 men in:

- 4 brigade headquarters
- 1 Presidential Guard brigade
- 15 infantry battalions (in 4 brigades) and 4 reconnaissance squadrons
- 1 parachute battalion--independent
- 1 armoured battalion with 17 tanks and 25 armoured cars
- 1 engineer battalion
- 12 artillery batteries with 12 75 mm and 36 105 mm howitzers

Air Force: 600 men, with 16 combat aircraft (A-37, PC-7)

- 1 helicopter squadron of 16 helicopters, 1 transport squadron of 21 aircraft, and 33 other aircraft in training and liaison squadrons.

Navy: 950 men, including 650 marines in 4 companies, 15 coastal patrol craft and several landing craft.

Police Forces:

1. Policia Militar Ambulante (PMA-- Mobile Military Police), estimates vary from 1,100 to 3,000. Part of the armed forces.
2. Policia Nacional (National Police)-- probably more than 9,000. The principal civil police force.
3. Policia Judicial (Judicial Police)-- also called the Cuerpo de Detectives

de la Policia Nacional (National Police Detective Corps). This is the principal intelligence and investigative agency. Numbering less than 500 in the 1960s, they may have expanded in recent years to cope with insurgency. They are known locally as the Secret Police.

4. Guardia de Hacienda (Treasury Police or Border Patrol). Estimated size-- 1,100-2,100. Formed to enforce immigration, customs and smuggling laws. Also has a counter-subversion role.

Other: Rumours persist of a special service under presidential control during the Lucas Garcia regime, and probably earlier. Linked to the Presidential Intelligence Agency in the telecommunications centre at the palace, the group was popularly known as the Policia Regional. The government denied its existence. The telecommunications complex links the communications networks of the military, the palace and the various police forces and houses the central filing system of the military intelligence branch.

The security forces suffer from a high level of politicization, poor training and equipment, and low levels of discipline and morale. For decades they have been part of the ruling establishment and have come to share in the prejudices, corruption and excessive brutality that have marked all of the Guatemalan regimes. In spite of American efforts to modernize and "professionalize" the security forces, through the Public Safety Program and instruction

in counterinsurgency and civic action, the Guatemalans remained politically and militarily unsophisticated and brutal. Some 3,300 officers were trained at North American military academies from 1950 to 1977. The termination of the Public Safety program--which had been training the police--in the early 1970s did nothing to improve the performance of the Guatemalan police. In 1977 President Carter cut off arms sales and military aid to Guatemala. The army looked elsewhere for arms and purchased from Israel and Argentina, as well as acquiring Czech weapons on the international market. Consequently, the army is well equipped in small arms, but is badly off in heavy equipment. Seven of its tanks and many of its armoured cars and personnel carriers date from the Second World War. At least a quarter of the artillery pieces are of the same vintage, as are most of the transport aircraft. Many of the latter are unsuited for modern military operations. The air force has had difficulty maintaining its helicopter fleet because the U.S. has refused to supply spare parts. In June 1981 the Reagan Administration began to ease the arms sales restrictions, and agreed to sell 50 2½-ton trucks and 100 jeeps to the Guatemalan armed forces. In any case, the Guatemalans are not technically equipped to maintain sophisticated military equipment. The conscripts who make up the bulk of the armed forces are drawn largely from the lowest social classes, especially the Indians. Conscripted against their will, often by force, the illiterate peasants make poor soldiers and are not retained in the army long enough to learn the appropriate skills. A shortage of qualified NCO's--whom the officers would regard as a professional and political threat--precludes effective training and discipline and serves to highlight the gap between the officer corps and the enlisted men. It is believed that the hit and run attacks of the guerrillas, which have inflicted many

casualties on the army, and the relative ineffectiveness of most military operations have lowered the morale and fighting efficiency of the armed forces.

Political control is exercised directly by the President. He is, by virtue of his position, commander-in-chief of the army. Furthermore, under emergency decrees (which have been in effect in various forms for years), the police forces are under military command. Operational control is exercised by the Chief-of-Staff. This system concentrates considerable power in the hands of a few men, or even just one, and has obviously left much scope for abuse.

#### Strategy, Doctrine and Tactics

Until Rios Montt took over in March 1982, there was no apparent strategy or doctrine apart from the use of terror. Acting either in their own right, or unattributably through the various rightist militias and terrorist groups, the armed forces engaged in kidnapping, torture and murder on a massive scale. Selective assassination was carried out on the basis of lists (often as much as 20 years out of date) held by the security forces. Members of opposition groups were arrested en masse and the army used press gangs to collect Indian/peasant conscripts. Troops were used also to seize land and to expel the peasants from it. If there was a philosophy at all, it was to punish civilians for the activities of the leftist guerrillas. In doing so, of course, the security forces hoped to instill such terror that the civilians would refuse to cooperate with the guerrillas. In addition, detention and assassination were undoubtedly expected to eliminate potential leaders and recruits for the rebels.

If those were the intended results, they backfired completely. The guerrillas have gained strength, not lost. The population is more polarized, more alienated from the government than before. And the important middle ground

essential to negotiation, reconciliation and bridge-building when the conflict ends, has been all but destroyed. Everyone has been forced to take sides.

These policies were modified somewhat after Rios Montt seized power. More emphasis was placed on conventional military operations (patrols, roadblocks, large-scale sweeps and search operations). For several months, a degree of sophistication crept into the Guatemalan strategy. The security forces initiated what they call the "Guns and Beans" program, whereby they arm villagers to defend themselves in Civil Defence Platoons and put them to work on community projects in return for food and a small salary. Rios Montt also declared a 30-day amnesty for guerrillas in June 1982. The government claims that more than 1,800 guerrillas surrendered, but other estimates say the number was closer to 150. During the amnesty, talks were initiated in Washington between the Guatemalan government and representatives of the insurgents.

Apparently, little came of these efforts, for in July Rios Montt imposed a State of Siege, which banned political activity, imposed censorship and introduced special courts to try suspected or captured insurgents and "subversives". The large-scale military operations, involving thousands of troops and producing few results, seemed to turn once more to "scorched earth" tactics. In short, very little has changed in the counterinsurgency campaign.

#### External Assets

These are, in a word, few. Some arms and technical assistance has been received from Israel, Argentina, Chile and from exiled Somozists. But the most vital assistance, from the United States, is still being withheld because of the government's appalling human rights violations. Although the Reagan Administration is strategically committed to helping Guatemala, it cannot overcome the human rights



hurdle with respect to opinion in Congress and amongst the American public. This may, in any case, be just as well. There is probably very little that the United States could do now that would substantially reverse the trends of the past six years. It seems unlikely that even massive American involvement could improve the Guatemalan army's fighting quality and its public image, or could institute sufficient reforms to forestall an eventual insurgent victory.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The security forces' principal strength lies in their links to the rightist underground. This gives them both a widespread intelligence network through the country and an unofficial "terrorist" branch for carrying out unattributable abductions and murders. Beyond this, the security forces have few, if any, advantages. For what it is worth, they have control of the air. But the air force suffers from a lack of technical expertise and shortages of spare parts. Thus the edge in mobility is limited. In spite of supplies from Israel and elsewhere, the military does not necessarily have an advantage in firepower.

Its most serious weakness lies in the military's brutal reputation, its corruption, and its almost total alienation from the peasant population. Here, where the guerrillas thrive, the security forces find little support or cooperation. Even if they were to shift permanently to a more moderate, sophisticated counterinsurgency strategy it is unlikely that the change would make much difference. The government's record has probably "queered the pitch" for good.

#### Prospects

Guatemala is in a state of nascent civil war. Neither side is yet strong enough to prevail although, if

there is no change in government policies and strategy, time is probably on the side of the insurgents. Much still depends, of course, on the continued unity of the insurgent movement and its broad front. It is not likely that broad-based government reforms--political, economic and especially military--could win back more than a small proportion of the population already alienated from the regime. There is no one left to build bridges to the opposition, and in any case, a program of reform does not appear to be forthcoming. That, in turn, rules out substantial American aid and it is doubtful whether any such aid could make a difference at this stage or later. If the Guatemalan government persists in its current policies, then a full-scale insurrection is likely and the leftist insurgents stand a better than even chance of winning.

# Guatemala and Honduras



## CHAPTER SIX

### HONDURAS

#### History

Honduras had been the centre of the original Mayan civilization, but by the time the Spanish arrived (1520s) the Mayan empire had long since fragmented and declined. The Spanish conquest, with its associated violence and disease, reduced the remaining Indian population from about a half million to 36,000 within 25 years. The Spaniards exploited Honduras for its gold and silver, but apparently did little else to develop the colony. In 1570, control was transferred to the colonial administration in Guatemala, where it remained until independence. In 1821, along with the other Central American colonies, Honduras adopted independence from Spain. From 1824 to 1838 it was part of the United Provinces of Central America. But constant feuds, clashes and endemic civil war forced Honduras to opt for full independence in 1838. For the remainder of the 19th century Honduran politics were characterized by internal strife and foreign interference, usually from Guatemala, but also from El Salvador and Nicaragua. There was no national unity, no national sense of purpose. Political factions divided along personal lines, around "strongman" leaders--Caudillos. Violence, sometimes reaching the status of civil wars, was a consistent feature of Honduran politics. Between 1839 and 1899, Honduras experienced 64 changes of government. Of these, only six were by constitutional means. This pattern continued well into the 20th century. Nonetheless, two of the 19th century leaders--Marco Soto and Policarpo Bonilla--have been credited with considerable

administrative, economic and social development. Since 1923, the constitutional process has been the preferred method of governmental change, but development of a democratic tradition was stifled by economic imperialism, paternalism, personalist politics, fraud and corruption. With constant interference by local and foreign interests in the election process and in the absence of a secret ballot, Honduras was a democracy in name only.

Much of this can be attributed, in the 20th century, to the development of the banana industry. The United Fruit and Standard Fruit companies became the dominant forces in the Honduran economy. By the 1950s, United Fruit was proportionately four times as important to Honduras as General Motors was to the United States. With the disproportionate economic influence went significant political power--the banana companies could practically dictate policy to the Honduran governments. This, and their policy of importing Salvadorans to increase the work force, contributed in a major way to the war between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969. Moreover, the Honduran people reacted against this economic imperialism. In 1954, the banana workers went on strike against the major companies and after a lengthy and bitter struggle emerged victorious. Unionization, restricted up to that time, was legitimized and in 1959 the Honduran government passed a law making unions mandatory in all major firms. That sort of legislation was typical of the moderate liberalism of the Morales presidency, 1957-63. Rigged elections in 1956 were set aside by a coup of progressive military officers, who then instituted a second set of elections--since regarded as the most free and honest in Honduran history. Morales' liberal programs (such as the agrarian reform act of 1962) were regarded with suspicion by the wealthy landowners and the military. In October 1963, just before the general elections, the military staged a

coup. Morales went into exile. U.S. President Kennedy, who had found in Morales a supporter of the Alliance for Progress, refused to recognize the new regime, but following Kennedy's death, U.S. recognition was accorded to the new Honduran leader, Lopez Arellano. His regime was characterized by brutal repression, death squads, fraud and corruption, economic chaos and, ultimately, the war with El Salvador in 1969.

The war was not caused, as thought at the time, by exaggerated rivalry over the World Cup soccer matches, but by the long-standing irritant of Salvadoran immigrants in Honduras. Anti-foreign agitation was popular amongst the Honduran masses and the Salvadoran immigrants (some 300,000) were convenient targets. Contributing factors were the implementation in 1969 of the Agrarian Reform Law, which discriminated heavily against Salvadoran immigrants, and the unresolved boundary dispute, a source of frequent provocative incidents. Soccer rivalry that got out of hand and became violent was "the last straw" that pushed the two countries into war. Hondurans retaliated against imagined and exaggerated insults and assaults with a wave of violence against Salvadorans in Honduras, producing a flood of refugees, a severing of diplomatic relations and, ultimately, war.

The war lasted six days (14 to 20 July), before OAS mediation brought about a cease-fire. The fighting was ineffectual--neither army was very large, well-equipped nor trained. Salvadoran forces did not push further than 25 km into Honduras. Under OAS pressure El Salvador removed its troops by 2 August. Total casualties, military and civilian, would not have exceeded 2,000. By the end of the following decade (1979) the dispute between the two nations remained unresolved, but in October 1980 the two countries signed a peace treaty.

Arellano was discredited by the war and was replaced in 1971 as president. Nonetheless, as commander-in-chief of the army, he retained considerable influence. When the outcome of the 1971 election, predetermined by agreement between the Liberal and National Parties, led to feuding, he moved to stop it. The coup of December 1972 led to a period of increasing prosperity, growth of unions and land reform. A major hurricane in 1974, which destroyed about 60 percent of Honduras' agriculture production, gave a boost to land reform as many landowners decided not to return to devastated land. Between January 1973 and September 1976, 44,700 families received title to 141,867 hectares of land. A new land reform act was passed in January 1974, but the government was overthrown in a coup two months later. The successor regime, more conservative than its predecessor, proceeded slowly on land reform and thus generated militant action by landless peasants. The regime gave in to a limited extent and, despite one major incident involving coercion of peasants, remained relatively popular. There was prosperity. The four major newspapers, divided equally amongst the two leading political parties, expressed opinion freely. There was no sustained repression of dissent, at least to the extent found in El Salvador or Nicaragua. The national university retained a reputation for being the most free institution of higher learning outside Costa Rica. But there was no politics--the assembly was empty from 1976 to 1980. Another coup, in August 1978, brought in the more conservative regime of General Paz Garcia.

But as the decade came to a close, trouble elsewhere in Central America spilled over into Honduras, and domestic dissent began to take more violent forms. The civil wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador turned Honduras into a sanctuary for foreign dissidents and exile armies. Domestically, the struggle for democracy has given rise to home-grown insurgent revolutionary groups. These are discussed later.

Current Data

Status. Democratic Republic.

Population. 3,702,000. Average annual growth rate: 3.4%. Most concentrated in west and northwest.

Ethnic Divisions. 90% Mestizo, 7% Indian, 2% Black, 1% white.

Language. Spanish.

Religion. 97% Roman Catholic.

Literacy. 59.5%.

<u>Cities.</u> Tegucigalpa (capital)	370,000
San Pedro Sula	160,000
La Ceiba (port)	50,000

Economy. Honduras is the poorest of the Central American nations. GNP (1980)--\$5 billion. Growth rate: 8.1% (1976-78), 6.7% (1979), 2.5% (1980). Inflation currently at 20%. Current budget deficit stands at \$60 million. There is little or no new investment and it has virtually lost three local major trading partners--El Salvador and Guatemala have put up tariff barriers and Nicaragua is unable to pay. Honduras's other principal trading partners are the United States, West Germany, Japan and Venezuela. In 1979 it imported \$931 million worth of goods (manufactured goods, machinery and equipment, petrochemical products), about \$90 million more than it exported (bananas, coffee, meat, lumber, petroleum products). The classic "Banana Republic", the Honduran economy has long been dominated by two American fruit companies. The extreme disparities between rich and poor found elsewhere in Latin America are less pronounced in Honduras, but some 600 families (.3% of the population) own 25% of the land, and 10% of the population accumulates 50% of the income. In



1978, 62% of the labour force was in agriculture (contributing 32% of GNP in 1979); 14% in industry (contributing 18% of GNP in 1979); and 22% in service sector.

Geography. Honduran territory totals 112, 150 km<sup>2</sup>, with the Caribbean on the north (820 km coastline), Nicaragua on the east. There is a small strip of Pacific coast between El Salvador and Nicaragua (124 km). 27% of the land is forested, 30% pasture, 36% urban and waste, and 7% cropland. Much of the country is mountainous, with cultivation concentrated in river valleys and inland basins. The Caribbean coast has a high rainfall and is covered with thick tropical forest.

Status of Government. Since January 1982, civilian rule under an elected president and constituent assembly. The unicameral legislature has 71 members elected by popular vote. Honduras was under military rule from 1972 to 1982 and the assembly was elected in April 1980 as a first step towards restoration of civilian rule. Leftist parties and the Christian Democrats were banned from contesting the 1980 elections. The conservative Liberal Party won at that time and also captured the presidential election on 29 November 1981.

#### Main Political Groupings

Partido Liberal de Honduras (PLH)--Liberal Party of Honduras. Currently the majority and governing party (35 seats). PLH leader, Roberto Suazo Cordova, formerly a country doctor, is the president of the republic. The party name notwithstanding, the PLH is conservative, although it is democratic and moderate on social reform. The PLH was established in 1890, but did not take power until 1957. It has been a major force in Honduran politics since that time.

Partido Nacional (PN)--National Party. Second in strength to the PLH (33 seats). Founded in 1923, it governed

uninterrupted from 1932 to 1957. It has continued to play a significant and influential role since then, including a "Pact of National Union" with modest social reform, economic and social development. The leader is Ricardo Zuniga Augustinus.

