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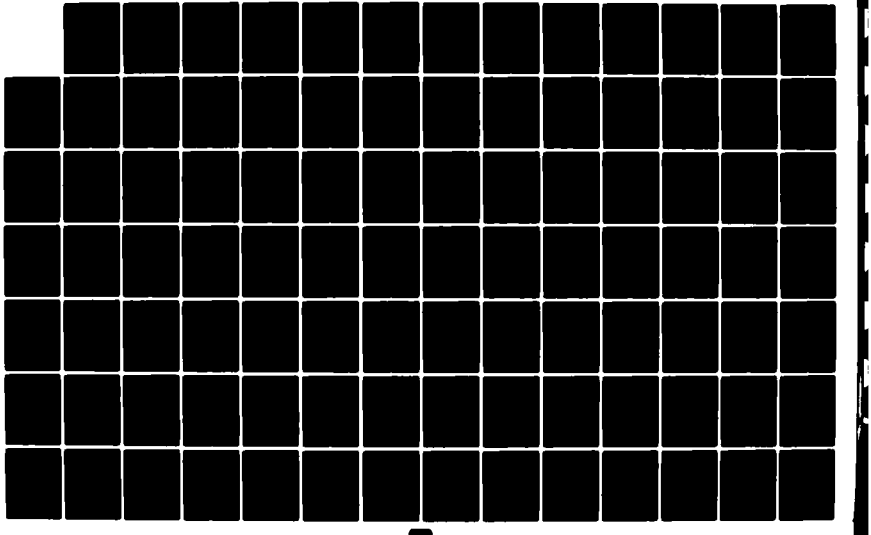

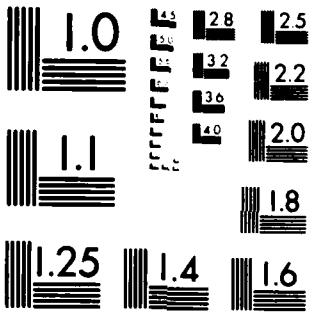

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Strategy in Latin American Revolutionary Politics

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Satisfactory--November 21, 1983

A thesis presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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STRATEGY IN LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

BY

HOWARD JOHN GENET

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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STRATEGY IN LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

By

Howard John Genet

December 1983

Chairman: Andres Suarez
Major Department: Latin American Studies

In Latin America, polemics concerning revolutionary strategy emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, it was only after the Cuban revolutionary victory that the topic acquired real relevance. Starting with the Cuban model, and under the influence of their own revolutionary experiences, theoreticians and guerrilla leaders strove to find the correct strategy to enhance victory. The Nicaraguan revolution was no exception, and its victory is explained by the adoption of the correct revolutionary strategy, labeled Popular Revolutionary War.

The purposes of this thesis are 1) to study the process that has led to the elaboration of this most recent formulation of strategy, and 2) to examine how the Nicaraguan victory fits the strategic model postulated by the theoreticians of Guerra Popular Revolucionaria. The variables emphasized in this study are those identified

as the most significant components of contemporary revolutionary strategy in Latin America: objective conditions, ideology, leadership, party-army relations, U.S. policy, and Soviet influence. These variables are analyzed in the context of four divergent revolutionary experiences: Cuba 1956-1959, Bolivia 1966-1967, Guatemala 1962-1968, and Nicaragua 1977-1979. The data are obtained from primary and secondary sources produced by theoreticians, historians and participants of each experience.

In the final analysis, these variables support the theory of popular revolutionary war. In the long run, the war will be based on mass support. The guerrillas will fight to incorporate the population into their organizations and ally with existing groups. They will not fight initially to seize power, but to gain and secure a broad base among the people. Only when a substantial number of the people have been mobilized and partially organized will there be an attempt to take power.

Chairman

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Revolution is a term commonly used by social scientists to imply a process of rapid social, economic and political change which entails physical violence and results in a restructuring of the relationship between classes. The old privileged class is displaced by a formerly subservient class.

By this definition, true revolution in Latin America is less common than might be expected. Though many Latin American countries have indeed endured unconstitutional changes in government, few have experienced the reordering of their social and economic structures. History reveals that even the most sincere and formative attempts of revolution have little chance of success. More often than not, revolutionary movements are thwarted in infancy or defeated in the course of their endeavor. Yet, the revolutionary process continues to be nurtured in many Latin American communities. Part of the reason for this resolve is that structural change through revolution is perceived as a viable solution for the impoverished social conditions which plague much of the region.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the contemporary revolutionary phenomena, at least since the Russian Revolution, is the belief that in order to be successful, revolutions have to be promoted, organized and fought following certain rules

and principles. In short, revolutionary victory depends on the adoption of a correct formula or revolutionary strategy. Since strategy is the most significant component of revolutionary movements, determining their failure or success, it is surprising that little literature has been devoted to the analysis of revolutionary strategy as an entity in its own right.

Although most writers are conscious of the problems of strategy, the majority have only dealt implicitly with the subject.[1] Their work reveals that common features of revolution can be identified, e.g., organization, tactics, violence, coercion, persuasion, ideology, internal grievance and external influence. However, they fail to explain how these features are combined and converted into an effective insurgent operation. More importantly, they do not adequately address how the revolutionary movement survives and even prevails over a large-scale conventional force supported by a government whose power, wealth and control are seemingly invincible. Inquiries such as these can only be answered by understanding the strategy adopted by the revolutionaries.

Two contemporary works which attempt to analyze revolutionary strategy are provided by J. Bower Bell and Mostafa Rejai.[2] Each writer proposes a concept of revolutionary strategy and examines some specific cases. Rejai defines strategy "as the overall plan for the operationalization, implementation, direction, coordination and control of the manipulables of political revolution. Strategy refers to

all actions, policies, instruments and apparatus necessary for mounting a revolutionary upheaval. It entails the deployment of men, materiel, ideas, symbols and forces in pursuit of revolutionary objectives."[3] Briefly, strategy is the overall plan for the deployment of human and material resources necessary to seize political power.

In Latin America, polemics concerning revolutionary strategy emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, it was only after the Cuban revolutionary victory that the topic acquired real relevance. Starting with the Cuban model, and under the influence of their own revolutionary experiences, theorists and guerrilla leaders strove to find the correct strategy able to enhance victory. The Nicaraguan Revolution was no exception.

On July 17, 1979, after eighteen years of guerrilla war and a year and a half of massive civil insurrection, Anastasio Somoza Debayle fled Nicaragua terminating one of the longest dictatorships in Latin America. Despite its powerful National Guard and broad institutional backing, the Somoza regime was thoroughly defeated. A coalition of Nicaraguan social forces under the politico-military leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional--FSLN) found the means to destroy a dynasty, once considered virtually invulnerable. Although there had been three tendencies or factions in the Frente Sandinista, each promoting a different strategy, after July 1979 the revolutionary victory is explained by the adoption of the correct revolutionary strategy--Guerra Popular Revolucionaria.

While the central objective here is to understand revolution with particular reference to strategy, this paper examines the revolutionary process which has evolved in Latin America leading to the elaboration of this most recent formulation. It will also explore how the Nicaraguan victory fits the strategic model postulated by the theorecticians of Guerra Popular Revolucionaria.

In order to codify the historical evolution of revolutionary strategy in Latin America, this study examines a series of variables in the context of four divergent revolutionary experiences: Cuba, 1956-1959; Bolivia, 1966-1967; Guatemala, 1962-1968; and Nicaragua, 1977-1979. These four revolutions have been chosen in the light of certain criteria. All four took place within a relatively short time frame (24 years). They share the same general geographic location (Latin America) which will enhance the applicability of the variables. It should be noted that although not all of these revolutions were successful, it is not the intent of this paper to evaluate them in terms of their accomplishments or shortcomings. What is important is their contribution to the development of revolutionary strategy.

From extensive descriptive analyses, useful generalizations about important aspects and commonalities among revolutions have emerged. Bell, Rejai and others[4] have reviewed this literature and identified several key topics such as preconditions, accelerators, leadership, organization, ideology, etc. These concepts help formulate the subsequent variables

which will trace the evolution of revolutionary strategy and enhance cross-national analysis and comparison. We have chosen to emphasize as the most significant variables in this study the following: objective conditions, ideology, leadership, relations between the party and the army, U.S. policy and Soviet influence.

Objective conditions simply stated are the sources and causes of revolution. The conditions of revolution have been systematically studied by numerous scholars resulting in a variety of sophisticated theories.[5] Although it is not within the scope of this paper to examine the theoretical formulations and empirical findings of these scholars, it is important to realize that revolutions do not occur haphazardly or purely spontaneously. The reasons for why and when revolutionary situations arise lie in a complex of social, political, economic and psychological factors. Not all conditions will appear in every case, nor will the intensity be the same in every situation. What must be clear, is that strategy entails the manipulation of the conditions. A revolutionary movement must create or exploit the objective conditions in the pursuit of its objectives both before and during the insurrection.

Ideology is defined as an emotion-laden system of ideas, beliefs, myths, and values that bind a society. A revolutionary ideology is designed to appeal to emotion with the objective of mobilizing the masses.[6] To be successful and appeal to the largest group possible, ideology must be broad and flexible. General ideals, such as nationalism, tend to cut

across class lines and have a better chance of attracting divergent groups. To this end, revolutionary ideology should provide a program based on the immediate needs of the people and offer a more equitable alternative to the existing social order.

Competent leadership is indispensable to any revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, few studies have been done on the characterisitcs, social backgrounds, occupations and education of revolutionary leaders.[7] Apparently, they tend to be young and come from the same social class they seek to overthrow, often representing disaffected factions from within the political elite itself. This implies that revolutionary leaders have lower-middle to middle-class origins and, with respect to the norm of society, are well educated. Regardless of their background, it is clear that revolutionary leaders need not only be able to lead, but must demonstrate skills in organization and propaganda as well as politics.