Partido de Inovación y Unidad (PINU)--Innovation and Unity Party. Established in 1978, currently under the leadership of Dr. Miguel Adonie Fernandez. A small party, whose political orientation is not known, PINU holds three seats in the assembly and received about 2.5 percent of the vote in the presidential elections in November 1981.

Partido Revolucionario Hondurena (PRH)--Honduras Revolutionary Party. PRH is a social democratic party, currently without representation in the assembly. Formed initially by an alliance of peasants, workers and professional people in 1974, it was established officially in 1977. Led by Francisco Rodolfo Jimenez Caballero, the PRH is believed to have some 8,300 members, well organized from local to national levels but not sufficient to be recognized as a national party under the 1978 electoral law.

Partido Democrata Cristiana (PDC)--Christian Democratic Party. The PDC is a small left-leaning party. It is not legally recognized but the PLH and PN have committed themselves to legalizing it in the near future. The PDC's leader is Dr. Hernan Corrales Padilla.

Partido Comunista de Honduras (PCH)--Communist Party of Honduras. Organized in 1927, destroyed five years later and re-established in 1954, the PCH has been illegal since 1957 and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, it has operated with varying degrees of openness under recent governments. The party Secretary-General is Rigoberto Padilla Rush (since 1978). Membership stands at approximately 1,500, making it the largest single

party of the extra-parliamentary left (in 1967 the PCH split in a dispute over strategy and tactics and several factions have existed since). The PCH has been active in mobilizing students and workers. It sponsors the Socialist Student Front (FES) and the Federation of Secondary Students (FESE), both of which have been active on the campuses of the national university since 1979. However, the student left was roundly defeated in student elections in August 1981. The PCH has also penetrated the unions employed by subsidiaries of American multinationals and the communications industry. It lends moral support to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and to the leftist rebels in El Salvador.

### Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Causes. There is no shortage of causative factors relative to insurgency in Honduras. What is remarkable is that Honduras, with its historical record of corrupt, inefficient and repressive military rule, economic imperialism and poverty, has not been besieged by leftist revolutionaries to the same degree that Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala have been so afflicted. Of course, it may be only a matter of time; all the factors favouring insurgency are present.

Special Factors. Recognizing the value of Honduras as a sanctuary for Nicaraguan rebels, both during and since the revolution, Honduran insurgents might find an equally hospitable "rear area" in Sandinista-ruled Nicaragua. In fact, in view of Nicaraguan accusations that Honduras has become a base for anti-Sandinista forces, the leftist regime may be more than willing to "turn the tables" by providing aid and comfort to Honduran rebels on the run. The border between the two countries is long (600 km), porous, ill-defined and undefendable.

On the other hand, Honduras has a popularly elected civilian president and government. Land reform, while by no means complete, made substantial gains in the 1970s. The unions are strong, but not necessarily radical. The press is free and repression is minimal. All of these factors would make it more difficult to mobilize a mass-based insurgency in Honduras. This goes some way to explain the limited scale of insurgent activity in Honduras at present.

### Insurgent Challenge

There are at least four insurgent groups currently active in Honduras, and possibly as many as seven, if some minor groups are included. None yet poses a serious threat to the regime, but they could do so in the future, especially as some have joined forces with other leftist and populist groups to form a "broad front". The front is described immediately following.

#### Organization.

Frente Patriótico Hondureña (FPH)--Honduran Patriotic Front. The FPH is a large coalition of leftist and non-leftist groups, united under the FPH umbrella since October 1979. It includes: the Communist Party (PCH--described earlier); the Maoist PCH--Marxist-Leninist; the Socialist Party; and the armed FMLH (see below). Several large unions, including the Christian Socialist CGT and two peasant-worker organizations, as well as a students' union and the Christian Democratic Party make up the moderate, non-communist element in the FPH. In all, between 30 and 40 groups belong to the FPH, but no accurate estimate of membership is available. The FPH claims to have gathered as many as 20,000 people for one rally, and through its sub-groups it may be able to count upon support from a wide cross-section of the population.

Frente Morazanista por la Liberación de Honduras (FMLH)--Morazanista Front for the Liberation of Honduras. The

FMLH is the armed branch of the FPH (see above), and appears to have evolved out of the PCH. It announced in February 1980 that it was going to start "armed action to assume power" after the April 1980 elections. The FMLH is believed to be small--estimates of size vary between 50 and 100 members. It can probably count on several hundred student supporters. By its own admission the FMLH was in a "building phase" in 1981, improving both the political and military capabilities of its cadres.

Union Revolucionario del Pueblos (URP)--People's Revolutionary Union. URP announced its formation in September 1979, apparently following a breakaway from the PCH. In October 1980 the URP publicly committed itself to "armed struggle". Although it is small (probably less than 100 full-time members) the URP is believed to enjoy considerable support amongst students, unions and peasants, especially in the north. URP may be linked to the Chinchonero MLP (which see below). However, it is thought that the URP suffered a severe organizational setback when two of its leaders were murdered in June 1981.

Movimento de Liberaçion Popular Chinchonero (MLP)--Chinchonero Popular Liberation Movement. Appeared in January 1981 and is thought to have close links to the URP. In fact, although it is by no means certain, it is possible that the MLP is the military arm of the URP. In any case, the MLP is very small, with possibly as few as 50 members.

Commando Revolucionario Popular Lorenzo Zelaya (CRP)--Lorenzo Zelaya Popular Revolutionary Command. First appeared in September 1981. Possibly linked to PCH and FMLH. Nothing is known of its organization and membership. CRP is thought to coordinate the activities of two sub-groups--the FPD (Popular Revolutionary Front) and the Juan Rayo Commando. Nothing more is known of these groups, which appeared in 1982 and have been quite active.

Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centro-americanos (PRTC)--Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers. Trotskyite terrorist organization, part of the group based in El Salvador, where it may have as many as several hundred members. Has occasionally operated in Honduras.

Other Insurgent Groups.

MR-19. A coalition of Hondurans, Nicaraguans and Salvadorans which surfaced in November 1979 but apparently has been inactive since.

FPL. Salvadoran insurgent group (see El Salvador).  
Popular Action Group. Nothing known.

People's Guerrilla Commando. Nothing known.

Froylan Turcios Revolutionary Command. Surfaced in July 1982 apparently in response to Honduran cooperation with Salvadoran security forces.

Movimiento Anti-Communista Hondureno (MACHO)--Honduran Anti-Communist Movement. Right-wing death squad thought to include members of the security forces. May also have links to like-minded Salvadoran, Guatemalan and Nicaraguan exiles living in Honduras. First appeared in the summer of 1981 along with Mano Blanco (White Hand), another rightist group. Almost nothing is known of either organization, although it is likely that both are small.

Methods

Prior to 1979, there was no insurgent activity to speak of in Honduras. Discontent and dissent manifested itself in other less-structured forms. One of those forms, occupation of land or of buildings, continues to be used, but with declining frequency since 1980. Demonstrations and riots occur as well, but not with the frequency or

severity found elsewhere in Latin America. Political strikes--as distinct from strikes related solely to labour-management disputes--have fallen into disuse in the past two years.

Since 1979, violent protest has played an increasing role in Honduran political life. Known statistical data appear to confirm an upward trend: 1979--6 incidents; 1980--24 incidents; 1981--44 incidents; and 1982 (to mid-September)--60 incidents. A cautionary note should be entered here, however. In spite of the rapid increase in the number of violent incidents, even the current levels do not approach the scale or intensity of Guatemala and El Salvador. The situation in Honduras is not out of control, yet. Secondly, it would be a mistake to assume a clear and unequivocal correlation between domestic discontent and increased levels of violence. The revolutionary left, which has never experienced widespread popularity in Honduras, remains relatively small and fragmented--the number of groups speaks for itself. Although hard and fast figures cannot be given--many incidents go unclaimed by their perpetrators--it appears that a large proportion, perhaps as many as half, of the incidents can be attributed to "overspill" from the civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Nicaragua has accused Honduras of harbouring "Somozist rightists" bent on overturning the Sandinista regime. The Honduras-El Salvador border area has proven virtually indefensible--refugees and insurgents slip easily into Honduras where rival factions indulge in the "settling of accounts". Consequently, up to the middle of September 1982 only 34 incidents of violence had been claimed by or attributed to known groups of the revolutionary left. Furthermore, many of these groups claim--for what it is worth--that they are acting not so much to overthrow their own regime, as to support the struggle in El Salvador. So

the extent to which violence is being employed to destabilize Honduras with a view to social revolution must be weighed in balance with these other factors.

That said, the available statistics do reveal some interesting patterns. Bombing is the method which has increased the most--from three incidents in 1980 to 25 in 1982 (to the middle of September), for a total of 35. Of those, 14 have been attributed to the Lorenzo Zelaya CRP and its two associated groups--the FPR and the Juan Rayo Com-mando. These two latter groups are, between them, responsible for 12 of the 25 bombings thus far in 1982. Clearly, the CRP coalition is emerging as the active extremist group. It remains to be seen whether the CRP front can sustain and/or increase its level of activity. The targetting pattern of bomb attacks is also interesting. More than half of the bombings in 1982 have been against targets of economic importance, including American-owned companies. Early in July the FTRC knocked out the power plants which supplied electricity to the capital. Then, in early August they bombed three foreign-owned businesses. This targetting pattern shows that the Honduran insurgents have learned from the example of their Salvadoran compatriots, who in the past year have concentrated on destroying the economic sub-structure of the country. It is an important development: with a weak economy to start with and a high concentration of foreign investment, Honduras is particularly vulnerable to this kind of pressure.

Another trend, equally if not more disturbing, is the apparent rise in political murders by right-wing death squads, something Honduras had not experienced since the early years of the Arellano dictatorship. Of the 27 assassinations and political murders recorded since 1979, 18 have been attributed to death squads, all since the early summer of 1981. Clearly, it indicates a reaction to



leftist violence, which had been increasing for the previous two years. But it also points to a lack of faith, on the part of some, in the ability of the democratic process, the security forces and the judicial system, to deal with leftist violence in a firm but legal manner. It is a dangerous trend: sooner or later, it may be seized upon by the left as a justification for their course of action and increased violence on their part. Then there will be the very real possibility of the kind of polarized violence--the endless reprisals by right and left--that have torn apart El Salvador and Guatemala.

Although kidnapping has increased substantially (from one case in 1979 to six in 1981 and 10 so far in 1982) the information on targets and perpetrators is inconclusive. Of the 16 victims since the beginning of 1981, five were businessmen, including several associated with American firms. That would fit in with the current bombing pattern which appears to be aimed at economic targets. The same could be said for the MLP's hostage-taking in September; the target was the Chamber of Commerce. However, it is by no means clear from available evidence that the groups involved in bombing are the same as those engaged in kidnapping. Groups do not seem to claim responsibility for the incidents. It may be fair to suggest that the domestic insurgents do not wish to let the security forces know who is involved--and which groups are getting rich from the extorted ransoms. Equally, however, it is quite likely that at least some of the kidnappings were undertaken by exile groups or foreign insurgents operating in Honduras. Whatever the case, it is a growing trend.

#### External Assets

Although there is considerable suspicion--both amongst American officials and Hondurans generally--that

Nicaragua has had a hand in stirring up subversion in Honduras, hard evidence is lacking. Such evidence of foreign interference as does exist is sketchy and unconvincing. It is possible that Nicaraguan military camps near the Honduran border are being used to train Honduran insurgents, but it is impossible to prove this--with the evidence currently to hand--beyond a reasonable doubt. Evidence of Cuban involvement is more conclusive. Much of the Cuban support is moral and ideological in the form of propaganda broadcasts. But there is some evidence to suggest that Cuba has trained at least a few Honduran revolutionaries and that it may be willing to offer more concrete assistance--such as weapons. Unfortunately, American assertions that the Cubans have actually reunited the leftist factions under a national revolutionary directorate should be viewed with skepticism. Earlier American estimates with respect to El Salvador were shown later to have been exaggerated, and thus far the Honduran rebels have shown few signs of unity or coordination. It is probably fair to conclude that at this stage the external assets of the Honduran revolutionaries are largely potential rather than actual. Foreign assistance received thus far may have made revolutionary violence possible, but it does not appear to be sufficient to overthrow the government. That could change in the future of course. The Honduran security forces could never effectively seal the frontier with Nicaragua, and should the Nicaraguans and/or the Cubans decide it was appropriate, arms and trained revolutionaries could easily be infiltrated across the border. At a more advanced stage in the revolutionary process, a sanctuary in Nicaragua would be an invaluable asset to Honduran insurgents.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The greatest strengths of the insurgent movements lie not in themselves but in the vulnerability of the regime.

The new liberal government lives in the shadow of the military, who may step in once again if the government is not sufficiently tough on the left. The economy is weak, dominated by American investment, and the demand for land reform vastly outstrips the government's ability or willingness to enact it. The terrain of Honduras favours a guerilla war and the Honduran army is too small to control the country if presented with an effective insurgent threat. In short, a recipe for social revolution, at least in theory. But the left is fragmented. The largest group, the FPH, which should be in the forefront, has in fact been the least active. That, in itself, goes some way to explain the proliferation of smaller extremist groups. Their younger, more radical members have criticized the Communist Party--which plays a key role in the FPH--for being reformist, not revolutionary. Others on the left argue that Honduras--in spite of all its difficulties--is not yet in a pre-revolutionary situation. From their own pronouncements it is clear that the extreme left do not feel they have convinced the broad mass of the need for armed struggle, or even for social revolution itself. On the contrary, the revolutionaries feel they have been outflanked and frustrated by the reformist tendencies of recent governments. They realize that the absence of brutal repression makes it difficult to mobilize popular opinion to support their own use of violence.

Fragmentation and theoretical disagreements hamper the insurgents in one vital way--they prevent the emergence of a single leader around whom the various factions, and eventually the population, could coalesce. This is not to suggest that a leader will not emerge over time, merely to say that none exists at present and without one the left will have a difficult time developing and coordinating an effective strategy for the overthrow of the regime.

### Achievements

Thus far, the achievements of the Honduran revolutionaries have been negative. They have not rallied the masses, especially the peasants, around the banner of armed struggle. In fact, the mass student and peasant actions that characterized the end of the previous decade have all but stopped. The revolutionaries are aware that they will have a difficult time convincing much of the population that reformism is as bad as repression and should be resisted by force of arms. The FMLH faction of the FPH broad front categorically denies communist or even socialist objectives, knowing these to be unpalatable. Furthermore, the sudden upsurge and rapid increase in revolutionary violence has sensitized the government to the security situation, giving it impetus to modernize its forces. The United States is giving assistance to Honduras.

On the plus side, the left must be credited with generating fear on the Honduran right, fear which manifests itself in political murder. Death squad activity may produce the kind of polarization in which a leftist extremist revolution can flourish.

### Government Response

#### Security Forces Organization

##### Armed Forces:

Army: 11,500--consisting of

Infantry: 11 battalions and 1 Special Forces unit

Armour: 1 regiment, with 17 Scorpion light tanks

Artillery: 3 battalions, with 12 75 mm and 12  
105 mm howitzers

Engineers: 1 battalion

Signals: 1 battalion

Air Force: 1,200--consisting of

Fighter/Ground Attack: 12 Super Mystere B2

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Air Force: 1,200--consisting of

Fighter/Ground Attack: 12 Super Mystere B2

Counterinsurgency: 4 F86F Sabre, 6 A-37B  
 Reconnaissance: 3 RT-33A  
 Transport: 2 C-54, 2 C-45, 1 C-47, 3 Arva,  
                   1 Westwind  
 Helicopter: 2 UH-19D, 10 UH-1H  
 Training: 6 T-6, 24 T-28F, 5 T-41A  
 Liaison: 2 Cessna 184, 2 Cessna 185

Navy: 300--consisting of 6 Swift patrol craft, 2 fast  
                   patrol boats and 4 coastal patrol boats.

Note: Up to 1981 the Air Force still had 10 F4U Corsair fighter bombers and 6 B-26C Invader light bombers--both types piston-engine. It is not known whether these have been scrapped or are being held in reserve. The B-26 would have some value as a counterinsurgency aircraft. The Super Mysteres were purchased from Israel. They are a 1950s aircraft with some 25 years of flying already in them. The Sabre jets are of the same vintage--it is reported that the pilots are afraid to fly them. The UH-19D helicopters are at least 20 years old and the 10 UH-1H's are on loan from the United States. The C-47 pre-dates World War Two and the C-54's are about 30 years old.

#### Paramilitary Security Forces

3,000 men in the Civil Guard. Charged with day-to-day law enforcement and maintenance of internal security. It includes the Directorate of National Investigations which combines the functions of criminal investigation, political intelligence, and security. It is also responsible for frontier control, immigration and control of smuggling.

#### Political Control

In theory, the President is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, whether or not he is a civilian. As has been noted earlier, however, the armed forces have been the government for the better part of the last 20

years. The President has the power to declare war if the assembly is not in session; otherwise, that power lies solely in the assembly's jurisdiction. The assembly may amend the President's budget proposals, thereby retaining a modicum of control over the size and activities of the armed forces. However, in view of the political role of the armed forces, the power of the assembly is more apparent than real.