Revolutionary theory, prior to the Cuban Revolution, stipulated that the party was to be created first and then prepare to launch the revolution. It was understood and generally accepted that the army was to be subordinate to the party. The party not only dictated political policy, but controlled and coordinated military operations. Additionally, it was the responsibility of the party to train, equip, supply and indoctrinate the armed forces. In other words, the guerrilla band was the vanguard, but it was not the center of the revolution. Before Castro, the traditional left in Latin America

had been relatively weak, European-oriented, outwardly-dependent, gradualist and reformist. Following the Soviet adaptation of Leninism, they insisted on waiting until conditions were right for revolution.[8] This attitude forced the more ambitious revolutionaries to divorce themselves from traditional left-wing groups.

U.S. policy in Latin America has revolved around the desire to protect U.S. national security and economic interests, including such goals as regional stability, economic growth and the promotion of democracy. Due to the rise of Soviet influence in the region during the early 1960s, the United States also became determined not to allow communism to spread in the Western Hemisphere. U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict served to reinforce its preoccupation with communism in Latin America. The United States provided vast amounts of military aid and training to counterguerrilla forces, especially for Latin American governments that took a firm, tough line against communism. U.S. financial, military and moral backing often became critical to the fate of revolutions in Latin America.

Soviet influence in Latin America prior to the Cuban Revolution had been modest. Because of the area's geographic remoteness from Moscow and the traditional hegemony of the United States over the region, Soviet relations with Latin American countries were limited to their respective communist parties. After the Cuban Revolution, the Soviets seemed to believe that this style of revolution might be exported with

their help. However, this attitude came to an abrupt halt following the Cuban missile crisis, which made the Soviets realize the limits of their power in the area. They subsequently adopted a policy of "peaceful coexistence," a more cautious and devious drive toward world communism. Accordingly, they tended thereafter to sanction communist military adventures only when they could effectively control the risks.

In the next chapters, these variables will be systematically applied to four revolutionary experiences which took place in Latin America. Hopefully, this comparative analysis will allow more precise statements to be made about the casual interaction of these theoretical variables and contribute to a better understanding of the most recent strategic model--Guerra Popular Revolucionaria.

Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, "Patterns of Violence in World Politics," in Huntington, ed., Changing Patterns of Military Politics (New York: Free Press, 1962); Chalmers Johnson, Revolutionary Change (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), chap. 8; and Ted Robert Gurr, Why Men Rebel (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970).

2. J. Bower Bell, On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976); and even more explicit, Mostafa Rejai, The Comparative Study of Revolutionary Strategy (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1977).

3. Rejai, The Comparative Study, p. 31.

4. Carl Leiden and Karl M. Schmitt, The Politics of Violence in the Modern World (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968); Thomas H. Greene, Comparative Revolutionary Movements (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Claude E. Welch, Jr., and Mavis Brinker Taintor, eds., Revolution and Political Change (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury, 1972).

5. Harry Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal War," History and Theory, 3, 2 (1965); Chalmers Johnson, Revolution and the Social System (Stanford University: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1964); Gurr, Why Men Rebel, and Charles Tilley, From Mobilization (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

6. Rejai, The Comparative Study, pp. 36-38; Greene, Comparative Revolutionary Movements, pp. 51-58; Leiden and Schmitt, Politics of Violence, pp. 97-112.

7. Greene, Comparative Revolutionary Movements, pp. 16-32; Leiden and Schmitt, Politics of Violence, pp. 75-89; Welch and Taintor, Revolution and Political Change, pp. 197-249; Rejai, Comparative Study, pp. 31-36.

8. The three conditions described by Lenin are 1) the ruling classes can no longer rule the old way, 2) popular dissention against the regime must be at the breaking point, and 3) there must be a subsequent increase in the activity of the masses.

CHAPTER II
CUBAN EXPERIENCE (1956-1959)

Objective Conditions

Prior to its revolution, Cuba appeared to be a somewhat calm vacation paradise and gambling playground for thousands of people fleeing the cold winters of the United States. Although poor in many respects, in the 1950s Cuba was among the richer countries of Latin America. Based on the normal criteria for assessing a country's level of development, Cuba ranked below only Argentina and Uruguay.[1] However, a closer examination reveals pertinent facts.

The key to Cuban society was the sugar industry. It employed nearly one-third of the total labor force of about 1.7 million. Although the $3.25 daily salary for the best-paid sugar worker was considered high by Latin American standards, employment was seasonal. Due to the nature of the sugar crop, after the five months of harvest, 500,000 people could expect to be unemployed for the rest of the year. The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that in 1953, for example, Cuban unemployment rose to 20 percent of the labor force during the rainy or dead season after a minimum of 8.4 percent during the height of the sugar harvest season.[2]

As might be expected in a one-crop agriculture, land ownership was highly concentrated. Seventy-five percent of

the agricultural land was owned by eight percent of the property owners, i.e., rich Cuban families and United States companies.[3] This further frustrated the seasonally unemployed because their access to land was limited.

With little industrial base, Cuba relied heavily on its sugar products to earn foreign exchange. Between 1952 and 1954 about 35 percent of its national income came from exports and 90 percent of these exports came from sugar. This export-led economy made Cuba extremely vulnerable to world market fluctuations. "When demand and prices abroad are favorable, all sectors of the Cuban economy are prosperous, but when conditions are unfavorable, the economy has very little to cushion the effects."[4] Moreover, Cuba was highly dependent on the United States for most of its other trade. From 1951-1953 about 59 percent of the value of Cuban exports went to the United States, and about 76 percent of the value of its imports came from the United States.[5]

The origins of the revolution are found in the fact that Cuban society was not so much underdeveloped as stagnant. The economic dependence of Cuba on the United States, the one-crop seasonal nature of the Cuban economy, the discontent of the unemployed and underemployed contributed to a frustration and resentment creating the preconditions for revolution. Yet, it was Batista himself who provided the precipitant.

On March 10, 1952, Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar, an ex-sergeant of the Cuban Army, overthrew the constitutional government of President Carlos Prio Socarrás. Batista's

emergence to power was in the form of a ruthless dictator. He immediately censored the press and used the police and army to get rid of his opposition.

Resistance to Batista's harsh rule developed quickly, particularly among university students who protested this violation of the 1940 Constitution.[6] On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro, then a lawyer, led a group of youths in an assault on the Moncado Army Barracks in Santiago. This attack not only gained recognition for Castro, it inaugurated the period of violence which would result in his becoming the national leader.

Ideology

The Cuban Revolution was not based on a preset philosophical program or ideology. Its program was prompted by the rupture of constitutional order, and evolved in an opportunistic fashion. The foundation of the platform was the issue of restoring the Constitution of 1940 and holding elections after Batista's overthrow. To this end, Castro and his followers continuously challenged the legitimacy of Fulgencio Batista's exercise of power.

In his pursuit of power, Castro was conscious not to antagonize any of the class elements in Cuban society because he needed to maintain a broad coalition of support. His propaganda sought to discredit the Batista regime in the eyes of all men, regardless of their ideological persuasions. In order to enlist their support and sympathy, he exploited their

resentment of Batista, promised to sponsor free elections and civil liberties.[7] He also did not want to alienate the business sector and avoided specific statements of social, economic, and foreign policy which might prejudice their allegiance. Not only did he accelerate the disillusionment of the Cuban population with Batista, but he managed to place the U.S. government in a defensive posture.

Before the invasion, while in exile, Castro traveled to the United States soliciting financial aid for the struggle while simultaneously prejudicing U.S. support for Batista. During the struggle, Cuban exiles in the United States took up the banner to insure the flow of money and to influence public opinion against U.S. arms shipments to Batista.[8] Their propaganda was based on the grounds that Batista was unworthy of aid from a government committed to the values of democracy. They accused him of exploiting Cuban nationalistic sentiments and held Batista to be an accomplice of foreign economic enterprise.[9] Eventually, the Batista regime was discredited both at home and abroad. A white paper published by the State Department in 1961 states in part, "The Cuban Revolution...succeeded because of the rejection of the regime by thousands of civilians behind the lines--a rejection which undermined the morale of the superior military forces of Batista and caused them to collapse from within."[10]

During the struggle, Castro neither expressed strong anti-American sentiments nor the ideas of Marxism. As late as 1959, an official of the Central Intelligence Agency

testified before a congressional subcommittee that the available evidence did not warrant the conclusion that Castro was a Communist.[11] There is no evidence that the idea of a Marxist state for Cuba was premeditated by Castro. It evolved after the revolution came to power.

Clearly, the ideology promoted by Castro was nationalistic in terms of the great freedom fighter José Marti, and democratic in terms of a desire to reestablish the 1940 Constitution.

Leadership

When one looks at the leadership of the Cuban Revolution, it would appear to have been a middle-class revolution. The leaders of the guerrilla troops could trace their backgrounds to middle-class professions. Fidel Castro was a lawyer and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was a doctor. The urban underground, which cooperated with the guerrillas, was also composed of persons with middle-class origins. Frank País was a teacher and José Antonio Echevarría was an architect student. Even the political figures who helped to finance the original Castro expedition were associated with middle-class interests.[12]

These leaders of the movement were young, educated and deeply committed. All had been politically active in student politics and had a group of followers loyal to them and to the movement to which he belonged. The leaders had different experiences which molded their charismatic styles.

Echevarría, as president of the FEU (Federation of University Students) and secretary-general of the DR (Directorio Revolucionario), was anti-dictatorship and nationalistic.[13] He fearlessly headed militant student demonstrations and plotted direct action against Batista. Frank País had a more humble origin, but appears to have been more utopian in his thinking. He went throughout Cuba organizing and strengthening the M-26-7. Fidel Castro, egocentric and authoritarian, had been schooled in violence and political graft through his early involvement in the action groups.[14] He diligently applied this knowledge as head of the Rebel Army and the 26th of July Movement.

During the initial phase of the insurrection, university students played an important role. They were the first to take up the banner against Batista to protest his coup as a violation of the 1940 Constitution. Subsequently, the students organized rallies, led demonstrations and called work stoppages to discredit the regime. However, the death of their popular leader Echevarría, following an attack on the Presidential Palace on March 13, 1957, had a detrimental impact on the student movement. Their role in the insurrection diminished and was superseded by Castro's guerrilla army.

Before the invasion in December 1956, the cadre of guerrilla leaders had been instructed and drilled in the tactics of guerrilla warfare in the mountains of Mexico by Alberto Bayo, a verteran of guerrilla warfare during the Spanish Civil War.[15] Although this short training period did

not qualify these men as trained fighters, they had become familiar with the principles of guerrilla tactics. Over a period of trial and error, they learned to adopt the doctrines of guerrilla warfare to the social conditions and the terrain in Cuba.

The Rebel Army managed to survive its initial phase and began to gain momentum by the end of one year. Publicity about the revolutionary leaders and their exploits served to attract fresh recruits, to create doubts about the authority or the established government, and to cultivate an image of irresistible guerrilla power. Because he was able to survive and flourish against insurmountable odds, Fidel Castro emerged as the single most important leader in the movement.

Party-Army Relations

Although Castro did not come to power with a real party orgainization, it is interesting to note that the classic Marxist theory, i.e., the army be subordinate to the party, became a major issue during the Cuban experience. The contention for power became a struggle between the guerrillas in the Sierra and the underground in the cities.

Castro formed the 26th of July Movement in 1955 intending to pursue a strategy of armed uprising leading to a revolutionary general strike. When he departed Mexico in the Granma on November 25, 1956, neither his political plan nor his plan of attack had matured much beyond the original design. His landing was to coincide with uprisings in provinces

throughout the island and culminate with a general strike which would collapse the Batista regime. There is evidence which indicates that Castro contemplated guerrilla warfare only as a contingency in the event his initial plan failed.[16] Whatever Castro's intentions, he realized that his mission would require an organized base of support within Cuba, and for this major task he relied on the talents of Frank País.

While supporting the guerrillas in the Sierra, País pursued a strategy based upon increasing terrorist activity in the urban areas, organizing cells within the labor movement, and executing a final revolutionary general strike coupled with widespread insurrectionary acts. He reorganized and tightened his control over the M-26-7 underground while expanding it from the major cities into rural areas. País' increasing popularity, dominance within the M-26-7, and a traditional belief that military affairs were subordinate to civilian direction became a challenge to Castro's bid for leadership of the revolution.

Castro, on the other hand, was gaining confidence in guerrilla warfare and its efficacy in toppling Batista. As the guerrillas consolidated and controlled more territory, they began to create an infrastructure and a government apparatus within their operational areas.[17]

This controversy between the "Sierra" and the "Llano" is effectively stated by Guevara:

> Differences over strategic concepts separated us. The Sierra was already confident of being able to carry the guerrilla struggle, to spread it to

> other places and thus, from the countryside, to encircle the cities held by dictatorship; by strangulation and attrition to provoke the breakup of the regime. The Llano took an ostensibly more revolutionary position, that of armed struggle in all the towns, culminating in a general strike which would topple Batista and allow the prompt taking of power.[18]

In the early part of 1957 several opposition groups had made serious and dramatic attempts to overthrow Batista. On July 12, Castro published the Manifiesto de la Sierra, which in part advocated the formation of a united front against Batista. In October the most important groups of the opposition met in Miami and drew up a program of action against Batista. Felipe Pazos, a former signer of the "Sierra Maestra Manifesto," represented the 26th of July Movement at the meeting and signed the so-called Miami Pact. Castro, from the mountains, soon condemned Pazos for signing such a document without consultation with the leaders and fighters in the Sierra and denounced the document as not acceptable to them.

Out of this dissension between the llano and sierra leaders within the M-26-7, it became apparent that in no circumstance would the former impose their will upon the latter. Indeed a united front and unified leadership were required to mobilize the masses and to break the structure of the established order. But this unified leadership had to be centered around those men who precisely constituted a credible threat to the dictator. By this time, Fidel Castro and his army had spent a full year in the sierras, and

Batista's forces had been unable to eliminate them. Consequently they had the right to lead others into the struggle.[19]

As the guerrillas continued to consolidate their position, they became the center of attraction for many in the opposition both in the cities and rural areas. When the Pact of Caracas was signed by most opposition leaders on July 20, 1958, the demands of the guerrilla army were accepted by all.[20] From this moment it was clear that the guerrilla force was not only the vanguard of the revolution, but was also its center. Henceforth, as recognized head of the M-26-7, Castro would make all of the political and military decisions for the revolution.

U.S. Policy

When Castro came to power in 1959, the total book value of U.S. business enterprises in Cuba was greater than in any other Latin American country, except Venezuela.[21] Moreover, U.S.-owned firms were especially prominent in certain industries. According to a Department of Commerce survey in 1956: "The only foreign investments of importance are those of the United States. American participation exceeds 90 percent of telephone and electric services, about 50 percent in public service railroads, and roughly 40 percent in raw sugar production."[22]

The sensitive nature of such a high level of U.S. investment in Cuba's public utilities provided a convenient political target for Castro. As early as 1953 he had called for

the nationalization of the telephone and electric companies.[23] Although he condemned the domination of Cuba by foreign economic interests, it was not interpreted as a call for socialism, but more understandably as one for nationalism. Moreover, as noted previously, Castro had gone to great lengths to gain sympathy and support from the United States. His public pronouncements about democracy, social justice, and economic reform served to demonstrate a friendly attitude toward the United States. Contradictions in his behavior and attitude blurred his image to such a degree that the United States was unable to label him either as a friend or foe. The United States had little basis for suspecting Castro of grave misgivings and was unwilling to commit its resources to enhance or retard his quest for power.

Another major factor influencing U.S. policy toward Cuba during its revolution was the negative image of Batista. The United States had provided support to his regime on the grounds that it was anti-communist. However, since Batista was increasingly portrayed as a corrupt ruler maintaining his authority by cruel and sadistic methods, the United States began doubting his reliability as an ally and curbed its assistance. The United States called on Batista to arrive at a peaceful solution, but since that meant he would have to step down, he resisted the proposals. Ultimately, the United States withdrew military support for the Batista regime and hastened its demise.[24]

The ambiguous images depicted by both Castro and Batista caused the United States to assume a neutral position. The

United States did not diplomatically abandon the Batista regime nor did it make available support to Castro. The power of the United States was effectively neutralized and Castro's guerrilla forces consolidated their triumph in Cuba without obligation to the United States.

Soviet Influence

The Soviet Union was not interested in Cuba during its revolution. Cuba was not within their recognized sphere of influence and any direct Soviet involvement would have escalated the Cold War. Any remote influence the Soviet Union might have exerted on the Cuban Revolution would have come through the very weak Cuban Communist Party, PSP.

Antonio Mella, one of the founders of the Cuban Communist Party in 1925, was its greatest figure.[25] After Mella's death in 1929, the Communist Party progressed from internal splits to collaboration with Batista. In true communist form, the party never dictated events, but merely profited from opportunities offered to it. At the time of the Cuban Revolution, the communists dismissed Castro as a 'putschista' although they did not support Batista.

After the underground failed to overthrow Batista by a general strike on April 9, 1958, the guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra became the focus of resistance to the regime. Castro, now well established as the decisive leader of the insurrection, welcomed the aid of every urban group, including the communists. The PSP, previously opposed to the insurrection,

by mid-1958 began to see the writing on the wall. The PSP's prior hesitation to participate in the revolution is expressed by Guevara:

> As I saw it from my vantage point as a guerrillero, this was the consequence of a strategic concept: The decision to struggle against imperialism and the excesses of the exploiting classes, together with an inability to envision the possibility of taking power.[26]

Although the Caracas Pact had rejected assistance offered by the Communist Party on the grounds that it was insignificant, the communists managed to establish a working relationship with Castro.[27] The PSP mobilized their cadres and sought to improve relations with the Frente Obrero Nacional (FON). Even when Castro authorized PSP members to join the rebel army, only a few obliged and by then the end was near.[28]

Clearly, Soviet influence was lacking and the role of the communists in the Cuban experience seems to have been small.

From the previous discussion of the Cuban experience, specific contributions to the revolutionary strategy for Guerra Popular Revolucionaria, can be identified. First, the guerrilla army became the most efficient instrument with which to oppose the established regime. Second, the efficacy of the guerrilla army increased the prestige of its leader in such a way that at a certain point the guerrilla leader became both the political and military leader of the revolutionary movement. Third, after the guerrillas became a significant military force, the concept of a united front became an important element of strategy. The guerrilla leader demonstrated great ability to

effect an alliance with other political opposition forces. And fourth, the main objective of the guerrilla army became the thorough destruction of the official army. Once this goal was achieved the revolution became radicalized because nothing remained of the old order.

Notes

1. Hugh Thomas, "The Origins of the Cuban Revolution," World Today 19 (October 1963):449.

2. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign Commerce, Investment in Cuba (Washington, D.C.: 1956), p. 5.

3. Robert Taber, M-26: The Biography of a Revolution (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), p. 303.

4. U.S. Department of Commerce, Investment in Cuba, pp. 7 and 139.

5. Leland L. Johnson, "U.S. Business Interests in Cuba and the Rise of Castro," World Politics 17 (April 1965):453.

6. Ramon L. Bonachea and Marta San Martin, The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959 (New Jersey: Transaction Inc., 1974), p. 14.

7. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

8. The embargo was not announced until March 1958. Ibid., p. 201.

9. Merle Kling, "Cuba: A Case Study of Unconventional Warfare," Military Review 42 (December 1962):15.

10. U.S., Department of State, Cuba, Dept. of State Publ. 7171, Inter-American Series 66 (Washington, D.C., April 1961), p. 3.