The Secretary of State for Defense and Public Security is responsible for administration of both the armed forces and the civil guard. But political control bypasses the Secretary and runs directly from the President to the Chief of Staff (some would argue that control flows as much in the opposite direction). The Chief of Staff is elected (in theory by the assembly) after nomination by fellow officers on the Superior Council of National Defense (which includes the President and the Secretary of Defense). He exercises operational control of all armed forces, but does not control appointments to the Presidential Guard. Nor does he control the Civil Guard, which has its own Chief of Staff.

Although it is a highly "politicized" force, the Honduran military does not appear to be quite the "law unto themselves" that the Salvadoran and Guatemalan armies are. It retains considerable political influence and wields it, but not gratuitously or with excessive brutality.

#### Strategy, Doctrine and Tactics

Information on this aspect is sketchy, but a certain amount can be deduced from available evidence. The Civil Guard has borne the brunt of the counterinsurgency campaign --such as it is. The DNI has had some success in penetrating the still relatively small and inexperienced insurgent

groups. But there is also reason to believe that they cast the arresting net wide, taking in innocent civilians along with genuine subversives. Unfortunately, the DNI is suspected of torturing prisoners and carrying out summary executions. As noted earlier, it is believed that members of the security forces (including DNI) are involved in "death squad" activity.

The government has taken a tough line on subversion since taking office in the spring. New anti-terrorist legislation with sweeping powers was passed by the assembly. The government intervened at the university, the main source of opposition, and replaced the rector with a government appointee. More than 60 student and trade union leaders were arrested in May and June. In order to stem the activities of foreign dissidents in Honduras, the government has ordered the arrest and detention (usually temporary) of suspected foreign leftists. More important, it has taken two steps to try to prevent overspill from the civil war in El Salvador. First, in response to a request from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Hondurans moved some 25,000 Salvadoran refugees from the border area to a single large camp at Mesa Grande, more than 80 km from the frontier. This removed the innocent refugees from the threat of being killed by Salvadoran security forces crossing the border in "hot pursuit". It also made it more difficult for Salvadoran insurgents to operate and recruit inside Honduras. In the second step, some 2,000 Honduran troops were sent in July into the "Bolzones", the disputed frontier areas left over from the "Soccer War" where Salvadoran insurgents were known to be operating; the refugee camps had been largely in these areas. The presence of Honduran troops--if they remain--may also disrupt the flow of arms into El Salvador from Nicaragua. The security forces demonstrated both effectiveness and sophistication in handling the mass hostage taking



in September. Government negotiators talked the insurgents out of their demands and conceded nothing, allowing the perpetrators only passage to Cuba.

Thus far the armed forces have not been involved directly in countering domestic insurgents, but soldiers have started armed patrols in the capital. Should they be required to do so in the near future, there is every reason to believe they would encounter considerable difficulties.

#### External Assets

Until recently, American military assistance to Honduras had been low-key. Up to June 1982, it included: \$10 million for the purchase of military equipment in Fiscal Year 1981-82; the loan of 10 UH-1H tactical transport helicopters; joint naval patrols (initiated in October 1981) to assist the Honduran Navy in the interception of suspect vessels operating in Honduran waters; and 90-100 U.S. military advisers (the current number is about 50). The latter involved Special Forces "A Teams", assigned to train the Honduran Army to patrol the border and to help them do so, and training teams which taught Honduran soldiers military technical skills such as communications and equipment maintenance.

In the middle of July, responding to a request from President Suazo, the Reagan Administration announced that it plans to provide more than \$60 million in military assistance to Honduras in the next two years. In addition to \$48 million in economic aid, the administration will ask Congress to approve \$17 million in supplementary military aid for the next two years, and \$21 million for upgrading three Honduran airfields, over and above the current basic military aid package (which is expected to be \$14 million in FY 1982-83).

The first manifestations of increased American assistance were visible in August when the U.S. provided two C-130's and four helicopters for a joint operation

involving the movement of a Honduran battalion to a new base near the Nicaraguan border. The Hondurans have expressed interest in buying C-130's, helicopters, and 12 F-5E jet fighters. American aid apart, it is believed that 30 Argentine military personnel and possibly some Israelies are involved in training the Honduran armed forces.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The return of civilian rule is probably the greatest asset of the Honduran government. Although tough on dissent and circumscribed by the potential for army intervention, it does have a mandate from the majority of the population. Provided it proves firm and fair, it may retain the allegiance of the electorate. The freedom of the press is a second major advantage, because it provides non-violent channels for legitimate dissent. The relative power and freedom of the trade unions and peasant organizations--although not completely unfettered or free from government interference--provide vehicles for political activity. Finally, however poor Honduras is, the poverty is almost universal. The gap between rich and poor is narrow in relative terms and Honduras does not have the kind of familial oligarchy that ruled Nicaragua or El Salvador.

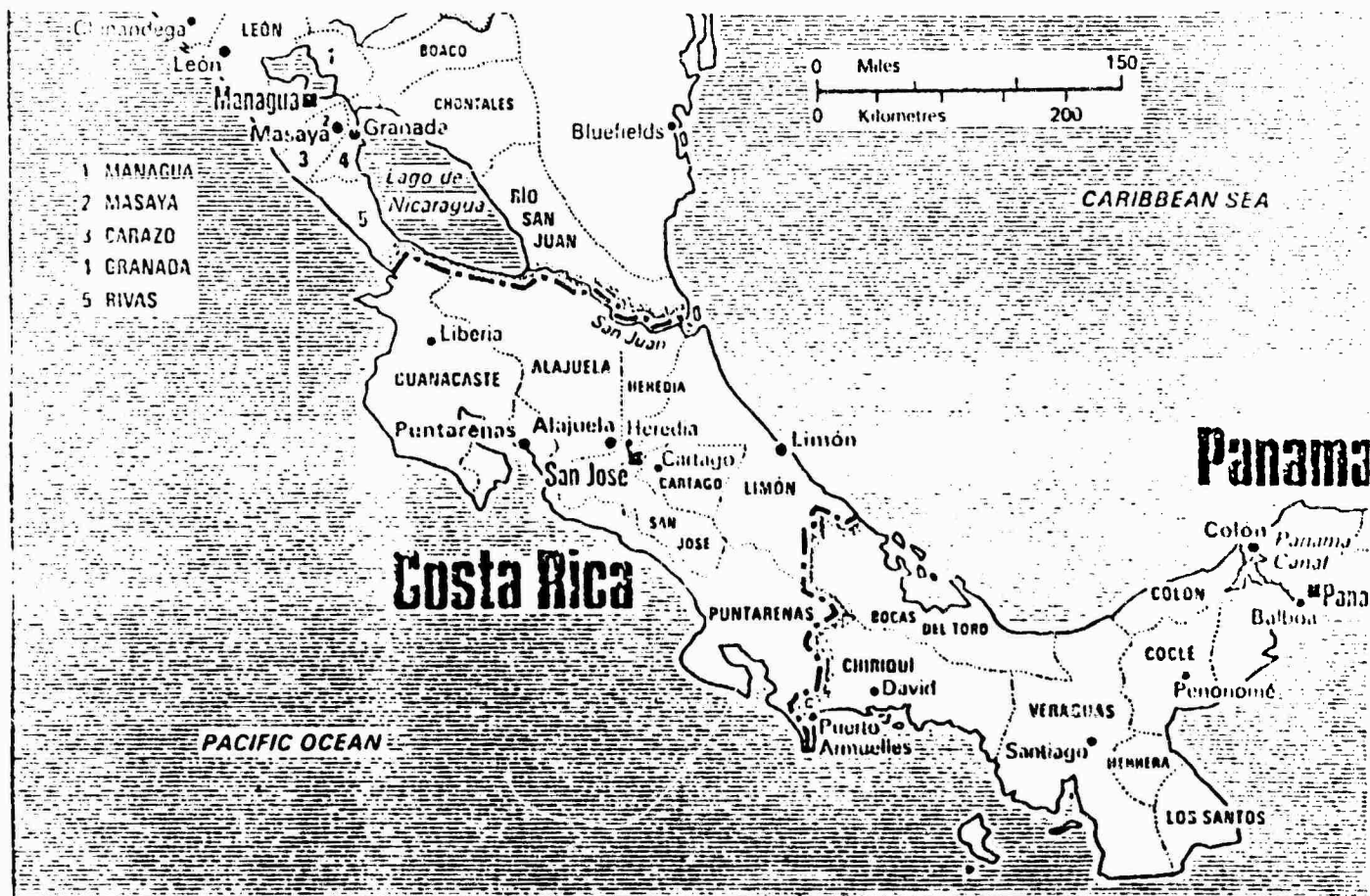
But those advantages, however admirable, are also vulnerabilities and they are compounded by other weaknesses. The Honduran democracy is young, vulnerable to pressure from both extreme left and extreme right. President Suazo will have to toe a fine line between respecting legitimate dissent (and responding to it effectively) and countering subversion. To be extreme in either direction, or to fail to be firm when required, could destroy the democratic process. It remains to be seen whether he has the skill to draw and act upon those fine political distinctions. Furthermore, the resources at his disposal are limited. Honduras is very poor and it is doubtful that the economy

could take the strain of a prolonged insurgency and counter-insurgency campaign--at least, without massive outside help. The effectiveness of the security forces is another unknown quantity. Although the army has good officers, the other ranks are poorly trained and ill-equipped. Moreover, there simply are not enough of them should the insurgency become widespread. The army has reportedly resorted to forcible conscription. Although the civil guard has demonstrated some competence in responding to terrorism, they have a record of and a tendency towards brutality which could undercut politically any tactical gains achieved by the security forces. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Honduran government has turned to the United States for military assistance.

#### Prospects

At this point the prospects for Honduras are uncertain. A great deal depends on the performance of the new civilian government. It shows some tendency towards mild repression, which could undermine the regime's legitimacy, without improving its ability to cope with the insurgents. More important, it risks dispersing its security resources, first to help the Salvadorans, and second, to secure its frontier with Nicaragua. It cannot afford a war with the latter and would be hard-pressed to cope with a widespread insurgency. American financial military assistance would best be spent improving and professionalizing the police and intelligence services, rather than on expensive items of equipment. That said, it must be stressed that time is not yet running in favour of the rebels. Unless they are able to unite, to coordinate their activities, and to present the population with a popular and viable political alternative, then they are unlikely to achieve a revolutionary breakthrough. They will also need patience; a sense of haste can be detected in recent insurgent activities. They risk

escalating violence too quickly, out of phase with a political program and mass-based movement. That probably would produce a right-wing backlash, with the tacit approval of the population. For the immediate future, however, the most serious threat remains an inadvertent or provoked clash with Nicaragua. Recent revelations in the American media suggest that the Americans, with Honduran complicity, may be bent on provoking just such a clash. It is not clear whether this covert action is intended merely to maintain pressure on Nicaragua or to destabilize the Sandinista regime as a prelude to overthrowing it. For Honduras the path is fraught with danger: while defeat by Nicaragua - should the Sandinistas chose to retaliate - is not likely, Honduran-American provocation could set an unfortunate precedent which could rebound to Honduras' misfortune at some point in the future.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### COSTA RICA

#### History

When the Spanish first settled what is now Costa Rica, in the 1560s, the area was inhabited by about 27,000 Indians, who resisted colonization--unsuccessfully. Costa Rica contributed little to the Spanish American empire and was subordinated to Nicaragua in the colonial system. The Roman Catholic Church did not acquire the power and wealth it gained elsewhere in Latin America, and even by the end of the 18th century a wealthy landed class had not developed there. In 1821 Costa Ricans opted for complete independence from Spain and their Latin American neighbours, but after a period of instability, joined the United Provinces of Central America in 1823. Two years later Costa Rica established a constitution and elected its first president, who served effectively until 1833. After 1836 Costa Rica broke its ties with the Central American federation and in 1848 became an independent republic. The previous seven years had been unstable, following the removal of a forceful but honest and efficient dictator, Braulio Carillo (1838-42). The new constitution abolished the army and established a national guard in its place. From this time an emerging political élite, consisting largely of landowners, began to dominate politics, but lasting stability proved elusive. A coup in 1859 brought eight years of "controlled" political peace, followed by coups in 1868 and 1870. The latter brought to power the progressive dictator Tomas Guardia. He banned political parties and broke the power of the ruling élite. He also fostered public education, abolished capital

punishment, and gave liberal incentives to trade, stimulating sugar and coffee production. His major contribution was a railroad from San José to the Caribbean coast which laid the foundation for the banana industry and the United Fruit Company.

Guardia died in office in 1882 and was succeeded by relatives, whose administration introduced compulsory free education. The first completely free elections were held in 1889, but strong-man rule continued until 1902. At that time the liberal Esquivel was elected. For the next 15 years Costa Rica experienced democratic freedoms and cultural advancement. But during this "renaissance" the ruling élites were able to reassert their influence, resulting in the overthrow of the government in 1917 and new elections in 1920. From 1924 to 1936 Costa Rica experienced stability, in spite of the Depression. During this period a national minimum wage was established and 250,000 acres of land from the UFCO were distributed to peasants in 50-acre plots. In 1940 Rafael Calderon of the National Republican Party was elected. His radical social welfare policies cost him the support of conservatives, so he turned to the Communist Party (known since 1943 as the Popular Vanguard Party). This alliance was tolerated until 1948, in spite of charges of corruption. During this period José Figueres emerged as a popular opposition figure, and was able to rally other parties around him. In 1948 the National Union Party coalition won the election, but Calderon's PRN refused to accept the ruling. Figueres then initiated a brief but bloody revolt (March-April 1948), supported by Cuba and Guatemala. Calderon, who was supported by the Army, the PVP, Honduras and Nicaragua (under Somoza) was defeated and the NUP became the interim government with Figueres as president. The Army was disbanded, replaced by a small national police and coast guard. In 1949, elections were

held under a new constitution. The NUP was elected, but without Figueres as leader. He broke with the party four years later, formed his own--the National Liberation Party--and was elected president.

Since that time Costa Rica has experienced internal peace, free elections and democratic politics, economic growth and prosperity. A strong commitment to social welfare policies has given Costa Rica the highest literacy rate in Central America, the longest life expectancy, good health services and other social benefits. But adherence to this commitment without regard for economic change eventually produced the economic crisis that now confronts the country. Costa Rica has been threatened by external invasion only once--in 1955 when Calderon attempted to overthrow the government with the help of other Central American dictators. Mediation by the OAS and assistance from the United States ended the crisis. Costa Rica remains dependent on its international guarantors for defence against external attack.

#### Current Data

Status. Liberal Democratic Republic.

Population. 2,600,000 (February 1982). Average annual growth rate--2.6%.

Ethnic Divisions. 98% white (including Mestizo), 2% Negro.

Language. Spanish.

Religion. 95% Roman Catholic.

Literacy. About 90%.

<u>Major Cities.</u> San José (capital)	800,000
Alajuela	41,000
Puntarenas	35,000
Cartago	40,000
Heredia	24,000
Limon	44,000

Economy. Welfare state economy based predominantly on coffee and banana exports. GNP (1981) \$5.7 billion. Economy now on verge of collapse. Government continued high prices and increasing oil costs, and borrowed abroad to finance this spending. Imports (as of January 1982) now exceed exports by \$400 million, and foreign debt is between three and four billion dollars. On a per capita basis Costa Rica is the world's most indebted nation. It has defaulted on both principal and interest repayments and in February 1982 was \$577 million in arrears. The Costa Rican Colon, long artificially pegged at 8.5/\$1 U.S., has been devalued 400% in the past 14 months and now stands at more than 50/\$1 U.S. Estimates of inflation rate vary from less than 20% to more than 110%, although the most consistent estimate is about 65%. Unemployment rate doubled in 1981 to 10% and is expected to continue to rise, contributing to a growing crime problem. In 1981 the economy showed a negative growth rate of -3.6%.

Geography. 51,023 km<sup>2</sup>, with land boundaries of 670 km. 30% agricultural (22% meadows and pasture, 8% cultivated), 60% forest, and 10% urban, waste and other. There is a coastal plain on the eastern and western sides and a range of mountains cuts through the centre. The country has 563 km of railroad track, 2,000 km of paved roads and 15,900 km of gravel roads. It is bordered by Nicaragua on the north and Panama to the south.

#### Main Political Groupings

Costa Rica has an Executive Branch headed by a president who is assisted by a 20-member cabinet. The 57-seat unicameral National Assembly is elected every four years on the basis of proportional representation. There is universal suffrage from age 18 and voting is compulsory. The government, elected in February 1982, consists of the National Liberation Party (PLN), headed by Luis Alberto



Monge. It received 58.4 percent of the vote and won an absolute majority (33/57 seats) in the Assembly. The new government was sworn in May 8th. There were no incidents during the elections. Costa Rica has had a reputation for free and fair elections since the revolution of 1948. Other political groupings include the following:

Partido de Renovacion Democratica (PRD)--Democratic Renovation (or Renewal) Party. A conservative party established in 1974 by Carazo Odio. It joined the Unidad Opositora alliance to win the 1978 elections. Odio became president and the alliance was the strongest in the assembly. Leader: Juan Elias Herrera.