11. U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on the Judiciary to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws, Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean. 86th Cong., 1st sess., part 3, 1959, pp. 162-64.

12. Bonachea and San Martin, Cuban Insurrection, p. 66.

13. Ibid., p. 51.

14. Ibid., p. 13.

15. Ernesto Guevara, Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War, trans. Victoria Ortiz (New York: Merit Publishers, 1968), p. 38.

16. Andres Suarez, "The Cuban Revolution: The Road to Power," Latin American Research Review (Fall, 1972):10-11.

17. Guevara, Reminiscences, p. 206. Also on the importance of this future state apparatus see Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes, eds., "Guerrilla Warfare: A Method," Che:Selected Works of Ernesto Guevara (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969), p. 97.

18. Guevara, Reminiscences, p. 197., and Bonachea and Valdes, Che, p. 99.

19. Guevara, Reminiscences, p. 211-27.

20. This pact, which united all movements and all resources behind a common insurrectionary strategy, was a historic step on the road to the overthrow of the dictatorship. More important, by dictating the terms of the Pact of Caracas, Castro emerged as the one leader of the entire anti-Batista movement. Bonachea and San Martin, Cuban Insurrection, pp. 238-40.

21. The book value of U.S. business enterprises in Cuba in 1959 was $956 million. Source: U.S., Department of Commerce, U.S. Balance of Payments, Statistical Supplement (Washington, D.C., 1963; rev. edn.), p. 10.

22. U.S. Department of Commerce, Investments in Cuba, p. 10.

23. Jules Dubois, Fidel Castro, Rebel-Liberator or Dictator? (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959):70-71.

24. Bonachea and San Martin, Cuban Insurrection, p. 200.

25. Ibid., p. 41.

26. Guevara, Reminiscences, p. 208.

27. K. S. Karol, Guerrillas in Power, The Course of the Cuban Revolution (New York: Hill & Wang, 1970), pp. 151-54.

28. Guevara, Reminiscences, p. 208.

CHAPTER III
BOLIVIAN EXPERIENCE (1966-1967)

Objective Conditions

Bolivia represented a classic Latin American latifundia system prior to its National Revolution. Inspired by the leftist revolutionary MNR party (National Revolutionary Movement), a revolt erupted in April 1952 resulting in the installation of Dr. Victor Paz Estenssoro as president of a revolutionary regime. The Army's powers were suppressed, the tin mines nationalized, miners' and peasants' militias created; land reform was undertaken, large estates were confiscated and the Indian population was given the right to vote. During the period 1952 to 1964, Paz Estenssoro and his alternate, Hernán Siles Zuazo, struggled to fulfill the promise of their revolutionary party against overwhelming problems. The revolution suffered from a lack of trained administrators, inadequate financial resources and opposition by both internal and external elements.[1]

The Cold War was in full development and the United States was actively intervening in Guatemala to suppress a radical government. The MNR, very much aware of the potential consequences, did not want to antagonize the U.S. government toward their own revolution. They toned down their extremeness and promised compensation for nationalized property.

Although the United States had not been heavily invested in Bolivia, the MNR refrained from expropriating several mines owned by American companies.[2]

The National Revolution transformed the life of the Bolivian Indian, who constituted more than two-thirds of the country's 4,250,000 inhabitants, by making him a full citizen and a landholder.[3] The agrarian reform, which eliminated the hacendados also contributed to a faltering national economy due to the disruption of agricultural production. The new regime was soon faced with a bankrupt economy without the capital to finance the proposed welfare and reform programs. Bolivia turned to the United States for aid upon which it became very dependent.[4]

When the IMF got involved in 1956, Bolivia was subjected to extremely austere economic measures.[5] The "Stabilization Plan" imposed by the IMF proved successful as foreign, private and government capital entered Bolivia. It also proved to be costly when the MNR split with the left, behind Juan Lechin, moving into strong opposition to the regime.

During his second administration, 1960-1964. Paz began to upgrade the armed forces. He justified this to the United States as a means of preventing communist subversion which was readily accepted in light of the recent Cuban Revolution. Paz soon found himself dependent on the army as he faced rebellion from the left and center of the MNR. He then committed a political blunder by attempting to succeed himself in 1964 resulting in his ouster. A military

coup installed Vice-President and ex-Air Force commander Rene Barrientos in office and forced Paz Estenssoro into exile. Although the United States recognized the new military government a month after Paz fell, economic assistance to Bolivia was reduced over the next three years.[6]

Barrientos, supported by the peasants who had been the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform, was hostile to the Left and especially the miners who, after nationalization, worked for COMIBOL (Bolivian National Mining Corporation). The miners' discontent was translated into violent demonstrations and strikes. Barrientos managed to dismantle the miners' labor union by firing 6,000 miners and suppressing strike activities.[7] In May 1965, the army was forced to occupy the mines. Debray comments about the impact of the measures on the revolutionary potential of the miners. "The repression of workers in May and September 1965 had driven the workers' movement underground, dispersing or destroying its organization, and enforcing a rigid political isolation on the proletariat by depriving it of its natural allies in the universities and among the radicalized petty bourgeoisie."[8]

Political stability, including the repression of leftist groups, economic policies favoring foreign investors, and the rising tin prices revitalized the national economy generating a new economic elite in the urban sector. Barrientos won the 1966 election heading a coalition of such wealthy strata, plus the middle peasants and the bureaucracy. The Army remained loyal.

Despite the failure of the MNR party to retain power, its twelve-year term in office achieved some fundamental changes in the Bolivian society preventing a return to the "old order." The population had been enfranchised, labor and peasants organized, and the process of "nationalizing" had been initiated which was affecting many Bolivians. But in 1966 the process was still far from complete.[9]

Ideology

We will deal here with the Bolivian experience represented by the guerrilla movement headed by Ernesto Guevara (1966-1967). The leadership was Cuban, Guevara had been a Cuban citizen since 1959, and the main goal was "to create one, two or more Vietnams."[10] The first one in Bolivia, followed by similar "focos" at least in Peru and Argentina. Guevara had not forgotten the previous failure of "Comandante Segundo," the journalist Jorge Masetti, and had cultivated his relationships with the Peronist Left. The goal of Fidel and Che was to extend revolution throughout Latin America.[11]

Bolivia was expected to be the ideal setting in which to apply the foco theory as developed intially by Guevara, and later by Debray, based on their personal interpretations of the Cuban Revoltuion. They believed that a small band of highly-trained and dedicated guerrillas, inserted into a favorable geographical location, could start a successful revolutionary war against any kind of regime. The purpose of the guerrilla foco was to create the conditions for

revolution. The revolutionaries were confident that confrontation with the authorities, and the application of indiscriminate repression by the latter, would radicalize the masses resulting in a peasant-worker alliance.

The cooperation of Bolivian communists had been discussed in principle with leaders of the party before Guevara's arrival to Bolivia at the end of 1966. But tensions appeared as Guevara revealed his real purpose. Guevara wanted to use Bolivia as a springboard from which the revolution could jump off into the neighboring countries.[12] The Bolivian communists wanted a national revolution, and they were much more familiar with "the objective conditions" than was Guevara. It was a disagreement which ultimately affected the revolutionary strategy.

Another cause of factionalism which had a major impact on Bolivia in 1965 was the Sino-Soviet split. Guevara saw this squabble as a hindrance to revolutionary activity and adopted a neutral position to nullify its effect on his plan. Speaking with Moises Guevara in January 1967, Che told him that "polemics on the international or national discrepancies must be avoided."[13] Because the guerrilla force was to be the "combat vanguard of the people," Che wanted to consolidate and enlarge it before attempting to organize the various political bodies. He also expected the confrontation with the Bolivian government to induce American intervention. This he believed would create a reaction against "yankee imperialism" on a continent-wide scale.

It is difficult to see how such discrepancies could have been overcome, especially when Guevara wanted to exercise the politico-military leadership of the struggle. Debray argued later that since the revolution was going to start as a peasant revolution, it would not be easy to recruit peasants under a program directed to the "liberation of the continent."[14] Debray explains the situation of the guerrillas after the quarrel with the Bolivian comrades:

> They appeared as a group of insurgents with no clearly defined political position, no name that could stir the popular imagination or at least enlighten people as to how the origins and purpose of this revolutionary violence related to their own immediate situation.[15]

Since the reasons for starting the uprising were not clear to the peasants and Guevara had no major political organization in the towns, recruitment became a detrimental problem. The seventeen Cubans at the Nancahuazú base were to function as trainers and advisors, not combatants. Yet, as of April 1967, after the conflict had prematurely erupted, Guevara reports in his monthly analysis that "not one enlistment has been obtained."[16] Therefore, with a disproportionate number of Cubans and Peruvians to Bolivians, the movement appeared internationalized.[17] This allowed the Bolivian authorities to present the guerrilla outbreak as essentially foreign and helped to legitimize U.S. aid to the government.

Leadership

Che Guevara considered the objective conditions for armed struggle to be present in Latin America. What was absent was revolutionary consciousness and this could be created by a cadre of professional revolutionaries. To lead the people's war of continental magnitude would require a technically capable executive group, centralized and united on the basis of identical revolutionary experience. He formed his revolutionary staff by bringing a group of Cubans with him to Bolivia.

All of these Cubans were veteran guerrillas and officers in the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces. They had served in either military or civilian capacities with Che, and many were his close friends. Almost half of the seventeen were also veterans of the Congo campaign. Five, including Che, had held the top rank of Comandante in the Cuban Army and four had been members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party.[18] Their ages varied between 26 and 30 years. They were politically indoctrinated in revolutionary ideology and experienced guerrillas. Guevara was confident that his hand-picked nucleus could play both the military and political leadership roles simultaneously fulfilling his ambition of continental revolution. However, once in Bolivia, it became apparent that the international blend plus PCB's opposition would make the task of leadership in this experience extremely arduous.

Although Che distrusted the leaders of Bolivia's pro-

Moscow Communist Party, he relied primarily on a small number of the more militant ones to make preliminary preparations for the guerrilla operation. One that he felt he could trust was Roberto Peredo.[19] Peredo had been active in recruiting Bolivian members for the guerrilla force until Monje withdrew his support from the guerrilla operation. Che was then forced to recruit from other sources and asked Moises Guevara to join the guerrilla force with his miners. Moises Guevara had been a union leader in the mines of Oruro and was now the leader of a dissident pro-Peking Communist group.[20]

As a result of these quarrels, the recruitment of Bolivians continued to be poor. By the end of March 1967, only 20 guerrillas were Bolivians and this number never grew higher than 29.[21] Some were Bolivian students trained in Cuba specifically for the purpose of fighting in the struggle. The remainder were dissident members of Monje's party or unemployed miners. The guerrillas never had a national leader from the host country and there was no one in the group intimately familiar with the area of operations. In fact, only one member spoke a few words of Guarani, the major language of the Indians in the area.[22]

When hostilities broke out, there were 44 guerrillas in the group including three Peruvians and another Argentinian besides Che.[23] The Bolivians only numbered 22 and it did not take long before a problem of leadership and discipline developed within the force. The Bolivians resented playing a secondary role to the Cubans who occupied the key positions

of command, and as noted in Pombo's diary, as the struggle wore on they lost confidence in their leadership.[24]

Party-Army Relations

Che Guevara's experience in the Sierra Maestra gave decisive form to his guerrilla theory which in itself challenged the orthodox communist position which subordinates the army to the party. "Fidel Castro says simply that there is no revolution without a vanguard; that this vanguard is not necessarily the Marxist-Leninist party; and that those who want to make the revolution have the right and the duty to constitute themselves a vanguard, independently of these parties."[25] Che firmly believed that the Cuban experience demonstrated that socialist revolutions in underdeveloped countries could be successfully launched without the direction and control of an orthodox communist party, and it was this view which earned him the disfavor of the pro-Moscow group.

Che saw guerrilla warfare as more military than political and was convinced that the political and military leadership should be united under a unified command. It was also essential that the masses perceived a single line of interpretation and guidance for the revolutionary movement. Because the guerrilla foco was to become the vanguard of the people, this responsibility would lie with the guerrilla commander. Contrary to the Marxist-Leninist classical rule, according to which insurrection has to wait for the maturation of the right socio-economic conditions and especially a well-

organized party, Guevara would first strengthen the guerrilla army which would in time give birth to the party.[26] The guerrilla commanders were to be the political instructors for the fighters.

This controversy was at the heart of the famous dispute between Che and Monje, the secretary-general of the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB). In December 1966, Monje told Guevara that his support for the movement was based on a number of conditions. The one most unacceptable to Che was that Monje insisted on being the political leader and would subordinate the guerrillas to the party as long as the revolution took place in Bolivia. In his diary Che writes, "I was the military chief and I would not accept any ambiguities on this matter."[27] Thereafter, Monje's attitude toward the guerrillas at times became harmful. Che writes in January 1967, "Now the party is up in arms against us and I don't know how far they will go, but it does not scare us, and maybe, it will benefit us in the long run."[28] There were other factors which contributed to the strain which eventually severed relations between the army and the party.

The decision to establish the foco in Bolivia had been made unilaterally by Che and Fidel without consulting the Bolivian communists. Monje and the PCB saw the revolution more exclusively in terms of Bolivian conditions. They felt slighted by the fact that the fate of their country was being decided by foreigners. While on the other hand, the Cubans intended only for the PCB to provide them with combatants

and material support, but not leadership. Furthermore, the PCB did not subscribe to Che's foco theory and were planning a mass uprising in the cities.[29] These conflicts eventually caused the PCB to pull away entirely from supporting the guerrilla struggle.

Guevara himself welcomed the break because he did not trust the PCB leadership. Furthermore, he realized that when a revolution is young, it is most vulnerable to usurpation and alliances cannot be trusted. In his diary he notes, "Monje's attitude can slow down our development on one side, but it may contribute on the other by freeing me from any political compromise."[30] Clearly, the Bolivian Communist Party did not share Guevara's unbounded ambitions.

U.S. Policy

The Cold War had stimulated extensive U.S. political and economic involvement in Latin America, including Bolivia especially between 1953 and 1968. The United States was the largest buyer of Bolivia's tin, the mainstay of its GNP. Furthermore, the Bolivian government became dependent on financial assistance from the U.S. government, which annually provided the regime with grants and low-interest, long-term loans.[31] This support, plus technical assistance and development programs made Bolivia the recipient of one of the largest U.S. aid programs in Latin America.

From the revolution of 1952 until 1968, the U.S. government gave Bolivia over $400 million in aid.[32] The moti-

vation behind this expenditure was largely political. Once the United States realized that the post-revolutionary political leadership in Bolivia was not communist, it decided to support the regime, and in particular the more modern elements in the ruling MNR. The principal motive was to stabilize the political situation in Bolivia and prevent any further movement to the left.

American presence in Bolivia was particularly noticeable in the southeast. Millions of dollars were invested by the U.S. government and by private firms interested in opening up this area. These investments were in the construction of the Cochabambo-Santa Cruz highway and the Santa Cruz-Corumba railway, as well as in sugar mills, oil wells, agricultural improvement projects, farm credit programs and school construction.[33]

As a result of the Alliance for Progress, American presence in Bolivia during the 1960s became even more visible in the form of American missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers, and civilian advisors. Régis Debray has credited this pervasive American presence in the rural areas of Latin America as an obstruction to the establishment of guerrilla movements in these areas.[34] Yet American military assistance to Bolivia was every bit as important and more detrimental for the guerrillas.

Che Guevara's visit to Guatemala in 1954 made him very conscious of the fact that the United States would oppose any social revolution in order to protect its financial interests.

He therefore not only expected U.S. intervention in Bolivia, but had calculated the act in his plan.[35] He was convinced that the Vietnam War and the Cuban Revolution would prompt U.S. political and military support to Latin American governments. However, determined not to become involved in another "Vietnam," the United States restricted its assistance to logistics, training and intelligence. The CIA had been active in the area for some time, and in April 1967 a counter-guerrilla school was established near Santa Cruz.[36] Under U.S. military advisors, Bolivian army units were reorganized for counterinsurgency operations and civic action was employed as a means of pacification.

United States policy since the Cuban Revolution has contributed to the frustration of liberation movements in Latin America. It seems reasonable to conclude that in this case strategic interests, i.e., the prevention of potential Soviet allies, was a more dominant factor in the United States' decision to act than the protection of financial investments.

Soviet Influence

An analysis of this revolutionary experience would be incomplete without emphasizing the serious effect that the Sino-Soviet split had upon the Bolivian Communist Party. The Chinese decision to split the World Communist Parties was announced in 1963.[37] In Bolivia the party split in 1965. The chief result of the split was a swing to the

right by the orthodox communist party in favor of legality and the abandonment of the armed struggle. The Pro-Peking party became much weaker and was essentially neutralized.[38] The only important opposition to the orthodox communist leadership as vanguard of the people's revolution came from the guerrillas.

The Soviet Union perceived Che's operation in Bolivia as a threat to its policy of peaceful coexistence. Success in creating another Vietnam would have threatened Moscow's relations with other Latin American regimes and the United States. It would have undermined the Soviet Union's policy of promoting closer relations and establishing economic ties with Latin America.[39] Moreover, Che was suspected of being sympathetic to the Peking line and his success would have benefited the pro-Chinese party. It was, therefore, in the best interest of Moscow to insure Che failed. Some evidence of this would be the lack of support he received and the treacherous activities of the pro-Marxist party leaders.

One of the first acts, after Monje's withdrawal of support for the guerrillas, was reported in Che's diary.[40] The entry indicates that Monje had prevented three young Bolivian communists, who had been trained in Cuba to fight with Che, from joining the guerrilla movement. In addition to denying Che valuable manpower, the pro-Moscow leaders also denied the guerrilla movement any political support. They did not serve as a source of propaganda, nor did they provide information to the guerrillas. Che's diary indicates

that this lack of contact with the cities was a serious shortcoming. Soon after hostilities began, Che and his band were completely cut off from the outside. The failure of the pro-Moscow group to provide logistics, information and propaganda, as promised, greatly helped to isolate the guerrillas.

Che's theory of radicalizing the masses by confronting the established authorities, clashed with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and subsequently lead to the withdrawal of support by the pro-Moscow communist party. Consequently, although the guerrilla group may have been freed of political alliances, more seriously, it was left without a political base in Bolivia.

Although the Bolivian experience failed and may not have been a fair test of the foco theory, it contributed to the development of revolutionary strategy in Latin America. First, the Bolivian experience signified the demise of the theory of the "foco." The founder of the theory, Guevara, was killed and the most elequent interpreter of the theory, Debray, later published a book of self-criticism. Second, Guevara seriously underestimated the importance of nationalism in the guerrilla struggle. Since the beginning he and his fellow Cubans were perceived as foreigners and the continental goals of the movement were too pretentious to get Bolivian support. Also, Guevara lacked familiarity with the Bolivian political and social conditions, the native Indian languages, etc. Third, the traditional

Bolivian Communist Party was a hindrance to the development of the movement and the Sino-Soviet split increased the difficulties for recruiting new members.

Notes

1. Herbert S. Klein, Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society (New York: Oxford Press, 1982), p. 238.

2. Ibid., p. 233.

3. Daniel James, ed., The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Che Guevara and Other Captured Documents (New York: Stein & Day Inc., 1968), p. 59.

4. James M. Malloy and Richard S. Thorn, eds., Beyond the Revolution: Bolivia Since 1952 (Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg Press, 1971), p. 76. By 1958 one-third of Bolivia's budget was paid for directly from U.S. funds. See Klein, Evolution, p. 238.