Partido Democrata Cristiano (PDC)--Christian Democratic Party. A relatively minor party in the 1970 and 1974 elections, it was part of the four-party Unidad Opositora in 1978. Thus it became part of the ruling coalition. Leader: Rafael Alberto Grillo-Rivera.

Partido Republicano Calderonista (PRC)--Republican Calderonista Party. The party was founded in 1975 by Rafael Calderon after a split in the National Unification Party. Part of the Unidad Opositora in 1978. Leader: Alvaro Cubillo Aguillar.

Partido Union Popular (PUP)--Popular Union Party. A minor conservative party that was part of the 1978 alliance. Leader: Manuel Jimenez de la Guardia.

Partido Vanguardia Popular (PVP)--Popular Vanguard Party. The Communist Party of Costa Rica, founded in 1931 and still under the direction of its founder, Manuel Mora Valverde. Pro-Moscow. Estimated membership in 1980, 3,200. It was illegal from 1948 to 1974. Since then it has participated in elections as part of the PPU coalition. The Party is closely linked to the CGT (General Confederation of Workers), the largest union in Costa Rica, and has played an

active agitational role in labour unrest, especially amongst banana workers, since 1979. The PVP's youth wing conducts agitation amongst university students. The party maintains close relations with the Soviet bloc, especially with the U.S.S.R. and Cuba.

### Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Causes. In theory, Costa Rica should not be among the countries included in this study. It has been the model democracy of Central America. Costa Rica does not have an army, so there have been no coups. It is almost completely ethnically homogeneous, and thus has been spared the social strife that has torn some of its neighbours. Costa Ricans vote in free elections and they do not suffer the wide disparities of wealth that characterize countries such as El Salvador. There is poverty, of course, but the country's wealth, such as it is, is shared across a wide social base. There is a large middle class and relatively greater opportunities for upward social mobility from the working class than exist in other third world countries of similar size and capacities. The political and social atmosphere of Costa Rica is atypical in Latin America. It does not fit the stereotype, the "Banana Republic" of coups and dictators. But this may be changing for reasons largely, but not exclusively, owing to Costa Rica's economic situation.

In September 1981 it was reported that a study by a New York investment firm, commissioned by the Costa Rican government, concluded that the country was in for "a prolonged period of severe readjustment and austerity". In view of the financial crisis facing Costa Rica, that was a generous understatement. The question is how this crisis may affect Costa Rica's political and social structure. There are already signs that it is causing an increased level of stress. Strikes and protests in the past year have turned violent on occasion, leading to minor loss of life.

Living standards have fallen by a third and only the most heavily unionized sectors--the banana workers and civil servants--are keeping their earnings up.

The economic problem is compounded by systemic problems. Admirable though the Costa Rican political structure is, it lacks flexibility. Decentralization of executive power--which puts a check on any nascent authoritarian tendencies--also limits the power of the president and the National Assembly to deal effectively with the economic crisis. Laws against re-election of deputies to the assembly in successive terms precludes continuity in policy development or execution. Consequently, the Costa Rican government has been unable to take appropriate initiatives to accommodate rapid population growth and declining economic prospects.

Another potential source of trouble is the land reform program. Initiated in 1961, the program made little progress until the late 1970s, and considerable disparities remain. The land reform agency had never done a careful assessment of the supply and demand for land. As a result, while small landholders are benefitting from redistribution, the landless peasants are not. As one analyst puts it, "Options have evaporated and no sign of relief is in sight." Costa Rica's limited financial resources make expansion of the program unlikely. This does not mean a peasant revolt is brewing. The landless peasant has few allies, and those he has--leftist parties and student groups--carry little political weight. Increased violence is possible, but thus far this has not materialized from the peasant community.

The spreading violence elsewhere in Central America has, thus far, not spilled over into Costa Rica to the extent that it poses a serious threat to internal peace. This is all the more remarkable for the fact that Costa Rica has played a not insignificant role in the conflicts sweeping

the region. It provided a sanctuary for the Sandinistas fighting to overthrow Somoza; and more recently for disaffected Nicaraguans trying to overthrow the Sandinista regime. Costa Rican territory has been used to smuggle arms to leftist rebels in El Salvador and a bipartisan inquiry concluded in 1981 that the government was directly involved in the gun-running. The new government may be less inclined to carry on in this manner, preferring instead to steer a more neutral course. Most terrorist incidents in recent years have been perpetrated by foreign groups and clearly this is not popular with the man in the street. The government expelled Nicaraguan dissident Eden Pastora in May 1982, barely a month after he arrived in Costa Rica.

Until recently, indigenous terrorism was virtually non-existent. But in 1981, several incidents and the police investigations that followed provided evidence of a small but potentially dangerous leftist terrorist threat. These may have been nipped in the bud but the potential remains. Although the extreme left did poorly at the polls in February, capturing only 6 percent of the vote, they may feel able to capitalize on the economic crisis by blaming foreigners for the hardship, because "they" control the economy. If the crisis worsens, that kind of thinking might provide a rallying point for disaffected elements. For the present however, polarization has not occurred. The population neither admire nor fear the left. Several days after the terrorist attacks on the American and Honduran embassies in March 1981, 15,000 people marched through San Jose in a peaceful protest against terrorism, to "demonstrate for democracy", in the words of one participant.

### The Insurgent Challenge

Organization. Several indigenous groups are known to exist. The Carlos Aguero Echeverria Commando, named for

a Costa Rican who died in 1979 fighting alongside the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, has been the most active group since its first appearance in March 1981. Another is the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (Revolutionary Movement of the People or MRP). The People's Student Front is also intermittently active. The Commando is variously believed to be an offshoot either of the MRP or the People's Student Front. Little is known of its organization, although it is believed to be small. Police arrested at least seven members of the group in 1981 and believe they have broken the back of the movement. One prominent member remains at large--Jose Antonio Figueres Zamora, nephew of Costa Rica's foremost politician and statesman. The MRP is a breakaway group of young activists from the PVP, which they feel has stagnated under an aging leadership. It may have as many as 200 activists, including 75-100 guerrillas, a score of whom are under arrest. There is no information available about the People's Student Front. In June 1981, a previously unheard of group, El Gallito, killed several guardsmen. The group is thought to be supported by Cuba, but nothing else is known.

Methods. No definitive statement on the methods used by these groups is possible, because many incidents go unclaimed and may, in any case, be the actions of foreign groups operating on Costa Rican territory. The Commando claims to be opposed to U.S. policy in El Salvador and Costa Rican and Honduran support for the Salvadoran junta. Most analysts date the Commando's existence from a rocket attack on the U.S. embassy and a bomb attack on the Honduran embassy, 17 March 1981. It is believed to have been responsible for subsequent shooting incidents, as well as bombings and attempted kidnappings. Terrorism continued sporadically after June 1981, when the police claimed to have broken the group. It is not clear whether those incidents could be attributed solely to other groups or to remnants

of the Commando. Undoubtedly, some might be attributed to the MRP. The MRP indicated its intention to try to disrupt the February 1982 general elections. Consequently, it would be a prime suspect in the attempt to kidnap a prominent businessman shortly before the election. The People's Student Front seems to confine its activities to agitation amongst university students. It may serve as a recruiting base for the insurgents.

#### External Assets

It is believed that the Commando and the People's Student Front are being aided and trained by a group called the Central American [Armed] Front. This group, consisting largely of former Uruguayan Tupamaro guerrillas, is suspected of running a guerrilla training camp in the mountains. Some 100 young Costa Ricans are thought to have attended the camp. The Sandinistas have been accused of running a similar camp for 50 Costa Ricans, in the mountains near the Nicaraguan border, but most of those are probably being trained to fight in El Salvador. It has been rumoured, but not proven, that an unspecified number of Costa Ricans are receiving training in Cuba.

During the Nicaraguan revolution, Costa Rica allowed the Soviet Union to expand its diplomatic staff to 300 personnel, out of all proportion to Soviet-Costa Rican political and economic links. It did not take long, however, for suspicions to arise that the Soviets were not confining their activities to aiding the Sandinistas, but were also beginning to meddle in the internal affairs of Costa Rica. Early in 1980 several East bloc diplomats, including three Cubans, two Bulgarians and a Russian, were expelled for alleged involvement in a banana workers' strike. In May 1981, the Costa Rican government severed diplomatic relations with Cuba.

The government has also expressed concern about the effect on the population of radical leftist radio broadcasts

from Nicaragua. In January 1981 the government shut down a similar radio station, Radio Noticias del Continente, which had been operating on Costa Rican Territory since the heyday of the Sandinista campaign.

Although they are not external assets per se, a large number of exile and foreign terrorist groups have carried out operations and other activities on Costa Rican territory, thereby contributing to the general decline in public order. These include the following: rival Nicaraguan, Guatemalan and Salvadoran rightist and leftist groups; members of Colombian (M-19) and Argentinian terrorist groups; occasional forays by troops of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua; Cuban refugees; and at least two groups of international terrorists, one who kidnapped an Iranian businessman and another who were planning to assassinate West German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

All of the groups are small. By themselves, without substantial external assistance, they do not pose a severe threat to the stability of Costa Rica. Public opinion is demonstrably opposed to the use of political violence. Respect for the country's democratic traditions and rule of law remains strong. Moreover, the movements lack any basis for legitimacy--the democratic process and the absence of oppression make it difficult to build a violent opposition movement that can have mass appeal. This could change as the economic crisis worsens, if the extremist movements are able to exploit labour unrest effectively. But the broad mass of the population, by their voting in the general election, demonstrated their disdain for extremist parties and refused to adopt polarized political attitudes. Thus, while there is some scope for violence and subversion, the ground is not fertile for the development of insurgency.

### Achievements

Domestic insurgents have achieved very little in Costa Rica beyond making both the government and the public more alert to the problem. Their activities may have convinced the government that it should modernize its security forces. Foreign groups have operated with impunity until recently and this too has sensitized Costa Rica to its potential security problems. Thus far neither domestic nor foreign insurgents have posed a significant threat to the stability of the Costa Rican democracy.

### Government Response

Security Forces--Organization. Costa Rica abolished its military forces in 1948 and maintains no regular army, navy or air force. Law enforcement and public order security are maintained by several police forces and the Civil Guard (Guardia Civil). These are organized as follows:

1. Fiscal Guard, under the Minister of Finance. Consists of two elements: Customs Police, a small force whose sole duty is the collection of customs fees; and the Treasury Police, a larger and more important force. In 1970, it had a strength of 560 men, most of whom were based in more than 50 detachments around the country. In addition to control of narcotics, intoxicants and smuggling, the Treasury Police are the only law enforcement agency with the legal authority to investigate political matters and to conduct counter-subversion operations.
2. Organization of Judicial Investigation, responsible to the Supreme Court. Apparently a very small force whose duties are unclear, although one source likens them to the American FBI. That, however, seems to be the province of the Detective Force, of which more will be said below.



3. Town and Village Police, operates under the auspices of the Minister of Government. It is the second largest force in the country, responsible for law enforcement in the rural areas, villages and small towns, i.e., all of Costa Rica except the national and six provincial capitals. In addition to the usual police duties, the Town and Village Police are assigned local judicial authority, enabling them to conduct summary trials and carry out sentences. In the rural villages the policeman may be the only representative of the government; he thus serves as a kind of political agent, distributing information (including mail), arbitrating disputes and overseeing the welfare of the community. The regular police are assisted by an auxiliary force who perform basic police duties in detachments (at district or canton level) or individually in smaller hamlets and villages.
4. Civil Guard, responsible to the Minister of Public Security. The Civil Guard is the largest of the security forces, consisting of between 4,000 and 5,000 men. It is used primarily for police duties and can be employed for national defence against external aggression if required. It operates principally in the national and the six provincial capitals. The force includes: a Presidential Guard, whose function is largely though not exclusively ceremonial; operational companies in San Jose and in the provincial commands; a detective force; small air and sea detachments; intelligence, communications and traffic control units. The Detective force has 75 plainclothes officers, responsible for all criminal investigation nationwide. The air detachment operates three Otter STOL utility transports and several helicopters and light aircraft (probably Cessnas).

The police naval detachment consists of 50 men with four patrol boats for customs duties and coastal patrol. The intelligence staff, which is very small, serves both the Guard and the police community as a whole. The Department of Radio Communications provides fixed and mobile communications in San Jose and between national headquarters and provincial detachments. There is also a National Police School that provides recruit and proficiency training for all police forces.

The Guard is organized along military lines, using American-style unit and rank structures, terminology, uniforms and equipment. American security forces have provided much of the training in the past. The Guard is composed entirely of volunteers. Although funds for the operation of the Guard are provided through the Minister of Public Security, a check on that minister's power is exercised by the Minister of Government, whose office allocates funds for the Guard's equipment and supplies. In Fiscal Year 1978, the budget for security forces was \$16.2 million U.S., 2.7 percent of the total government budget.

The Minister of Public Security is responsible to the President for policy with respect to the Civil Guard. Day-to-day administration and operation are controlled by the Director General and his staff. He, in turn, reports to the Minister.

#### Strategy, Doctrine and Tactics

The Guard, and the other forces, concentrate on traditional police-style criminal investigation to identify subversive and insurgent threats. Where necessary, the security forces raid the premises of illegal organizations and arrest their members. Occasionally, the Guard engages in armed clashes with guerrillas or terrorists. The government

has deported or extradited foreigners engaged in violent or subversive activity on Costa Rican territory. In the absence of a genuine insurgency it is difficult to make significant observations on strategy, doctrine and tactics, other than to note that the security forces are under strict political control and are inclined to abide by the legal procedures governing their activities. There are no "death squads" and abuses of civil liberties and human rights are infrequent.

#### External Assets

In the past Costa Rica has relied successfully on the OAS to act as guarantor of its territorial integrity. And up to the early 1970s the United States provided training and equipment. Recently, the American connection was revived. The U.S. began in 1981 a small (\$30,000) training program emphasizing air/sea rescue operations, improved communications coordination and munitions control. Most of the training is done at American military bases in Panama. In 1982 the funding for the program was increased to \$50,000. Other countries are being considered as sources of training and equipment, but at present only the United States is actively supporting the Costa Rican security forces.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

The greatest asset the security forces have is Costa Rica's democratic tradition. Government integrity, respect for due process and public support for moderate and fair law and order programs will give great strength to the government and the security forces if ever they are challenged by a serious insurgent threat. The government's openness, integrity and confidence was demonstrated in 1981 in its handling of the "Camacho" case. On July 1st, Viviana Gallardo Camacho, a member of the People's Student Front who had been arrested on suspicion of involvement in terrorism, was shot dead in her jail cell by a corporal of the Guard. Before the case had cleared the Costa Rican courts,

the government had submitted the matter to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, an OAS institution, for a ruling on the human rights aspect of the incident.

Unfortunately, the security forces do suffer a number of shortcomings. Reckoned in 1970 to be one of the best-trained forces in Central America, the Guard went into decline during the decade. In response to domestic criticism of its Latin American police training programs, the United States cut off all forms of assistance to the Costa Rican security forces for the better part of a decade. Security assistance was restored, and only modestly, in 1981. Consequently, Costa Rica has fallen substantially behind its neighbours in terms of modernizing its security forces. Border clashes during the Nicaraguan revolution demonstrated the relative weakness of the Guard. The country's small intelligence and criminal investigation staffs would be overwhelmed if confronted by a major insurgent or subversive threat. Much of the Guard's equipment, especially its weapons, is obsolete.

The Guard also suffers from a systemic problem: all ranks and positions are appointed. There is no guarantee of tenure, at any level, for personnel. Top positions are subject to the whims of the new president every four years and it is not unusual to see a high turnover rate (rarely exceeding 40 percent) following elections. It goes without saying that this has a detrimental effect on training, morale and efficiency. It is a testimony to the dedication of those who have survived successive changes of government and personnel that the security forces have performed as well as they have. Clearly, however, the continuation of that practice would be disastrous in the event of a major security threat, internal or external.