5. Malloy and Thorn, Beyond the Revolution, pp. 80-81.

6. After one year, Military assistance returned to the early 1960s level. See Ibid., p. 98.

7. Klein, Evolution, p. 248.

8. Régis Debray, Che's Guerrilla War (Great Britain: Hazel Watson and Viney Ltd., 1975), p. 104.

9. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 18.

10. Ibid., p. 287.

11. Roland E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes, Che: Selected Works of Ernesto Guevara (Massachusetts: the Massachusettes Institute of Technology, 1969), pp. 97-98.

12. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 287.

13. Richard Gott, Guerrilla Movements in Latin America (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 24.

14. Debray, Che's War, p. 130.

15. Ibid., p. 107.

16. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 151.

17. Debray states that, "despite its profoundly patriotic dedication to national liberation, the struggle looked far more 'international' than was desirable," Debray, Che's War, p. 140.

18. Those who held the rank of Comandante and were members of the Central Committee (CC) were Juan Vitalio Aquana, Antonio Sanchez Diaz, and Alberto Fernandes. Another guerrilla leader, Eliseo Reyes Rodriques, was a member of the CC and hald the army rank of Captain. James, Bolivian Diaries, pp. 324-25.

19. Richard Harris, Death of a Revolutionary: Che Guevara's Last Mission (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1970), p. 72.

20. Ibid., p. 76.

21. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 326.

22. Debray, Che's War, p. 90.

23. Haydee Tamara Bunke Bider (Tania) claimed to be from Argentina, but was in fact from East Germany. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 25.

24. Ibid., p. 141.

25. Régis Debray, Revolution in the Revolution? trans. Bobbye Ortiz, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), p. 98.

26. Ibid., p. 105.

27. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 96.

28. Ibid., p. 108.

29. The Central Committee had been encouraged by the results of a recent election in which the Communists had received double the previous number of votes. Ibid., p. 260.

30. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 96.

31. Klein, Evolution, p. 238.

32. Malloy and Thorn, Beyond the Revolution, p. 77.

33. For a discussion of U.S. investments in Bolivia after the revolution of 1952, Malloy and Thorn, Beyond the Revolution, pp. 157-216.

34. Debray, Revolution, pp. 52-53.

35. See Che Guevara's "Guerrilla Warfare: A Method," and "Message to the Tricontinental," in Bonachea and Valdes (eds.), Che, p. 98 and pp. 170-182 respectively.

36. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 23.

37. This speech by Chu Yang entitled "Everything Tends to Divide in Two," was published in People's Daily, 27 December 1963.

38. Gott, Guerrilla Movements, p. 25.

39. Dederico G. Gil, "Latin America: Social Revolution and United States Foreign Policy," in Marian D. Irish, ed., World Pressure on American Foreign Policy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 135.

40. James, Bolivian Diaries, p. 104.

CHAPTER IV
GUATEMALAN EXPERIENCE (1962-1968)

Objective Conditions

The objective conditions of Guatemala in the 1950s and early 1960s portrayed a typical underdeveloped country long in need of some basic social and economic reforms. A study published by the United Nations in 1957 indicated an annual per capita income in Guatemala of only $160, ranking it fifth from the bottom out of sixteen countries in the Americas.[1] Yet, even this low figure over represents the true socio-economic status of the Guatemalan masses.

Because Guatemala featured an agro-export economy, 70 percent of its active labor force was engaged in agriculture, producing such cash crops as coffee, cotton, sugar and bananas. These products, requiring large tracts of land, support a landownership pattern typical of the plantation system. Two percent of the landowners possessed 72 percent of the land while some three-quarters of the rural population owned only small plots or no land at all. The people were therefore subjected to seasonal labor on the hacienda and on coffee fincas to supplement their incomes. The labor force shifted from harvest to harvest, often under duress, in a manner not unlike that of the early Spanish repartimiento system.[2]

Also hampering national development was a severe social cleavage. The majority of the Guatemalan population, 54 percent, were Indians who had not been integrated into the Guatemalan society. Malnutrition among them was widespread and Indian life expectancy was less than 40 years, as against 50 years for the ladino. Illiteracy, 70 percent overall, was reported to be over 90 percent in Indian communities. The over 40 percent of the population which did not speak Spanish, spoke one of sixteen different Indian dialects.[3]

Primarily an exporter of raw materials, Guatemala was dependent to a large extent on imported manufactured goods. Its agro-export economy was closely linked to the United States. In 1954, the United States provided 64 percent of Guatemala's imports and purchased 71 percent of its exports.[4] Additionally, the Boston-based United Fruit Company was Guatemala's largest employer, landowner and exporter, as well as the owner of its one railroad and only Caribbean port.[5] Finally, Guatemala's chief commercial crop and principal source of foreign exchange was coffee, causing the economic conditions in the country to fluctuate with the coffee price in the world market. The results of these socio-economic conditions were not only peasant poverty, but enormous under-utilization of labor and land resources, a narrow domestic market, the need to import food stuffs, and an economy almost wholly dependent on the United States coffee and banana markets.

During the 1945-1954 liberal presidencies of Juan José

Arevalo and Jacob Arbenz, some reforms were enacted to transform Guatemala into a modern state.[6] Arevalo attempted to incorporate the Indians into the national framework by extending male suffrage and supporting workers' rights through labor legislation. Arbenz, elected in 1950, became preoccupied with restructuring the land tenure system. He expropriated some 1.5 million acres for redistribution to about 100,000 peasants.

The Arbenz government, however, had been infiltrated by communists and his liberal reforms threatened the status quo. He was overthrown by Col. Carlos Castillo Armas in 1954. When the reform measures were nullified by Armas, the deprivation and dispossession experienced by the people served to antagonize an already explosive situation.

Post-Arbenz politics was dominated by military strongmen. Basically corrupt and ineffective, Castillo Armas was assassinated in 1957. Following inconclusive elections, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes was appointed president. Ydigoras' regime was also corrupt and his austere economic measures heightened rising unrest among workers and peasants. It is also during Ydigoras' administration where one finds the precipitant for the guerrilla movement.

In 1960 Ydigoras cooperated with the United States by permitting Guatemalan territory to be used as a staging area for the Bay of Pigs invasion.[7] A coup was attempted on November 13, 1960, by a number of national officers. The revolt was designed to prevent Cuban exiles and the United

States from using Guatemala as a base for operations against Cuba. They also hoped to end corruption and inefficiency in the army and government. Although defeated and forced into exile, these young officers sowed the seeds of a left-wing guerrilla movement which continues to this day.

Ideology

In March 1961, a number of the ex-army officers exiled since the aborted November rebellion infiltrated back into Guatemala. Two ex-lieutenants, Marco Antonio Yon Sosa and Luís Turcios Lima, began a guerrilla campaign known as the Movimiento Revolucionario del 13 de Noviembre (MR-13). Because these leaders were professional soldiers and lacked the ability to formulate sophisticated political theory, the MR-13 at first had no coherent ideology. The first guerrilla group was formed with the limited objective of swiftly overthrowing the government and was not organized for the long war of attrition that it would ultimately fight.

Then in December 1961, a member of the ex-officer group, Alejandro de León, was shot by police in Guatemala City. According to Aldolfo Gilly, "the shock produced by the death of Alejandro de León...acted as a powerful stimulus in leading the movement...to launch guerrilla warfare."[8] The majority of the Guatemalan army no longer sympathized with the ex-officers and the administration declared them outlaws. They had little choice but to flee into the hills where the chance of survival was more certain. Additionally,

one of the ex-officers, Turcios Lima, had been meeting with the leaders of the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT) since July 1961. In February 1962, Fidel Castro had signed 'The Second Declaration of Havana,' a dramatic document calling for armed struggle in Latin America, and that same month guerrillas in Venezuela started their activities. It would appear that all these factors played some role in the decision to open the Alejandro de León Front in Guatemala in the same month and year, February 1962.

The leaders realized that the revolution, in order to survive, would require definite direction, clear-cut orientation, and adequate organization. Also aware of their political ineptitude, the guerrilla leaders were anxious to obtain some kind of organized political and financial backing. In September 1962, the leaders of MR-13 went to Cuba where they received some money, but more importantly "their first exposure to communist ideology 'a la Castro' and guerrilla tactics 'a la Guevara."[9] This trip undoubtedly marked a turning point in the evolution of the MR-13. The leadership became increasingly convinced that conciliation was not possible within the existing national structure and that prolonged revolutionary warfare would be the only way to bring about meaningful reforms.

In December, MR-13 entered into an alliance with the PGT and the 12 April Movement[10] to form the Fuerzas Armadas Rebelde (FAR). Its program was provided by the PGT; it called for a national democratic revolution to create a

coalition government of workers, peasants, national and petty bourgeoisie. Additionally, the FAR adopted the practice of guerrilla warfare based on the foco model.[11] According to this model, a small, armed group would establish itself as a military force in the countryside, and through confrontation with the army, arouse the rural population by setting an example of how to struggle. Although the alliance suffered some internal conflict,[12] it existed until 1967 when the FAR officially split with the PGT.

Clearly, the radicalization of the movement was not a sudden development. It evolved gradually in the early 1960s from a nationalist and anti-imperialist orientation to an acceptance of Marxism as a method of analysis and action, and socialism as the goal of the struggle.

Despite its commitment to armed struggle, the FAR lacked a clear concept of how to relate to the majority of Indians and ladinos within the country. The foco theory does not initially call for a strongly organized popular base. Subsequently, the FAR, relying on a small group of men as the motor force of social change, became vulnerable to similar weaknesses of earlier reform movements.[13] Although the guerrillas attempted to turn peasants into revolutionaries by means of "armed propaganda,"[14] the FAR lacked a structure capable of mobilizing mass suport. This deficit contributed to the FAR's military defeat when the government launched a counteroffensive in the mid-1960s with U.S. assistance.

Leadership

Although the guerrilla bands included peasants, students and urban workers, the most significant figures to emerge were those with a military background. The original leaders of the guerrilla movement in Guatemala were the young ex-officers who participated in the national military uprising in 1960, i.e., Lieutenants Luís Augusto Turcios Lima and Marco Antonio Yon Sosa.

Turcios Lima was born November 23, 1941, into a lower-middle-class family.[15] He received primary education in Catholic schools and began secondary education at a government vocational college. At age 15, he entered the Escuela Politecnica, Guatemala's military academy. He graduated second in his class and was commissioned into the army in 1959.[16] Turcios spent six months in Ranger training at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and returned to Guatemala in March 1960 when he became involved with the Thirteenth of November rebellion.

Yon Sosa, born in 1929 in Quirigua, Guatemala, was the son of a small businessman of Chinese descent. He entered the Escuela Politecnica in 1946 and upon graduation, received training in counterinsurgency from the U.S. Army at Ft. Gulick, Panama. Though tenacious and strong minded, Yon Sosa was not considered very bright by his superiors and at the time of the November rebellion he still held the rank of lieutenant.[17]

Because these guerrilla leaders were Escuela Politecnica

graduates and were rebelling for a national cause, initially they were able to maintain relationships with and sympathy from the Guatemalan military. Gradually, however, both Yon Sosa and Turcios became increasingly militant and committed to the concept of armed struggle. They eventually adopted a political position in favor of extreme socialist revolution. They refused to be involved in any democratic processes of elections or compromises with the government, placing themselves in direct opposition to the entire established regime.

When Yon Sosa split with the PGT, the guerrilla forces of the MR-13 became clearly differentiated from those of the FAR under Turcios. Yon Sosa, operating in Izabal and Alta Verapaz, carried on sporadic attacks seeking brief, armed insurrections to topple the existing order.[18] Turcios, on the other hand, worked in the Sierra de las Minas on a sounder operational philosophy. Operating on a long-term plan, Turcios spent more time indoctrinating the peasants and establishing a campesino base of support in the mountains.[19] While the communists regarded Yon Sosa militarily and ideologically unreliable, Turcios maintained relations with the PGT. In part, Turcios disagreed with the Trotskyite tactics and strategy adopted by Yon Sosa, but he also felt his position in the FAR offered him more opportunity to advance politically.

At the time of his death in 1966, Turcios Lima led the most important guerrilla organization in Guatemala. He had politically matured in his five years as a guerrilla and

despite his ties to the PGT, he strove hard to retain his personal control of the guerrilla force. Since Cesar Montes was a member of the Central Committee of the PGT when he assumed command of the FAR, he lacked the military contacts that Turcios always retained in the army. Additionally, Montes lacked the personal charisma and popularity of Turcios among the masses. In 1968, after breaking with the PGT and once the MR-13 and FAR were reunified, Montes conceded command of the new guerrilla organization to Yon Sosa.

Party-Army Relations

The alliance between the MR-13 and the PGT which formed the FAR in December 1962, also laid the foundation for future conflict between the guerrilla army and the communist party. In this period the guerrilla movement was conceived of as primarily military with a socialist orientation, represented politically by the PGT. There was an attempt by the PGT to create a broad front for the FAR, designated the Frente Unido de Resistencia (FUR), but this effort was unsuccessful.[20] The immediate problem was that, although the MR-13 participated in the FAR, the FAR's political and military strategy was to be decided by the FUR, which was dominated by the PGT and in which the guerrilla fronts had no representation. The PGT was trying to make it clear that guerrilla action would not be allowed to dominate the political choices made by the party.

The aim of the PGT was to "abolish imperialist firms and expand and recognize foreign trade" (presumably with the Soviet block as the PGT is a Moscow-line communist party), but the attainment of power was to be accomplished through different means of struggle.[21] The PGT wanted to keep open the possibility of eventual negotiations which would lead to a shift from armed to electoral struggle. Their program was to support a presidential candidate who they hoped would install a democratic regime, paving the way for later and more radical governments. The PGT considered guerrilla action, not a means of toppling the system, but an instrument of pressure which could be applied against the government to force it to negotiate and yield on the electoral level.

The MR-13, on the other hand, was committed to armed struggle and found the PGT's program unsuitable. They felt that the United States would not permit the gradual establishment of a socialist state even through the electoral process and would intervene as they had in 1954 against Arbenz. Thus, from its inception, the FAR contained seeds of disagreement as to objective and function.

The separation in organization and purpose between the political and military apparatus of the PGT and the guerrillas produced a crisis within the FAR. The party had failed to respond to the needs of the guerrilla movement and provided no training and poor logistics for the militants. Thus, lacking a central base of support and a unified command, each guerrilla unit developed along autonomous lines,

creating its own strategy and sources of supply.[22] Yon Sosa, able to secure arms and ammunition more rapidly through contacts in Mexico, welcomed the support of the Trotskyite "Fourth International."

Although the PGT directly organized "commands of resistance," no member of the Central Committee took part in the armed struggle. The communist labor leaders were well-known to government officials and feared that open support for guerrilla warfare would prompt their liquidation.[23] Subsequently, the composite groups of the revolutionary movement were unable to consolidate their efforts against the military's anti-guerrilla campaign. The fact that the FAR was not a single unified organization, but an alliance of several distinct components disposed in varying degrees to carry out an armed fight for power, proved catastrophic for the guerrilla war in Guatemala.

Ultimately, on January 10, 1968, from a camp in the Sierra de las Minas, the FAR's leadership issued a declaration publicly breaking all organic and ideological connections with the PGT.[24] The declaration not only condemned the PGT for its failure as "vanguard of the revolution," but also blamed the party for the isolation of the guerrillas from the urban resistance and the consequential defeat of the movement. The FAR also declared itself the political-military leadership of the revolution. Additionally, Cesar Montes, who assumed command of the FAR upon the untimely death of Turcios Lima in October 1966, announced his resig-

nation from the PGT.[25] In his statement, Montes criticizes the PGT's lack of confidence in the people's ability to take power into their own hands and for never having been noticeably active in providing leaders for the fight.

U.S. Policy

In 1954, total U.S. investment in Latin America was some $7.5 billion, of which Guatemala held some $107 million.[26] Three U.S. corporations; United Fruit, International Railways of Central America (IRCA) and Electric Bond and Share, dominated the nation's economy. United Fruit and IRCA monopolized the nation's rail and port facilities, while a subsidy of Electric Bond and Share provided 80 percent of the nation's electricity.[27] However, it would be an oversimplification to ascribe U.S. policy toward Guatemala in the 1950s and 1960s solely to the protection of these companies' interests.

The cold war and in particular, McCarthyism, were at their most intense period in the United States during the mid-1950s when the Arbenz government was overthrown by a CIA-backed "Liberation Army" under Castillo Armas.[28] Then, the events of the early 1960s, i.e., Castro's socialist revolution, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and the Cuban Missle Crisis, served to heighten America's guard against communism.

Between 1955 and 1960, the United States contributed more than $110 million in direct assistance to develop Guatemala's economy.[29] The United States also began to provide substantial amounts of military aid for internal

security. Upon request of the Guatemalan government, the U.S. Office of Public Safety (OPS) began to provide training to Guatemalan policemen at the International Police Academy in Washington and at the inter-American Police Academy in the Panama Canal.[30] In addition, the United States provided the Guatemalan army training in counterinsurgency at training bases in Panama and the United States. This not only helped to professionalize the Guatemalan army and promulgate a strong anti-communist ideology, ironically, it also provided basic training to the guerrilla leaders in the first years of the movement.

Although military aid to Guatemala continued to increase after 1960, the regime of Enrique Peralta Azúrdia, which came to power in March 1963 and was trying to give itself a "nationalist" image, neither asked for nor allowed an expansion of U.S. aid programs. Peralta was aware that a U.S. presence in Guatemala had been the major issue against Ydigoras, and in 1963 he still considered the insurgents as "bandits" and "subversives," far from being a military threat.[31] He preferred not to internationalize the struggle by openly accepting military assistance from the United States. By 1964, Peralta realized the gravity of the guerrilla problem. The peasantry of the Northeast, where the guerrillas had been most active, began to identify with the guerrillas and to feel animosity toward the military. Subsequently, Peralta sought military advice from U.S. Army advisors and began to implement a sound counterguerrilla campaign in the Northeast.[32]

Under pressure to return constitutional government to Guatemala, elections were held in March 1966. In free and apparently honest elections, Julio César Méndez-Montenegro, a liberal, was elected president. Méndez-Montenegro soon requested direct U.S. assistance in the anti-insurgency campaign and a company of U.S. Army Special Forces was introduced to assist in the counterinsurgency campaign.[33] The U.S. forces provided training in anti-guerrilla techniques and cooperated with the Guatemalan forces in civic action plans designed specifically to renew in the peasants a friendly attitude toward the military. By the end of the 1960s, guerrilla activity had dwindled to virtually nothing, and the movement ceased to pose a serious threat to the government.

Soviet Influence

Communist activity began in Guatemala after the Revolution of 1944 when they gained prestige for their leadership in building labor unions. Their political influence on a governmental level, however, was not significant until after Arbenz was elected to the presidency in 1950. To launch his reform programs, Arbenz relied on the organizational skills of the communists. They stimulated mass support for land reform and soon became prominent in organizing urban labor and rural peasants.[34] The party's leaders made frequent visits to the Soviet Union and were obviously working toward Soviet aims.[35] With the overthrow of the

Arbenz regime and the expulsion of the communists, Soviet influence in Guatemala was greatly diminished.

When violence broke out in the early 1960s, the communist party was still Moscow oriented and financed. Faced with Moscow's policy of "peaceful coexistence," the party experienced a conflict of interests. As early as May 1961, they had endorsed violence in a resolution which stated: "The conditions do not exist in Guatemala today for peaceful action to remove the reactionaries from power and consequently, for the peaceful development of the revolution."[36] The Soviet Union, nevertheless, recovering from the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, was not willing to become involved in another situation which would further antagonize relations with the United States. In early 1963, the PGT suppressed talk of revolution and promoted the candidacy of Dr. Arevalo for the presidency in the upcoming election which they hoped would take place. Following the March 1963 coup of Peralta, the possibility of an election was eliminated and the party again realized the necessity of armed struggle.