If the security threats do not increase, the Costa Rican security forces can probably cope adequately. Given

time, a modest amount of American assistance, along the lines of that now being provided, should be sufficient to improve their capabilities. If, however, a serious insurgent threat were to develop, with or without external interference, the Costa Rican security forces as they stand today might easily be overwhelmed. Costa Rican officials take this problem seriously and are already trying to devise programs which will allow them to deal more effectively with potentially serious security threats. Attention is being given to the following areas:

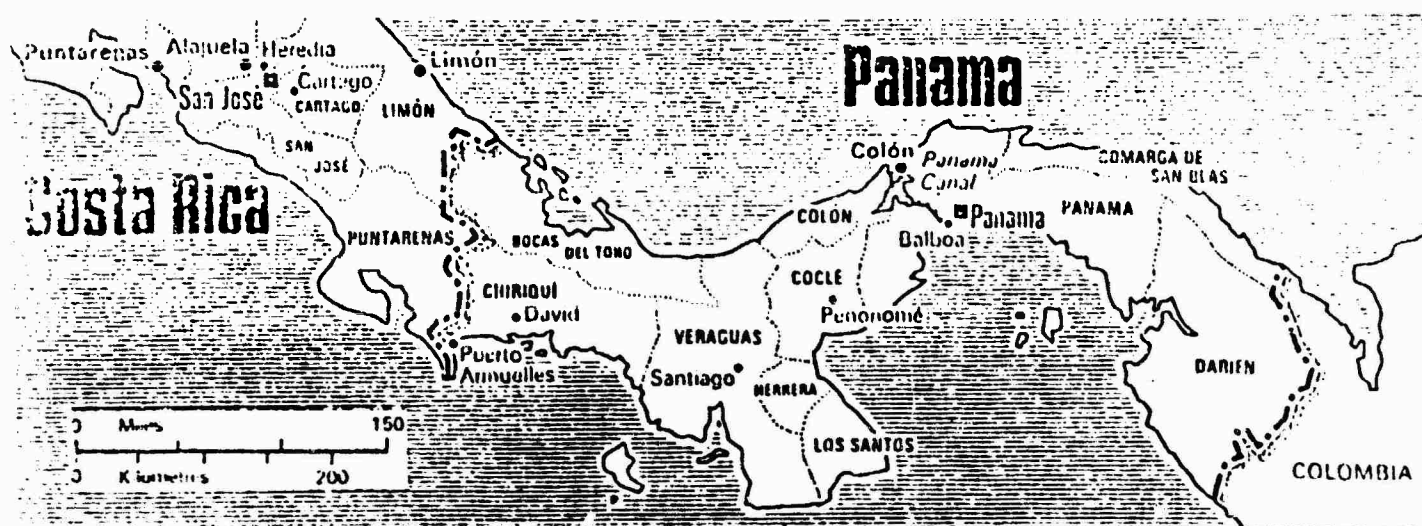
1. a Civil Guard reserve, made up of all able-bodied males, who would undergo a regular period of training each year;
2. creation of a new intelligence system for the security forces;
3. a few specialized units, including an anti-terrorist squad and a revamped narcotics bureau;
4. introduction of computers and other sophisticated methods of community policing;
5. development of a network of informers among Costa Rica's "street" community, those closest to the criminal element and the political underworld;
6. modern light infantry weapons; and
7. training programs from countries other than the United States--West Germany, France, Israel, Spain, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

The relative merits of these proposals aside, the Costa Rican government faces one almost insurmountable problem--it cannot pay for improvements to its security forces. Moreover, as the security forces have such a low public profile and a budget to match, and as there is no clearly defined threat, the government might encounter difficulty selling--to foreign governments, creditors and the domestic public alike--the idea that the security forces

should be improved. Consequently, for the near term at least, Costa Rica will have to choose the least expensive route to improved security. With respect to foreign assistance, one diplomat put it plainly: "Whatever they are going to get is going to have to be given."

### Prospects

For the near term, Costa Rica looks relatively secure. There is no significant domestic insurgent threat and little likelihood of foreign invasion or foreign-supported insurgency on a scale that would undermine the government. The long-range outlook, however, is more uncertain. If the current economic crisis persists or worsens, it could undermine domestic political harmony and stability. Given time and an apparent absence of progress, it could produce a climate where extremist organizations might flourish. Moreover, if a foreign power chose to target Costa Rica for destabilization, it would find student, worker and peasant discontent open to exploitation. But success would not be a foregone conclusion. Economic hardship alone might not be sufficient to mobilize an insurgency. The Costa Ricans guard jealously their democratic and pacific traditions. Furthermore, now that the government is aware of the potential threat, it may be able to take effective preventive and remedial measures, before a serious problem develops. But someone else will have to bear the cost.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### PANAMA

#### History

Until 1903, Panama was part of Colombia. U.S. interests overtook the French in the Canal project, and in 1903 the Colombian Senate vetoed the canal idea. Local interests were incensed and declared independence, a move which was quickly backed by the U.S. Government of Theodore Roosevelt. That administration recognized and offered to defend the new state. It also concluded a treaty under which the land for the canal was ceded "in perpetuity" to the U.S.A. for a lump sum followed by annual payments.

The Canal created a foreign enclave dividing the national territory. It also made Panama nearly totally dependent on the project for revenue and employment. The issue of sovereignty soon became political. It dominated national life and fomented nationalist sentiment. Power passed between liberal and conservative parties and sometimes fell into the hands of strong men who seized it by coup. Arnulfo Arias became president in 1940, but was removed in 1941 for his near-fascist views. A succession of governments followed, including Arias again between 1949 and 1951. Then in 1952 the former head of the National Police, Jose Antonio Remon, was elected president. He was a reformist and he made progress. However, he was murdered in 1955 and political turmoil returned. Increased popular agitation against U.S. control of the Canal, usually led by students, heated the atmosphere. From 1960 to 1968, however, there were two relatively successful governments. Then Arias, now 67, won another election. He immediately sought totalitarian power,

but National Guard officers threw him out after 11 days. After an internal power struggle, Colonel Omar Torrijos emerged supreme in 1970, head of the National Guard and, under a newly drafted constitution, "maximum leader" for six years from 1972.

Claiming to be neither capitalist nor communist (although backed by the Panama communist party), Torrijos was a pragmatist par excellence. He encouraged private enterprise, attracted foreign investment--particularly banking--gave incentives for industrialization, encouraged agriculture, reduced unemployment, began massive public works (a new airport, a \$40 million hydroelectric scheme), and began serious negotiations with the U.S. to revise the canal treaty. The Panamanian economy expanded rapidly. By September 1979, there was success too on the negotiating front. New treaties allowed for the complete transfer of the Canal Zone and the waterway to Panama by the year 2000, and for immediate, and continuing, increased payments (\$75 million compared to \$2.5 million per annum). But they also stipulated a U.S. military presence and bases in the Zone until that date, and joint operation of the Canal. Sovereignty, as opposed to ownership, was to be transferred immediately. Out of office, U.S. Republicans opposed this Canal treaty, but although the Reagan Administration retains some reservations and doubtless wishes to keep options open, it has not upset the arrangements made by its predecessor.

Torrijos stepped down as president in 1978, but retained indirect power through his continued control of the National Guard. Aristides Royo became president. Rising unemployment and reduced economic growth eroded government popularity. There were disturbances in 1980 and 1981, including a protracted teachers' strike. The decision to grant asylum to the Shah of Iran provoked student riots.



On the international scene, Torrijos had strongly supported the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. His supply of arms to FSLN was scarcely concealed. He also backed Belize in its move for independence from Britain and in its rejection of Guatemalan threats. He was a proponent of change in El Salvador and Guatemala, but Cuban interference in post-revolutionary Nicaragua caused him to re-evaluate his support for the FMLN. At home, too, Torrijos felt a backlash against his earlier "progressive" attitudes. Panamanian teachers, students, labour and peasant organizations staged a massive strike against a virtual Cuban takeover of the country's educational system. Torrijos then criticized Cuba and condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; Panama boycotted the Moscow Olympics. Moreover, it was Torrijos' son, Martin (who had fought with Eden Pastora in Nicaragua), who persuaded the Cubans to release Pastora some time after his father's death.

On 31 July 1981 General Omar Torrijos Herrera was killed when his airplane crashed in the mountainous jungles of the western isthmus. There was no evidence that the crash was other than an accident, although the airplane deaths of two prominent Latin American leaders--the other being President Jaime Roldos Aguilere of Ecuador--inside two months gave rise to some suspicions. In view of Torrijos' more conservative outlook in his later years, such suspicions might justifiably have been cast Eastwards. However, the Soviets wasted no time in trying to divert any such thoughts. Pravda wrote:

In planning the physical removal of Omar Torrijos, the U.S. espionage agency fulfilled the orders of the American monopolies and the Pentagon who were dissatisfied with the progressive course of the Panamanian government.

(Quoted Soviet World Outlook, 15 August 1981, p. 7) and the theme was immediately taken up by Cuba and Nicaragua.

Torrijos' position as head of the National Guard was taken by Colonel Florencio Florez Aguilar, who promised to defend his late boss's policies. However, seven months later in March 1982, after a power struggle within the Guard, Florez was dismissed. His place was taken by former agriculture minister Colonel Ruben Dario Paredes. Two of Dario's close associates, Lieutenant Colonels Armando Contreras and Manuel Noriega, were appointed deputy and chief-of-staff respectively. Noriega was the unpopular former chief of the efficient intelligence service.

Colonel Dario Paredes became the most powerful man in Panama. He eased the liberally minded President Royo out of office and installed de la Espriella, thought to be a cypher. Paredes is expected to run for president in the new elections in 1984 or thereabouts. Noriega, however, was too impatient to wait so long for his chance to succeed Paredes as head of the Guard. On 4 September 1982, evidently at Noriega's prompting, de la Espriella announced that Paredes would retire. Noriega had insisted that after 25 years' service Paredes must accept compulsory retirement. A major leadership crisis arose.

The United States threw its weight behind Paredes. A former U.S. ambassador and the Commander, Southern Command (in Panama) spoke in his favour. De la Espriella changed his mind: he and the general staff asked Paredes to stay in office. The outcome was, apparently, a strengthening of Paredes' position. No doubt Noriega will have forfeited the trust of his chief and may have to be removed. This could be interesting, in view of Noriega's past control over intelligence with its power to blackmail.

Meanwhile, the major opposition Panamanian Party (PP) abandoned its stance of boycotting the new constitution and registered with a view to contesting the next election. PP's leader, Dr. Arnulfo Arias Madrid, was 81 when this decision

was made, but still in remarkably good shape. His decision to participate indicated some concession, since he had previously refused to accept the legitimacy of the ruling party. Nevertheless, the PP's running a candidate will make a victory for the ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) less than certain. The National Guard will not be likely to accept a PP president. Therefore, any swing of voter support in that direction will possibly be countered either by a postponement of the election, the rigging of results, or a military coup in the aftermath of a PP victory. Either eventuality would put back the liberalization process and create tense political conditions in Panama.

After 67 years of operation, the Panama Canal had still to recover more than half its original \$475 million construction costs. In 1980, 13,600 ocean-going vessels from 75 countries journeyed through the Canal, bearing a record 167.5 million tons of cargo. The Canal remains of great economic and strategic importance. However, with an increased tendency for Far Eastern goods to be shipped to West Coast U.S. ports and carried East by rail, with a similar overland route being constructed by Mexico, and with a diminishing transit of oil because of reliance on supertankers, some of the channel's significance is being lost.

#### Current Data

Status. Republic. Described in the Constitution as "unitary, republican, democratic and representative".

Population. 1,939,000 (January 1981). 2.2% annual growth.

Ethnic Divisions. 70% Mestizo, 14% Negro, 9% white, 7% Indian and other.

Language. Spanish; about 14% speak English as native tongue; many Panamanians are bilingual.

Religion. 93% Catholic; remainder mainly Protestant.

Literacy. 85% of population over the age of 10.

<u>Main Cities.</u>	Panama City (capital)	655,000
	Colon	117,000
	David	80,000
	Santiago	20,000

Economy. Panama's economy has traditionally been founded on income from services involving visitors and U.S. military personnel, and from Canal employees. However, this has broadened to include tourism, services, industry, copper. Agriculture contributes some 14% of the GNP, which in 1980 was \$3.2 billion. Industry accounts for an identical percentage. The main industry is food processing, and there are textile and clothing concerns, chemical, plastics and other light industries. Petroleum products are the only industrial export. Mining should help lessen the Republic's dependence on the Canal. Vast deposits of copper have been found at Cerro Colorado and elsewhere. At the moment, however, the world copper market is in a slump. Large coal resources have been found at Rio Indio.

Banking is dynamic. Since 1970, offshore banks have increased from 20 to over 100. For the last eight years, imports have been twice the value of exports. The budget is in similar shape. Foreign aid has been and remains essential, but if economic hopes are realized, this dependence will lessen. As the service sector--particularly banks--is the main capital-growth area in the economy, and as this is a capital-intensive sector, there is a severe unemployment problem. In 1981 the inflation rate dropped to 5.6%, having been 16.5% in 1980. Provided the current problems of high unemployment and the world recession can be surmounted, the medium-term outlook is fair. Increased Canal revenue, together with opportunities in port, shipyard, bunkering and railway development, offers strong possibilities. The Gross Domestic Product in 1980 was \$3.2 billion.

Geography. Panama is on the narrowest and most southerly part of the Isthmus linking North and South America. Its width varies between 48 km and 185 km, and contains 77,082 km<sup>2</sup>. Because of its S shape, transit of the Panama Canal from the Pacific to the Atlantic involves northwest travel. The Atlantic coastline measures 1,246 km and the Pacific, 1,634. The dominant feature of the country's landform is the central spine of mountains and hills that forms the continental divide, called the Cordillera de Talamanca at the Costa Rican end, and Serriaria de Tabasara elsewhere.

In many respects, Panama stands apart from Central America. Its affinities are with northern South America. However, it shares with its neighbours of the Isthmus comparative small size, small population, and limited resource endowment. Its distinctiveness derives essentially from the Panama Canal, completed in 1914.

Rainfall is heavy on the Atlantic coast. Temperatures in the lowlands range from 21°C at night to 32°C by day. The result is deep tropical forest: 70% of the whole land area is forested. The rain lessens towards the coasts and is much less on the Pacific side. The forest gives way to semi-deciduous trees and areas of savanna between the divide and the Pacific.

The former Canal Zone was a ribbon of territory extending 8 km on either side of the Canal and including the cities of Cristobal and Balboa. In 1979 this was transferred from U.S. to Panamanian sovereignty, including the cities, dry docks, trans-isthmus railway and the naval base of Coco Solo. Until the final transfer of ownership in the year 2000, the Canal administration is under the Comision del Canal, on which the U.S. retains majority representation.

### Status of Government

Panama's current system and style of government is essentially the legacy of Brigadier General Omar Torrijos Herrera, the country's strongman from 1970 until his death in an air crash in July 1981. His policy was reformist yet conservative. He angered Washington by his stand over the Canal and his support for Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutionaries; he also disappointed the totalitarian left by his refusal to endorse ideologically inspired promotion of revolution from outside the region. He was a natural go-between in the nearby struggles for social reform and economic development.

Under the provisions of the 1972 Constitution, as amended in 1978, the president is the chief executive of the republic. The legislature has two bodies; a 505-member National Assembly of Municipal Representatives, and a National Legislative Council consisting of 59 members, 39 of whom must also be assemblymen.

The executive organ consists of the president and the vice-president who operate "with the indispensable cooperation of the [12] ministers of state". The commander-in-chief of the National Guard is nevertheless the second most powerful figure in the land, and in times of crisis might become the most powerful.

The currently ruling party is the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PDR), which was of Torrijos' making. The recent president was Aristides Royo, who had assumed this office prior to Torrijos' death, but in August 1982 Royo stood down in favour of Ricardo de la Espriella, formerly vice-president.

### Main Political Groups

Democratic Revolutionary Party (PDR). The recent creation of the former president, Omar Torrijos Herrera, the PDR has a majority in the National Assembly and selected the

president and vice-president. The party's aim is "to build a politically, socially and culturally more just society for the benefit of all sections and strata of the community". However, in spite of massive government spending prior to the September 1980 parliamentary election, 40 percent of voters abstained and PDR was unable to win more than 40 percent of the vote.

The Broad Popular Front (Frampo). Called the "first middle class party in Panama's history", Frampo has connections to PDR but is generally slightly to the left of the governing party.

Panamanian People's Party (PPP). Although small in numbers, the Moscow-line communist party was the principal source of organized political support during the early years of the Torrijos government. It resisted the formation of the broader based PDR and lost much of its power during the late 1970s. PPP publishes a monthly, Unidad.

Extremist Parties. There is a handful of small extremist parties, such as the Trotskyite Faction on the left, and the God and Panama Movement on the right. As any party has to obtain 30,000 signatures before being eligible to take part in elections, the outlook for such parties is bleak.

National Opposition Front (FNC). Established in 1979 by ten political parties and groups, the FNC or Freno has called for the direct election of parliamentary representatives and full freedom of expression. All the parties listed below belong to the Freno.

Panamanian Party (PP). The party's leader, Dr. Arnulfo Arias, was president 1940-41 and 1949-51 and (for 11 days) in 1968, being deposed at the end of each of these periods. In October 1979 members of

the PP were accused of involvement in an anti-government plot. The PP's platform is nationalist, anti-U.S.A., and anti-communist. It is the strongest opposition party.

The Liberal Party (PL). The party's leader was defeated in presidential elections in 1968. The PL was the only party whose leader took part in sessions with the PDR in 1978 to legalize political parties in Panama and implement electoral law and constitutional changes. This caused the PL to be ostracized by Freno and cost its leader his job. The new party leader is Arnulfo Escalona. The PL is the second strongest opposition party.

Christian Democratic Party. The party's candidate was third in the 1968 presidential election. The Christian Democrats do offer a programmatic alternative to government policy by calling for substantial social reforms.

Panamanian Social Democratic Party (PDS). A left-of-centre, reform-oriented party with S.I. links.

The Republican Party. Right of centre.

The Third Nationalist Party. Right of centre.

The Independent Democratic Movement. Moderate left.

The Agrarian Labour Party. Right of centre.

Socialist Revolutionary Movement (MSR). At its foundation in 1979 MSR declared it would strive to lower the cost of living, provide better housing, transport, health facilities, land, fiscal reform and equal rights.

Revolutionary Students Federation (FER-29). Not a political party, but a militant political pressure group, FER-29 has carried out occupations, demonstrations and protests in support of leftist causes. It is an obvious recruiting ground for terrorists, but so far has not moved into this field.



### Potential for Insurgency

Violence in Panama has erupted from time to time, such as student bombing and rioting, an apolitical kidnapping (neatly foiled by the National Guard), an attempted assassination of a former president, a Cuna India attack on National Guardsmen, mob attacks on the opposition newspaper, La Prensa, and molotov cocktail attacks on British property during the Falklands crisis. No properly organized terrorist groups had been identified. However, in June 1982 five North Koreans were expelled from Panama for planning subversive operations, an incident that may suggest that this country and its Canal had not been completely forgotten in distant lands.

At present there is no broadly based revolutionary movement in the country. Current economic difficulties, the likely return to quasi-military government of conservative views, and the continued presence of United States troops in the Canal Zone might provide either the genuine popular grievances on which an indigenous revolt could be built, or at least the propaganda platform around which externally sponsored terrorism might flourish. The latter is the more likely, and would match the pattern traced elsewhere in Central America, where terrorism has been used as the polarizing catalyst for a wider uprising.

The only political party with true revolutionary potential is the Moscow-aligned Panamanian People's Party (PPP). The PPP celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 1980. Banned from 1953 to 1968, the party was made legal by Torrijos and it backed his regime. Individual PPP members held important government posts but, as the PRD moved slowly to the right, relations between the communists and the government worsened, and PPP participation was confined to the margins.

In foreign policy matters the PPP has backed the Moscow-line obediently, praising the invasion of Afghanistan and criticizing the Panamanian government for boycotting the Moscow Olympics. The National Guard broke up a PPP rally in May 1980. The party has been somewhat isolated by its past support for what is now regarded as a failed, reactionary regime, and needs new policies if it is to gather any sizeable popular support. One of its members, running as an independent, did get himself elected to the National Council in September 1980, demonstrating the political views of his banana plantation constituents in Bocas del Toro.

The PPP is one of three regional communist parties (the others being Costa Rica and Honduras--Belize has no such party) that is still committed to the "constitutional road". Having been squeezed out of their alliance with the PDR, the PPP may now opt to form a front with social democratic parties; it may concentrate on infiltrating the labour movement; or it may go underground and organize violence. Ideological considerations make that last course unlikely unless and until the "objective conditions" for rebellion have been developed. Nevertheless, the changed Soviet attitude towards "partisans", and the success of terrorism as a prelude to civil war in other nearby countries, may tempt at least a faction in the PPP into this arena. So far as is known from open sources, any terrorist group would be starting from scratch, as there is no indication of existing groups. However, assistance would doubtless be readily available from outside. An early objective would be to infiltrate, demoralize and disable the National Guard's security agency. Another aim might be to undermine Panama's economy, on the Salvadoran and Guatemalan model, in which case foreign businessmen and canal traffic might become targets.

Another course open to the PPP would be to remain officially committed to the constitutional road, while using

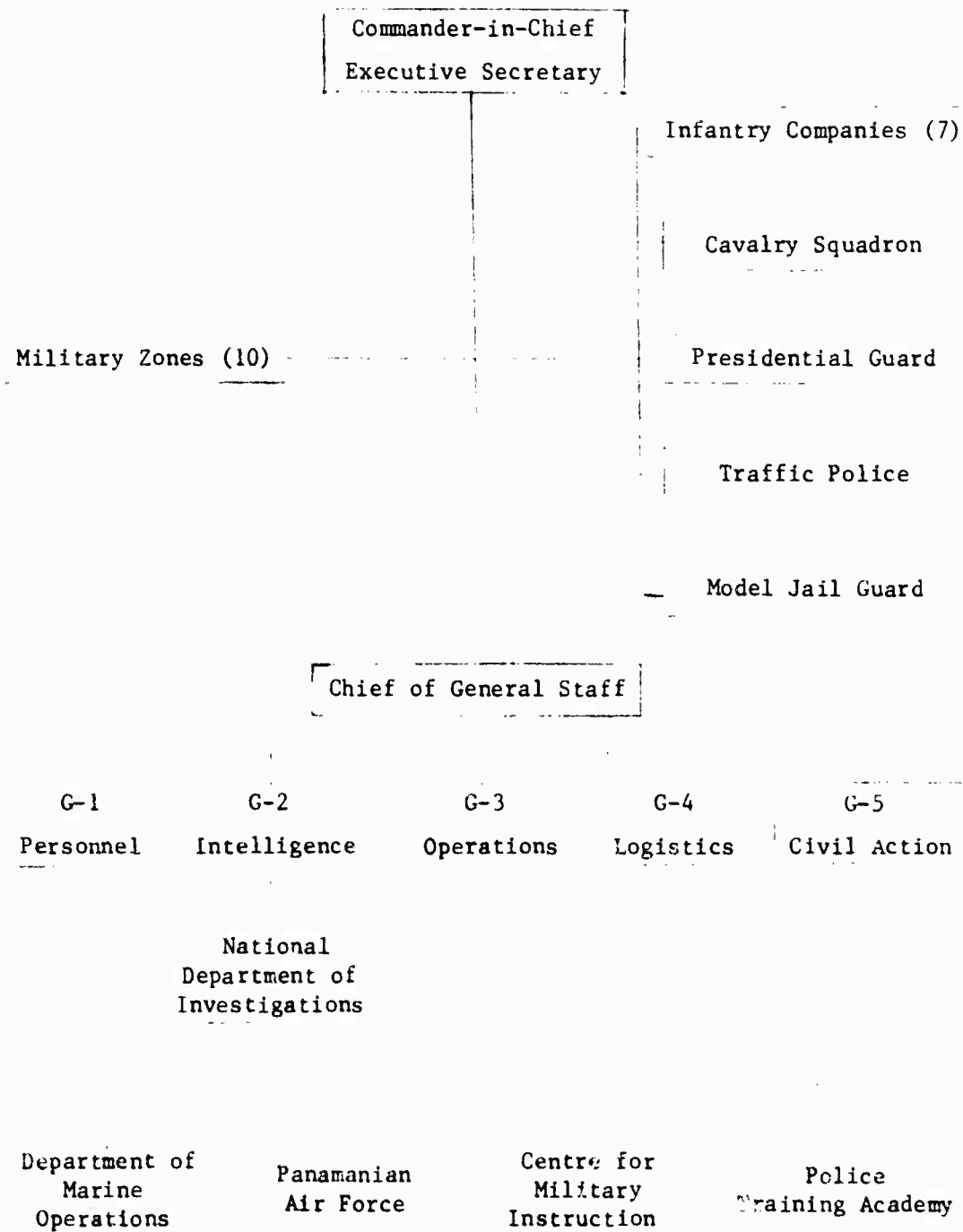
a front organization to stir up street violence and, possibly, hive off a terrorist cell. For such a purpose the PPP might seek to control the FER, whose student members have traditionally been the standard-bearers of radical demonstration in Panama.

On the extreme right, such fringe groups as the God and Panama Movement led by Juan Carlos Voloj Pereira and the Panamanian Nationalist Front led from Costa Rican exile by Jorge Crocamo might form the nuclei for right-wing death squads in the event of leftish violence. At present, neither presents a credible threat.

#### Government Counterinsurgency Potential

Historically, the United States has provided the primary defence of the Canal Zone and, in effect, of Panama proper. The new treaty leaves responsibility for the Canal's security in U.S. hands for a further 20 years, but fosters a new relationship that looks towards Panamanian assumption of such tasks in 2000. Consequently the National Guard, which in the past has consisted of a small military organization and the national police force, has begun to transform itself into the "Panamanian Armed Forces", a term used in the implementation agreement of the canal treaty.

Currently, the Guard's military units number about 6,500 and its police units, some 4,500. The military component has several infantry companies, a noncombat air arm, and a naval patrol force. The police consists of a uniformed force stationed throughout the country plus an undercover plainclothes security agency, regarded as efficient. The Guard is administered by the Ministry of Government and Justice, an arrangement which easily enables the military companies to be employed on counterinsurgency. Organization is as follows:



The command line direct from the Commander-in-Chief to the Military Zones and the Infantry Companies, which by any normal standards would pass through the staff, is apparently intentional, as a means of concentrating key authority under the C-in-C, and preventing a Chief-of-Staff from gaining too much power.

The Marine Operations control a fleet of 2 Vosper-type large patrol craft, 2 U.S. CG utility type coastal patrol craft, 5 small craft of various types, being augmented by new U.S.-supplied patrol craft.

The Air Force has 1 Electra turboprop, 4 C-47s, 1 Twin Otter, 12 Cessna 172 Islanders, 5 Otters, 1 Skyvan, 11 Cessna U-17Bs and 2 UH-7H, 1 UH-1N, 2 UH-1D and 1 FH-110, and 12 UH-1B helicopters. It is also believed that Vietnam has sold to Panama some of the U.S. Bell Cobra helicopters abandoned there. These are said to have been delivered in Cuban ships.

The seven infantry companies are patterned on the U.S. organization, but without some heavy weapons. One is designated as airmobile and another as airtransportable. The Cavalry Squadron is mounted and largely ceremonial while the Presidential Guard, which is basically an infantry company, provides protection for the president and forms honour guards. These units would bear the brunt of counter-insurgency duties in any situation beyond the control of the police.

By placing the Department of Investigations under the G-2 staff, the Panamanian armed forces have effective control over their equivalent of the FBI, and an intelligence data bank of strong counterinsurgent potential.

#### United States Forces in Panama

Besides the training centres described in Chapter Two, the U.S. Armed Forces maintain, under Southern Command, the 193rd Infantry Brigade, a detachment of Special Forces, an

aviation battalion, a civil affairs group, a logistics support command and an Air Force composite wing--altogether, some 9,340 troops. The Air Force component has six C-130 transport planes, and four A-7 fighters borrowed from the U.S. Air Force National Guard and Reserve. In terms of defence against external threats, these forces still provide a back-up for the Panamanians. However, in the event of internal unrest, they would doubtless be fully occupied securing the canal. Their use on counterinsurgency tasks outside the old Canal Zone would in any case raise such massive international issues as to be extremely unlikely.

#### Outlook

Panama's main vulnerability lies in its position, both as an objective U.S. security concern on account of the canal, and as part of the Central American region which is suffering widespread civil unrest and violence. The first may make it a tempting target in Moscow and Havana, in so far as these centres may have the desire and the ability to export revolution; while the latter can be infectious, giving hope and inspiration to indigenous rebels and undermining confidence in government and security forces. If Panamanian unrest became widespread and violence grew, we might see harsh counter measures which, in time, would probably alienate the moderates. The United States might not find her ability to assist the regime was strengthened by the existing military presence, because any increase in that presence or widening of its duties would probably inspire strong nationalist reactions. The result might be to deprive the regime of its nationalist credentials and confer these upon the rebels.

These scenarios, however, are not likely in the near future, nor need they arise at all if the Panamanian government can satisfy popular concerns over living standards and liberalization, while at the same time remain on top of the security situation through its strong intelligence capability.

# Belize



## CHAPTER NINE

### BELIZE

#### History

The earliest inhabitants of what is now Belize probably were Mayan. The area fell within the Spanish colonial ambit, but the first white settlers (1638) were British buccaneers seeking a secure base for operations against the Spanish. The Spanish had concluded that the area was unsuitable for settlement, but the British were soon engaged in a lucrative wood-cutting industry. These activities raised the question of territorial jurisdiction between Britain and Spain. Early treaties (1667, 1670, 1713) did not give the British sovereignty; by 1717 Britain was claiming rights of economic exploitation, but Spain did not concede this until the Treaty of Paris (1763). The Spanish drove out the British inhabitants between 1779 and 1786, after which time the Convention of London allowed them to resettle in what is now the northern third of the country. The settlers constantly violated this agreement by moving as far south as the Sarstun River (the present border with Guatemala).

When Central America gained its independence from Spain, Guatemala--as successor state to imperial Spain--claimed the territory of Belize. Britain rejected the Guatemalan claim, in spite of the facts that it did not regard Belize as a very important colony and had never been granted sovereignty over it. While the conflicting claims remained unresolved the territory developed slowly, with emphasis on virtually unchecked exploitation of the forests--mahogany being the most sought-after product. In 1859 Britain and Guatemala negotiated a boundary agreement for



Belize. Guatemala regarded this a cession of territory over which it was sovereign and in compensation it extracted from Britain a commitment to build a road from Guatemala City to the Caribbean coast. After studying the project, however, the British government refused to do so, making the project subject of another treaty in 1863. Moreover, in 1862, Britain made Belize a Crown Colony. In the meantime, Guatemala had gone to war with El Salvador and did not ratify the 1863 convention within the specified time. In 1867, the British government announced that Guatemala's failure to ratify in time released Britain from its obligations under the 1859 treaty. Guatemala thereupon also renounced the treaty and insisted that Britain's rights in Belize were limited to timber cutting as per the London Convention of 1786. The Guatemalan claim to sovereignty was reasserted and there the matter rested for more than 60 years.

In 1875 the Hoare family in Britain founded the Belize Estate and Produce Company (BEC), to facilitate forest exploitation. By 1942 the BEC owned more than one million acres, or about one-fifth of the colony. The company was a poor "corporate citizen": it forced forestry workers and farmers into a dependent relationship with the company--entire villages became tenants; forced evictions were not uncommon, and the company withheld from use vast tracts of fertile land. Worse, it plundered the forests to exhaustion. By the turn of the century they were in decline from the productivity aspect and almost past the point of recovery from an environmental point of view. The thus weakened forest industry never recovered from double blows of the hurricane of 1930 and the world depression that followed during that decade.

It was at that time that Britain reopened the "Belize Question" by offering to compensate Guatemala. But by that time Guatemala was interested only in gaining territory, not

compensation. Time, however, was beginning to run against Guatemala. During the Depression Belize was developing internally. After decades of domination by a single company, a single crop and a small number of locals whose interests were closely integrated--if not always aligned--with those of the colonial power, Belizean "national character" began to assert itself. Diversification of the economy was initiated gradually. A new constitution in 1935 provided for elected representation on the colonial Legislative Council (although the electorate consisted of only 3 percent of the population and most of the council seats were appointed). By the end of the Second World War representatives were starting to argue for "no taxation without local control of treasure", in essence, responsible internal self-government. This group of emerging politicians still represented the Creole *élite* of Belize City, but included professional men and businessmen who were not beholden to BEC. The devaluation crisis of 1948 (brought on by Britain's own financial difficulties) highlighted a significant change in the colonial relationship. Within two years the nationalist Peoples United Party (PUP), led by the charismatic George Price, had burst on the scene, changing the colonial political landscape irrevocably. But for the Guatemalan dispute, independence would have been only a matter of years. PUP, with Price at the helm, has dominated Belizean politics since. With this political "renaissance" came an economic one: the turnaround was highlighted by major development in the agricultural sector, although two companies dominated the sugar and citrus industries.

In 1954, the colonial administration introduced quasi-ministerial government and full adult suffrage. During the next four years Price's leadership split the PUP and led to the creation of the National Independence Party as the principal opposition party. Price's flirtation with the

Guatemalan government in 1957 cost him three years in the political wilderness--although his personal popular support remained high. By 1960 PUP and NIP were able to set aside their differences to present a united front at a Constitutional Conference. They were granted ministerial government with a fully elected assembly and four years later Belize was given full internal self-government.

Only the dispute with Guatemala continued to delay full independence. There was no major disagreement between the PUP and the British government on the independence question; in fact, there was a general consensus that independence should not be undertaken hastily. In 1965, Guatemala had written the claim to Belize into its constitution. At that time Britain and Guatemala agreed to accept mediation by the United States, which appointed a single mediator. In 1968 he presented his proposals for a treaty which would grant Belize independence in 1970, but which would also give Guatemala a large measure of control of defence, foreign affairs and economic matters. When the draft treaty was made public, Belizeans rioted in the streets and the proposals were rejected by Britain and Guatemala.

The dispute unresolved, Britain continued to move Belize gradually towards independence. In 1973 the colony (which had been known as British Honduras) was officially renamed Belize. Two years later the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution supporting Belize's right to independence and self-determination. In March 1981, Britain, Belize and Guatemala reached an agreement which cleared the way for Belizean independence. In return for dropping its claim, Guatemala was to receive use of facilities at Belize's seaports, permission to build two pipelines across Belize, and a "sea corridor", allowing it to exploit sea and seabed resources off the coast between

Belizean and Honduran territorial waters. The agreement was viewed with some apprehension in Belize, and Guatemala complained in September 1981 that the "Heads of Agreement" were supposed to become a treaty before Belize received its independence. That had not been done; indeed, the agreement had collapsed two months earlier. Nonetheless, on 21 September 1981 Belize became independent. The dispute with Guatemala still simmers, unresolved.

#### Current Data

Status. Democratic republic, independent since September 1981.

Population. 146,000 (1981). Average annual growth rate 1.9%.

Ethnic Divisions. Creole (Black)--51%; Mestizo--22%; Indian--19%; other (including Whites)--8%.

Language. Creole (dominant); also English, Spanish, Maya, Carib.

Religion. Roman Catholic--50%; remainder mixed, including Anglican, Baptist, Methodist.

Literacy. 70-80%.

<u>Cities.</u>	Belmopan (capital)	4,000
	Belize City (port)	45,000

Economy. Substandard agricultural export economy based predominantly on sugar (70% of exports). GNP (1981)--\$135 million (U.S.); per capita income (1981) \$1,038 (U.S.). Growth rate, estimated 1.3%. Major production and industries--sugar and sugar refining; citrus fruits; bananas; molasses and rum; timber and forest products; furniture; textiles. Imports--consisting of vehicles, manufactured goods, food, fuel, machinery--outstrip exports by at least \$30 million. Although arable land makes up 38% of the country, estimates

of actual cultivated land vary from 5 to 15%. Major trading partners--U.S., U.K., Canada, Mexico, Jamaica. Until independence Britain had subsidized Belize to the amount of \$8 million per annum. That was terminated on independence, the blow softened by a single grant of \$22 million. Offshore oil and fishing industries are being developed. Unemployment rate stands at about 15%. The country is not self-supporting. Quantities of food and consumer goods have to be imported. With little industry and largely subsistence agriculture, the population lives a "hand to mouth" existence "from one ship or aircraft to the next".

Geography. Small coastal state, totalling 22,973 km<sup>2</sup>, with a coastline of 386 km. Bordered on the north by Mexico and on the west and south by Guatemala. Swampy coastlands give way in the north to rolling fertile forested land and in the south to pine ridges, scrub forest, savannahs and arable lands amongst the Maya mountains (maximum elevation approximately 830 m). 46% of the area consists of exploitable forest, especially logwood and mahogany; 38% agricultural; and the remainder, urban, waste, offshore islands and territorial waters. The coastal waters are criss-crossed by reefs and the coastline provides one major seaport (Belize City) and several minor ones. The coast has been ravaged by several major hurricanes in this century.

#### Status of Government

Parliamentary constitutional monarchy based on the British model. The Crown is represented by a Governor-General. The Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party in the 18-seat National Assembly. The senate has eight members. The Prime Minister is assisted by a 10-man cabinet. Either house may choose its Speaker or President from outside the elected body. There is universal adult suffrage and elections are held every five years (the last

elections were held in November 1979). In 1980 the government had a budget of \$69.4 million (U.S.). Belize is a member of the British Commonwealth. It is not a member of the OAS.

#### Main Political Groups

There are seven principal political parties and several political activist or pressure groups:

People's United Party (PUP). Majority party in the National Assembly (13 seats), under leadership of Prime Minister George Price. The PUP is a moderate centre-left party, Price himself described as a "Christian Socialist". PUP was formed by Price in 1950, with independence a primary goal. Although the PUP, especially its youth wing, has links to Cuba, the government has no plans to establish formal diplomatic relations with Havana.

United Democratic Party (UDP). Minority party in the National Assembly (5 seats). UDP is a coalition under the leadership of Theodore Aranda, consisting of the National Independence Party (NIP), the People's Democratic Union (PDM), and the Liberal Party. A conservative party, the UDP opposed independence on the grounds that the country was not ready to stand on its own. Some elements, including Aranda himself, supported the use of violence to oppose independence and the UDP was held largely responsible for anti-independence rioting in March 1981. The UDP boycotted the independence celebrations but the threatened violence never materialized. The UDP also accuses Price and the PUP of being "Communist".

Corozal United Front (CUF). Led by Santiago Ricalde. Formed in 1973 when Ricalde resigned from PUP to form a local party to represent the Corozal area and Mestizo interests. Considerable support locally, but very little nationally.

United Black Association for Development (UBAD).

Led by Evan Hyde. Founded in 1968. Initially, a black cultural organization, which attracted considerable support from the poorer classes. Hyde was tried for sedition in 1970, probably because UBAD did not rule out the use of violence as a way of changing the status quo. Tended to view PUP policies as perpetuating colonialism. Continues as a radical "Third World" oriented minority party.

Belize Action Movement (BAM).

Radical right wing group associated with UDP. Led by Odinga Lumumba (currently under detention). Black Power advocates, BAM was opposed to independence on grounds that it would threaten the existence of the Amerindian population. BAM advocates violence and was probably directly involved in the March 1981 riots and subsequent disturbances in July. Lumumba is believed to have gained revolutionary experience in Africa and was implicated in a coup attempt in Ghana. The Deputy Chairman of the UDP, Sam Rhaburn, is also a member of BAM.

Toledo Progressive Party (TPP).

Led by Anthoney Martinze. Guatemalan-backed and almost certainly Guatemalan-funded. Small, but a nuisance. Was totally opposed to independence.

Anti-Communist Society (ACS).

Alliance of businessmen under former Trade Minister Santiago Perdomo. Share certain views with Guatemala, although probably not to the point of annexation. Believed responsible for some acts of violence.

Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

There is no active insurgency in Belize at present, but there is potential for internal disorder and a residual threat from Guatemala. The BAM and UBAD, radical black movements, have not been active against the government since independence.

### Causes

As noted earlier, the Belizean economy faces serious problems. The country is very poor, with a high level of unemployment, and with few resources to improve the standard of living. Because of the historical neglect of agriculture, Belize remains a food importer. Of course, a sub-standard economy might not be sufficient to generate major turmoil, but it could contribute to the development of a climate of desperation if the situation persists long into the future.

Although Belize's ethnically mixed population has in the past coexisted with minimal friction, the spillover of Central America's political problems may cause trouble in the future. According to United Nations sources, 5,000 to 7,000 Salvadoran refugees have entered Belize since 1979. An indeterminate number of Guatemalans have also fled the fighting and repression at home by moving to Belize. Clearly, in a country with such a small population, even a few thousand refugees can have a major impact. Quite apart from placing a strain on the country's meagre resources, the influx of Latin American refugees generates fears of "majority-minority" conflicts. Right-wing politicians are already playing upon Creole fears of being overwhelmed by a new Spanish-speaking Mestizo majority. The fears are largely without foundation since the Mestizo population would have to more than double to become the majority. But that does not make the perception and the fears any less real. A more likely danger is that the refugees may bring with them their own political feuds, with rival groups settling scores on the streets of Belize, or setting up exile armies to strike at the homeland. So far this has not happened, but the potential remains, especially for Guatemalans who have traditionally been able to slip easily back and forth across the frontier.



It is, in any case, Guatemala which poses the only significant threat to Belize. Since the treaty talks broke down in July 1981, Belize proceeded to independence without the benefit of resolution of Guatemala's territorial claim. With fifty times the population and a large army, Guatemala could be a powerful opponent. The presence of British troops in Belize, of which more will be said below, as well as Guatemala's preoccupation with its own insurgency, have deterred any direct military conquest. But so long as Belize remains weak, that threat will exist. It is not yet clear whether the new regime in Guatemala is prepared to renounce or pursue the long-standing claim. A second security threat comes from Guatemala in the form of the MLN, the Movimiento Nacional de Liberacion (National Liberation Movement). The MLN is a legal political party in Guatemala, as well as being a violent extremist organization. The MLN enjoys considerable popularity in Guatemala, especially amongst farmers in the eastern part of the country, near the border with Belize. It won 24 percent of the vote in the controversial elections in March 1982, then played a key role in the military coup against the government two weeks later. The MLN maintains a sizeable underground army in Guatemala and is believed to have some sympathizers in Belize who may have been responsible for occasional acts of violence there. But its support there is minimal and it is unlikely that MLN is able to maintain active cells in Belize. Instead it probably infiltrates across the border from Guatemala.

Now that Belize has achieved its independence the prospects for the MLN are very poor indeed. There is little domestic Belizean sympathy for the Guatemalan case upon which to build an effective insurgency. Even assistance from the Guatemalan Army would make little difference so long as a British presence and/or a British/Commonwealth security

guarantee is offered. The best the MLN might be able to do is contribute to unrest which might develop for other reasons. In any case, the MLN is currently preoccupied with the violent anti-leftist campaign inside Guatemala--it probably has no activists to spare.

#### Government Response

##### Organization

The security of Belize from external attack is, for the most part, the responsibility of Great Britain. More will be said about this later. The local internal security effort will eventually be carried out by the Belize Defence Force. This force of some 800 men and women is divided into two units: the police, and the Belize Volunteer Guard. The latter was formed by the British before independence, paid for and trained by them. At present it consists of some 350 personnel, about half of whom are volunteers. The headquarters and a company equivalent are based in Belize City. Independent platoons are deployed around the country. Prior to independence training was along the lines of the British Territorial Army, with evening drills and an annual camp. After independence the training program, still under British supervision, was increased.

The main force of police totals 450, of whom 180 are stationed in Belize City. There is also a detachment in Belmopan, the capital, and the remainder are deployed at the six district headquarters or the posts scattered around the districts. All the posts and headquarters are connected by radio. A police Special Force of three platoons has been formed to assume the riot control role filled by British forces until independence.

There is, as well, a small security service. No details are available as to its size, organization or operations.

No one, the prime minister included, believes that these small, inexperienced forces will be able to defend the country on its own. Like Costa Rica, Belize is heavily dependent on external assets for security guarantees.

#### External Assets

The most tangible external asset is the physical presence of a sizeable contingent of British forces. Since 1979, when the British force was at a peak of 2,500 (two battle groups), British Forces Belize (BFB) has been reduced to a single battalion battle group of 1,800, consisting of:

- Headquarters--approximately 50 men;
- 1 Infantry battalion;
- 1 Armoured recce troop with Fox reconnaissance vehicles;
- 1 Artillery battery with 105 mm guns;
- 1 Light Air Defence troop with Blowpipe Surface to Air Missiles;
- 1 Squadron, Royal Engineers (less a detachment);
- 1 helicopter flight--probably 4 helicopters;
- Jungle Warfare School--12 men;
- 1 Royal Air Force flight--with 4 helicopters and 4 Harrier GR3 V/STOL ground/attack aircraft;
- 1 RAF Regiment Air Defence detachment with Rapier SAMS.

The Royal Navy usually maintains a frigate on station.

Although this represents an expensive commitment--about £25 million per annum--it is unlikely to be run down quickly, at least so long as the Guatemalan threat remains and Belize is unable to defend itself. A premature British disengagement might invite invasion; so long as the force remains, it acts as a strong deterrent to Guatemalan adventurism--more so now in view of British military performance in recovering the Falkland Islands.

Both the Belizean and British governments are anxious to spread the security burden. At independence, Canada and five Caribbean Commonwealth nations agreed that, in the event that Belize was threatened with external attack, they would consult with the Belizean and British governments and if necessary, take appropriate action. More recently, Prime Minister Price has asked Canada and the others to send troops if Guatemala invades. The United States agreed in January 1982 to provide training for the Defence Force in the United States.

For what it is worth, Belize's independence was endorsed 139-0 in the United Nations. Guatemala has few friends there and Belize could probably count on moral support at least if Guatemala attacked. If required, peace-keeping forces could be provided to prevent cross-border attacks: Canada, and the other guarantor nations, probably would prefer a peacekeeping rather than a combat role.

#### Prospects

For the immediate future Belize's prospects are promising. Guatemala, beset by its advanced insurgency, cannot spare the time or the troops to harass Belize and, in any case, is unlikely to do so as long as this involves confrontation with superior British troops. During the summer of 1982 the Guatemalans indicated a willingness to reopen talks with the British (although not the Belizeans) on resolving the long-standing dispute. It remains to be seen whether these talks lead anywhere, if--indeed--they occur at all.

The long term is less certain. Much depends on the country's ability to overcome its economic difficulties. The other wars in Central America will continue to be a cause for concern. Refugees from those conflicts bring their squabbles with them when they flee to Belize. These, combined with economic difficulties, could destabilize the

country. Moreover, if the dispute with Guatemala is not resolved satisfactorily soon, it is possible that a revolutionary successor regime in Guatemala, seeking to unite its warring peoples, could use the Belize issue as a rallying point. Direct invasion would be less likely than an attempt to mobilize discontented elements in Belize under a revolutionary banner, with covert Guatemalan assistance.

The challenges to Belizean security are diffuse and unpredictable. But one thing is clear: Belize cannot face those challenges alone.

## CHAPTER TEN

### TRENDS IN CENTRAL AMERICAN CONFLICT

#### Indigenous Factors

In his timely and well argued paper, Soviet Strategy in Latin America (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1982), Robert S. Leiken argues that Central American revolutionary movements were not created by the Soviet Union and Cuba but are an historical product of Central America's backward, repressive, oligarchical, and dependent societies. But Leiker points out how, as regional social forces took up age-old grievances, and as democratic channels were blocked or suppressed, the Soviet Union and Cuba were not slow to recognize and then to seize their opportunity.

Leiken's assessment is borne out by the case studies in this report. Revolution and insurgency are flourishing or have flourished in backward, repressive, oligarchical and dependent Somozist Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. It was probably inevitable that Fidel Castro would have supported such movements, whether he had embraced Marxism-Leninism or not, and whether he was under virtual Soviet control or not: the dimension that is new is the Soviet Union's involvement. Moscow's conversion to the support of violent revolution in the Western Hemisphere, whether springing from disillusionment over the "peaceful road" or from the Nicaraguan example, does indeed change the nature of insurgency and counterinsurgency in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also raises the stakes in superpower terms. On the one hand the West may stand to lose more than is safe by failing to contain Soviet-backed challenges;

on the other, it may easily overlook the social, political and economic foundations of such insurgency and become the champion of regional reaction.

#### The Soviet Dimension

The Soviet decision to support revolution was accompanied by reconciliation between Leninist and Guevara-style tactics, and between Moscow-aligned and Castro-leaning Marxists. Both, of course, were preceded and made possible by the absorption of Castro's Cuba within Moscow's empire. The new policy illustrates the U.S.S.R's more aggressive external line as well as that country's pragmatic acceptance of any tool or technique which is effective in supporting that line. In so far as it can be made to work, it is particularly useful to Moscow. The Politburo's iron hand is concealed within Castro's glove: local revolutionaries are less likely to be accused of becoming the agents of a new European imperialism: the romance and myth of Castro and Guevara are given full scope in regions suspicious of more distant ideologies.

But how realistic is the new Soviet policy? Will the victory in Nicaragua inevitably be followed by leftist victories in El Salvador and Guatemala? Can Honduras be toppled; and what about Costa Rica, Panama and Belize? Lenin's cautions about attempting revolution without appropriate "objective" and "subjective" conditions cannot have been thrown completely out of the window. And, in spite of his optimistic views on the galvanizing effects of the revolutionary foco, Guevara also understood the need for favourable circumstances:

Where a government has come to power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be promoted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted. (Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* [New York, Vintage, 1971], p. 2).

Thus both wings of the new Moscow-Havana alliance recognize the limitations of the violent road, a fact which is borne out by the continued commitment of the Moscow-aligned communist parties of Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama to the peaceful road.

A likely answer concerning Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama is that indigenous revolutionary forces will be encouraged to undermine domestic stability in these countries by acts of terrorism, while grassroots organizations are developed in readiness for objective conditions to develop. The Castro elements will do the killing while the communists organize. Then, when the time is ripe, the two parties will form one central command and will lead a broad front of social-democratic appearance.

Another answer has to be considered, however, one that is suggested by the belligerence of Moscow's rhetoric towards the region and by the extent of Cuba's military build-up. If, for example, Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutionaries were to succeed, and those countries joined the "socialist" camp, and if Honduras could be plunged into internal war, Cuban troops might intervene as they did in Africa to sweep aside all opposition, whether in Honduras, Costa Rica, Belize and--possibly--Panama. Since the last is an objective American interest, the potential in this scenario for regional conflict to turn global is severe. Moscow's role, of course, would be carefully concealed, and her propaganda apparatus would isolate and discredit those who pointed towards it.

Of the two possible answers, the first is a virtual certainty, although the outcome is not. The second possibility is at present rather remote, because the risks are probably too high for either Havana or Moscow to accept. Nevertheless, if the conditions seemed right, it could possibly materialize.



### Revolutionary Conditions

An examination of objective and subjective conditions therefore seems relevant. In making the rough assessment that follows, reference has been made to the works of Lenin, Huntington and Elliott-Bateman, and to a lesser extent of Mao, Castro, Guevara, Debray, Draper and de Tocquoville (see Charters, Graham, Tugwell, Trends in Low Intensity Conflict, ORAE Extramural Paper No. 16 [Ottawa, 1981], pp. 13-23). The knowledge and experience of this Centre's analysts has then been applied to the development of a revolutionary indicator list against which the conditions prevailing in the seven regional countries can be checked. Nicaragua has been listed twice: once in its revolutionary state prior to Somoza's overthrow; once as it stands today. Since Nicaragua's revolution seems to have become the standard by which all others in Central America are judged, this arrangement may be useful.

The check list is composed of symbols. A white circle indicates the absence of the relevant condition; a black circle means that it exists; a circle half black and half white implies that the condition is present to some degree, but is not fully developed. All these judgements are subjective and should therefore be treated with reserve. The half-and-half symbol is deliberately restricted in its meaning. It would be possible to show quarters or smaller fractions, but such finesse would promote the false impression that analysts can measure these conditions with accuracy. The closest that we dare go in our estimates is to suggest a partial existence of a condition. The indicator list is on pp. 242-247.

Although in such an instance as Nicaragua during her revolution the large proportion of black circles indicating the presence of objective, subjective or geographical conditions made Sandinist victory very likely, the chart is

































nevertheless not to be read as an indicator of success or failure. The sole white circle, indicating the unbroken loyalty of Somoza's National Guard, held back the tide for a period. This revolutionary disadvantage was finally overcome by superior military force. This example points to a key factor necessarily omitted from the chart--the correlation of forces.









































#### Correlation of Forces

In Marxist-Leninist political analysis, the correlation of forces (sootsheniye sil) is always the predominant factor. The Soviet theoretician maintains that the correlation of forces provides a conceptual framework more conducive to accurate measurement than the Western "balance of power" approach. He lists four factors in the correlation: economic, military, political and international movements. He also includes such subjective factors as the cohesion of communist parties and the level of ideological conviction (see R. Judson Mitchell, Ideology of a Superpower [Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1982], pp. 11-13). In recent years, the Soviets have attached increasing importance to the military dimension of the correlation. It is as though the failure of Soviet economics, ideology and culture had forced them to lean against the one wall of their house that is still standing. "Long war" theories may have suffered from improved non-Marxist performance in counterinsurgency, encouraging the type of Soviet support that won rapid victories in Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, Cambodia and, in the final months, Nicaragua. If such an emphasis is justified, then it points to the crucial importance in Central American rebellions of arms supplies.

#### International Aspects

































Although not new, the internationalizing of these insurgencies has seemed an original departure in recent








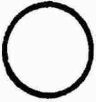











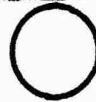

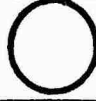










	<u>INDICATORS</u>				OBJECTIVE
	1	2	3	4	
COUNTRIES	Political institutions are incapable of providing channels for the participation of new social forces in politics and of new elites in government. Rulers have lost touch with reality.	Considerable changes have occurred in the economic base of society causing similar changes in social grouping. The regime therefore cannot maintain its rule in an unchanged form.	The oppressed classes are aware of their condition and begin to react..	The regime allies itself with a foreign power, thus foregoing nationalist credentials.	
Nicaragua under Somoza					
Nicaragua under Sandinists					
El Salvador					
Guatemala					
Honduras					
Costa Rica					
Panama					
Belize					

CONDITIONS			SUBJECTIVE CONDITIONS	
5	6	7	8	9
The regime moves towards partial liberalization, thus weakening its control, but fails to satisfy demands for reform.	Historical or cultural influences have steeped the community in a violent tradition.	Natural or manmade disasters, such as severe economic recession, earthquake, prolonged strikes, crop failure, etc., undercut rising expectations, cause infrastructure breakdowns, and heighten class contradictions.	Revolutionary leadership emerges.	Revolutionary elite demonstrates credible military prowess, and reinforce the contradictions in serial 7.
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				

	SUBJECTIVE			
	10	11	12	13
	Leaders create grass-roots infrastructure and a legal front organization.	Rebel domestic propaganda undercuts the regime's credibility and legitimacy.	"Education" and a popular platform draw mass support for the revolution.	Rebels form strong intelligence capability.
COUNTRIES				
Nicaragua under Somoza				
Nicaragua under Sandinists				
El Salvador				
Guatemala				
Honduras				
Costa Rica				
Panama				
Belize				

## CONDITIONS

14	15	16	17
"Youth" is alienated from the regime and backs the revolution, giving it a generational dimension.	Stabilizing cultural elements such as the Church withdraw support from the regime.	An alliance is formed between the urban middle-class intelligentsia and the urban proletariat.	The alliance extends to include the peasants.
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

	SUBJECTIVE CONDITIONS			GEOPOLITICAL
	18	19	20	21
COUNTRIES	A political organization emerges which is independent of social forces yet capable of manipulating them. This "vanguard" party appeals to all classes and groups. To achieve formal unity, an opposition "broad front" is formed.	Regardless of ideological appeal, the vanguard party also captures the nationalistic standard.	Rebel overseas propaganda influences international perceptions, isolating the regime.	Armed forces loyalty is undermined.
Nicaragua under Somoza				
Nicaragua under Sandinists				
El Salvador				
Guatemala				
Honduras				
Costa Rica				
Panama				
Belize				

## GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS

22	23	24	25
Geographical conditions favour the insurgents.	Sanctuary is available in neighbouring countries.	Arms supply is provided by countries favouring the rebels.	The regime is isolated from outside assistance by international pressures.



times. The technique was developed during the Spanish Civil War and repeated in Vietnam and unsuccessfully in such a relatively minor conflict as the Dhofar rebellion in Oman. The world correlation of force is made to support the local balance of military power. The pattern that emerges from the case studies is as follows:

1. Terrorism deprives the target regime of the confidence of the financial community and forces it into economic dependence.
2. The regime's counterinsurgency operations are exposed as an indiscriminate reign of terror (which, of course, they may well be) and the country is blacklisted by the Soviet fronts and, through them, by the New Left and liberals in the West. The non-aligned and the UN are enlisted.
3. The regime turns to its friends for financial and military help.
4. Such friends endure domestic upheaval and international censure if they provide the needed help.
5. As the insurgency grows, the regime's response becomes more desperate, providing more ammunition for its enemies abroad.
6. The rebels form a broad front claiming democratic and reformist credentials and appeal for recognition and support from "progressive" nations and groups within nations.
7. The regime's friends are isolated and discredited. To maintain minimal domestic cohesion, such friends attach conditions to financial and economic assistance which are, in the circumstances, virtually impossible to meet.
8. Under diplomatic and propaganda cover by the "progressives", the Soviet Union and Cuba, now assisted by Nicaragua, supply arms. Under diplomatic and

propaganda pressure by the same forces, the friends deny such help. The correlation of force tips decisively in the rebels' favour.

That is the pattern: whether it can always be made to work is another matter. The isolation of the target regime calls for real repression on its part; propaganda can expand and amplify, but it needs a basis of fact to work effectively. In Honduras the level of repression is of questionable intensity to make a credible case for isolation. In El Salvador, where the regime's behaviour has been everything an opposition propagandist could possibly ask for, there has been the problem of an almost equally unpopular rebel force. Only in Guatemala are there the makings of a repeat performance of the Nicaraguan model.

Moreover, the pattern can defeat its own long-term objective by its short-term success. If, in Guatemala and El Salvador, American assistance is withheld, the prime cause will have been outrageous behaviour on the regimes' behalf. Ironically, the international pressure and propaganda laboriously concocted in Havana, Mexico City and Moscow might, in such circumstances, help to save the Americans from commitments and actions they might later regret and from which the Soviets might benefit. For all the international overtones imposed by Soviet methodology, the insurgent struggles of the region remain firmly rooted in national histories and cultures, and will not always respond as required by either Moscow or Washington.

#### Internal Aspects

Whereas the international aspects of Central American insurgency seem to conform to a pattern, the internal arrangements are less easily stereotyped. Here it is the Soviets who may be misled. The Nicaraguan revolution that inspired their new policy was not, as they may have imagined, an ideological movement. It was, as so aptly described, a

national mutiny against the incumbent regime. The vanguard party was Marxian, but the slow and difficult pace of Sovietization since victory underscores their limited popularity. Such conditions may be repeating themselves in Guatemala. They are likely to lead to revolutionary victory, but not necessarily to Marxist-Leninist supremacy in the aftermath.

In El Salvador, the rebels are much more to Moscow's and Havana's liking, but this quality makes them much less appealing to the majority population. Successive regimes have acted with appalling disregard for human rights. Yet this does not seem to have lowered government standing to the point where an elitist, foreign-backed, militarized revolutionary alternative, bearing an alien, anti-Christian ideology, is seen as attractive. As for the FDR front, this apparently impresses foreigners more than Salvadorans. This is not to say that a majority would not prefer a moderate, centrist government, were such an option a realistic possibility. In conditions of violent polarization, this is not very likely.

Honduras has social and economic problems that make it vulnerable to destabilization. In Costa Rica and Panama similar difficulties lie a little further beneath the surface. None has the kind of regime that is likely to generate a national mutiny. Insurgencies, therefore, will need to be created by elite, ideological, foreign-backed groups, and this will pose problems for revolutionary leaderships.

#### Counterinsurgency

A pattern of counterinsurgency is visible in Guatemala and El Salvador, being similar to what occurred in Nicaragua under Somoza. It is to be hoped that this will not become a regional pattern; indeed there are grounds to believe otherwise. These three countries are or were easily the worst governed of the area and their armed forces had

become accustomed long before the recent upheavals to being used as the henchmen of autocrats. Political and military leadership in such circumstances have tended to be one and the same. The link between political and military power is present too in Honduras and Panama, but not in Costa Rica or Belize. Fortunately, neither the Honduran nor Panamanian armies have earned the fear and hatred of the people. There is, therefore, a possibility that the old pattern of counter-insurgency can be restricted to El Salvador and Guatemala, and that a better pattern can be established elsewhere, should this become necessary.

The old established pattern is based on terror. This form of rule goes further back into history and has had wider application than any alternative. In one form or another, rule by terror is practised today in two-thirds of the world's countries--all those which are not democracies. But while most of the single-party undemocratic regimes conceal the nature of their rule behind elaborate legal facades, and mobilize their populations to present appearances of apparent cohesion, many Latin American regimes have neglected all cosmetic precautions. Moreover, these regimes tend to be brutal and inefficient. They use terror gratuitously, indiscriminately, and to no useful purpose. It becomes their last and only legitimacy. They lack the skills developed in many sophisticated single-party states which involve the use of carrots as well as sticks, and which confine terror to the margins where it lurks as a deterrent.

The sophisticated form of terror-based counter-insurgency can be seen under development in Nicaragua. By creating a huge army and a massive militia, backed up by block committees and an efficient secret police, the Sandinists doubtless hope to deter rebellion and crush any opposition which nevertheless emerges. Their increasingly controlled news media and their Soviet- and Cuban-provided

international propaganda organizations can be relied upon to present an acceptable account of such actions to domestic and world audiences. Sandinista fronts will mount demonstrations which project an image of massive popular support, so that opposition groups are branded "enemies of the people". If a threat were to grow severe, terror could be unleashed selectively, purposefully, and with the veneer of "revolutionary justice". This is how Castro has ruled Cuba for more than 30 years. The technique is reinforced by other elements of Sovietization, such as ideological indoctrination, isolation from the outside world, economic dependence upon the state, the party apparatus, the surreptitious invocation of nationalist pride, and the banishment of unbelievers. But without terror as its constant and readily available servant, this counterinsurgency pattern would cease to function.

In contrast to both terror-based systems, the democratic regime rests its counterinsurgency firmly on the rule of law. Terrorism and revolution are seen as illegal political actions, punishable in the courts. Public safety may require military action to restrain the insurgents and to overcome them when they resist, but basically, counterinsurgency is seen as a police action. Court convictions followed by a return to normality are the desired ends. By acting within the law, and consequently resisting any temptation to use counter terror, the government, police and military retain the respect of the population. The insurgents are branded enemies of the people. Such a system can flourish only in a functioning democracy, and it needs appropriate organization. The police must operate independently, as agents of the courts, not under military control. The military, when they deploy in support, should work under their own command, but must be accountable in law for their every action. The government must retain total

control over all aspects of counterinsurgency, which will include economic and social initiatives, and political policy, as elements every bit as important as the use of force.

Few counterinsurgency campaigns in history have matched this ideal, and to expect a perfect application in Central America today is unrealistic. Nevertheless, as the model to be encouraged, the democratic response outlined above is the correct one. All moral considerations apart, it is the only model compatible with a democratic future. A so-called counterinsurgency "victory" achieved by the methods of present-day El Salvador or Guatemala would have to be consolidated by a continuing reign of terror. Any subsequent softening or liberalization would likely unleash a new insurgency.

Within the democratic framework, there is a need for various skills and assets. These include:

1. a first-class intelligence organization under unified control;
2. well trained police;
3. a disciplined, professional army, good at operating in small units and able to beat insurgents at their own game;
4. government infrastructure that supports the campaign by excellent and timely performance in all fields, particularly in the courts, the administration of the economy and in all matters that touch the daily lives of the people;
5. strong and credible public information, domestic and international; and
6. ability to outmatch the insurgents and their fronts in the political field.

One aspect of the political battle is the ability to mix force with negotiation. Since any revolution is a

struggle for allegiance, the government must be constantly seeking to extend its constituency by gaining the centre ground. Rebel fronts should, if possible, be persuaded to defect and to back the regime, thus isolating the hard-core revolutionaries. This can only be accomplished by a process of negotiation. The government has to be careful that it is not discredited or divided in such activities; hence the value of stand-off arrangements, which can be disowned if they go wrong. Direct contact is established only at the concluding stage.

The immediate prospects of Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama and Belize being capable of matching this model are mixed. Only in Panama is the intelligence function well developed. The distinction between police and military is clear in Costa Rica and Belize, because the former has no army and the latter relies largely on the United Kingdom for defence. Security force training is hampered in Panama and Honduras by the military's political ambitions, which undermine professionalism. The efficiency of government institutions, even in times of peace, is questionable in all four countries. Under the strain of insurgency, considerable effort and leadership would be required to keep them functioning well. As for political skills, the outstanding moderate politician of the region was Omar Torrijos. Since his death, Panama has lurched to the right. Honduras has moved in the same direction. These two countries could easily abandon the democratic response model if events were pressing, and would then be incapable of operating efficiently in the political field. Costa Rica and Belize might retain moderate leadership. The test would be one of robustness. These are not uniformly negative assessments, but nor do they justify much optimism.

### Reflections

In policy statements issued in February and April 1982, the U.S. Government stressed that its objectives in the region were to defend national security interests and support freedom. High value was attached to the "power of democracy". It was pointed out that Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador had formed the Central American Democratic Community and that Venezuela, Colombia and the United States had agreed to support this initiative (Thomas O. Enders, Assistant Secretary for Inter American Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 1 February, and before the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on 21 April 1982).

Doubts may be expressed over the credibility of any Democratic Community that contains a nation such as El Salvador. The likely conclusion reached by many observers is that an anti-communist stance is the only qualification deemed necessary for such a title. Given the importance of the political and international factors in the correlation of forces, and considering the operational limitations of the terroristic response to insurgency, the continued American support for anti-democratic regimes of the reactionary right may be judged as mistaken. Critics have for years made this judgement in moral terms. The restrained American policy towards Guatemala indicates that these issues are not neglected in Washington. Our studies add to the moral arguments the practical suggestion that countering insurgency without heeding the political and international factors is a recipe for failure.

Without trespassing too far into broader policy issues, it is for consideration whether the anti-communist theme serves Western and regional interests well. If it were to be replaced by the narrower but more positive theme



of promoting democracy, a broader domestic and international consensus might be formed. The difficulty of course is that the shunning of El Salvador and Guatemala, which such a policy switch might involve, would leave holes in the regional defence of such strategic interests as the Canal and the exclusion of foreign bases. There are, however, other policy options that could look after these interests, of which a reinvigorated Munroe Doctrine is one.

This study has made unflattering comments on anti-democratic regimes and rebel groups alike. It exposes the broad front policies practised by Marxist-Leninists as shams, even though, within those broad fronts, there are many sincere democrats whose energies are needed in building the region's political future. There is an apparent need for U.S. allies to face the realities of the Central American situation and to avoid the simplistic conclusions that inform much of our public opinion. Most importantly, the white and black hat interpretation has to be resisted. Because a government is reactionary and brutal, it does not follow that the rebel leadership constitutes a desirable alternative. A commitment to democracy should guide our attitudes, not merely a commitment to change.

A second need is for America's allies to recognize the Soviet and Cuban roles in militarizing the region, with the potential that this may have for conflict in the future. Whilst it is correct, as well as fashionable, to keep the indigenous roots of internal conflicts in focus, this vision can become as myopic as the exclusively East-West interpretation if it is allowed to blind us to outside activities.

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