Besides a few radicals, the positon of the PGT changed little after the 1963 coup. The Central Committee maintained conservative views. "It should be stressed that the party, notwithstanding its difficulties, is striving to use all legal avenues as a means of drawing the masses into the struggle."[37] As Moscow-line communists, the leadership of the PGT reamined doubtful in regard to violence, pending

the existence of the classical "revolutionary situation" as theorized by Lenin. They wanted to control the guerrilla movement without becoming directly involved in the armed struggle. They felt that guerrilla war could not be successful, but if by chance it was, the communists wanted to be in a position to exploit the situation in their favor.

Throughout the 1960s, the Soviet Union maintained firm control over most communist parties in Latin America including the PGT in Guatemala. This was apparent in 1967 when a high percentage of the Central Committee became radicalized in response to the right-wing anti-guerrilla campaign and favored the position of guerrilla war. Manuel Fortuny reasserted the traditional party position, denouncing the radical tendency. "We do not see the Cuban Revolution as a specific historical trend because the influence it exerts on our continent is the historical continuation of the influence exerted by the ideals and achievements of the Russian Socialist revolution."[38] Following the publication of this article, the FAR formally severed its relations with the PGT.

From the Guatemalan experience, once again we can extract specific contributing factors made to the most recent model of revolutionary strategy in Latin America. First, the organization and experience of the traditional communist parties, as well as their dependence on the Soviet Union, prevented them from the required capabilities

to adapt to the changing circumstances demanded by guerrilla war. Second, although when Turcios Lima was killed he was beginning to show the political qualifications required by this kind of struggle, he was still far from being an accomplished political leader. Neither did Yon Sosa nor Cesar Montes demonstrate that they possessed such abilities. Third, in the Guatemalan experience, the guerrillas never reached the point allowing them to have a significant impact on the urban areas. The masses were never mobilized and the popular element of the Popular Revolutionary War was missing.

Notes

1. See United Nations Office of Statistics, Per Capita National Product of Fifty-five Countries, 1952-1954, *Statistical Papers Series E, no. 4, p. 8.*

2. Nathan L. Whetten, Guatemala, The Land of the People (New Haven: Yale University Press, Inc., 1961), p. 24.

3. Ibid., p 24.

4. U.S., Department of Commerce, Investment in Central America: Basic Information for United States Businessmen (Washington, D.C., 1956), pp. 160-61.

5. The impact of the United Fruit Company on Guatemala is discussed by Thomas McCann, An American Company: The Tragedy of the United Fruit (New York: Brown, 1976).

6. Whetten, Guatemala, p. 67.

7. On Guatemala's role in the Cuban invasion see David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, The Invisible Government (New York: Random House, 1964) and Peter Wyden, Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

8. Adolfo Gilly, "The Guerrilla Movement in Guatemala," Part I, Monthly Review 17, 1 (May 1965): p. 17.

9. Robert F. Rose, "Guerrilla War in Guatemala," (Master's Thesis, University of Florida, 1969), chap. 1.

10. The 12th of April Movement was primarily organized by students and had arisen as a result of the demonstrations at the beginning of 1962.

11. Richard Newbold Adams, Crucifixion by Power: Essays on Guatemalan National Social Structure, 1944-1966 (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Printing Division, 1970), p. 268.

12. The movement was temporarily divided when Yon Sosa became more radical and accepted support from the "Fourth International" adopting a Trotskyite ideology. See Richard Gott, Guerrilla Movements in Latin America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 64.

13. Because Arbenz relied on a small group of educated ladino social reformers to produce social change rather than the Guatemalan masses, he was unable to defend his government in 1954.

14. For a discussion of Armed Propaganda see Gilly, "Guerrilla Movement," Part I, p. 20.

15. Gott, Guerrilla Movements, p. 49.

16. A. Howard, "With the Guerrillas in Guatemala," New York Times Magazine, 26 June 1966, pp. 8-9.

17. Rose, "Guerrilla War," p. 16.

18. Ibid., p. 47.

19. Adams, Crucifixion, p. 215.

20. Gilly, "Guerrilla Movement," Part I, p. 18.

21. C. Campos, "Paths of Development of the Newly Emerging Countries," World Marxist Review (Prague) 6, 7 (July 1962):77.

22. The guerrilla units obtained most of their arms through raids on the military and financed themselves by kidnapping wealthy individuals for ransom. See Adams, Crucifixion, p. 268.

23. This presumption became reality as right-wing groups captured and killed nine members of the Central Committee between January 1966 and February 1968. See Hernan Barrera, "Constitutional Dictatorship and Violence," World Marxist Review (Prague) 11, 5 (May 1968):47.

24. "Declaration announcing the separation of the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes from the Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo, January 1968," is published in part as Appendix Three in Gott, Guerrilla Movements, pp. 507-11.

25. "Statement made by Cesar Montes, Commander in Chief of the FAR," from the text published in the Tricontinental Bulletin, Year III, no. 26 (May 1968), Havana, Cuba and reprinted as Appendix II (A) in Eduardo Galeano, Guatemala: Occuppied Country, trans. Cedric Belfrage (London: Monthly Review Press, 1969), pp. 133-44.

26. "Fresh Track in Investing Planned," New York Times, 27 February 1955, sec. F, pp. 1 and 11.

27. Max Gordon, "A Case of U.S. Subversion: Guatemala, 1954," in Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1983), p. 49.

28. Wise and Ross, Invisible Government, pp. 177-205.

29. Gordon, "Subersion," Guatemala in Rebellion, p. 62.

30. Institute for Policy Studies, "Behind Guatemala's Military Power," in Guatemala in Rebellion, p. 129.

31. Rose, "Guerrilla War," p. 36.

32. Paul P. Kennedy, "Guatemalan Rebels," New York Times, 20 December 1964, p. 38.

33. Gott, Guerrilla Movements, p. 98.

34. Gordon, "Subversion," Guatemala in Rebellion, p. 58.

35. John E. Peurifoy, "Whose Intervention in Guatemala, Whose Conspiracy?" in Guatemala in Rebellion, p. 73.

36. Bernardo Alvarado Monzon, "Some Problems of the Guatemalan Revolution," World Marxist Review (Prague) 9, 10 (October 1966):21-27.

37. Alfredo Guerro Borges, "The Experience of Guatemala: Some Problems of the Revolutionary Struggle Today," World Marxist Review (Prague) 7, 6 (June 1964):13-14.

38. J. M. Fortuny, "The Political Situation and Changing Tactics," World Marxist Review (Prague) 10, 2 (February, 1967) :24.

CHAPTER V
NICARAGUAN EXPERIENCE (1977-1979)

The Root of Revolution

To best understand the origins of the Nicaraguan revolution, it is important to review its related history dating back to the nineteenth century. Independence came to Nicaragua as a by-product of the movements in Mexico and in the South American states. Through the actions of Guatemala, Nicaragua joined Mexico under Iturbide and became a member of the Central American confederation, but withdrew from it in 1838.[1] By the time of independence, emergent Liberal and Conservative factions of the socio-economic elite, centered in the towns León and Granada respectively, had fought bitterly over ideology and policy. This feud reflected different economic interests and political styles, with the León oligarchy being more dynamic, export oriented, and "modern."[2] This struggle engendered a tradition of militarism, caudillismo, and political violence still evident in Nicaragua today.

Other factors also entered into Nicaraguan problems. British interests established a protectorate over the Atlantic region, known as the Autonomous Kingdom of Mosquitia, which was not incorporated into the national territory until 1894.[3] Also, during the 1850s and 1860s, Commodore

Cornelius Vanderbilt's transit company became involved in ferrying California-bound gold prospectors across Nicaragua, and the liberals of León invited William Walker, a U.S. soldier of fortune, to head up their army to crush the Granada conservatives.[4] Walker's successes in León were such that Vanderbilt was induced to aid the conservatives of Granada. Walker was eventually captured and executed in 1860 and the conservatives established their dominance which was to endure for 30 years. The conservatives quelled numerous uprisings, installed their presidents and provided the country with some semblance of stable government. Factional quarrels among the conservatives, however, made possible a liberal coup in 1893 and the seizure of power by José Santos Zelaya.

The 16 years of tyrannical misrule by Zelaya became notorious both at home and abroad. He persecuted his conservative enemies, betrayed his liberal supporters and systematically looted both public and private funds. He maintained his position with a ruthless system of spies and police, suppressing all critics.[5] Despite his misrule, the economy prospered, railroads were built and the number of public schools increased. United States-Nicaraguan relations also became strained when Panama was selected in 1903 as the sight for the interoceanic canal and Zelaya began to negotiate with other foreign powers to build a second canal in Nicaragua. Then Zelaya's execution of two U.S. adventurers further aroused the U.S. government and the dictator fled

to exile in 1909.[6] Santos Zelaya's flight left the country in a state of near anarchy; the government was bankrupt and foreign creditors were threatening intervention. The conservatives appealed to Washington to intervene.

When the liberals revolted in 1912, the U.S. government took steps to promote political stability, guarantee business opportunities, and to secure the protection of the transisthmian canal. U.S. warships landed a few Marines, suppressed the revolt, and became involved in a twenty-year war for the elimination of violence and the establishment of a stable, democratic government. Larger forces of Marines were introduced in 1927 to control the country while the United States tried to resolve the internal liberal-conservative conflict through free and democratic elections.[7]

Although Augusto César Sandino, the only liberal general not to sign the peace agreement, was still at large in the mountains of Segovia, the U.S. forces left Nicaragua in 1933. The Americans had departed with the government in the hands of a liberal president and peace guaranteed by a Marine-trained police force, the Guardia Nacional. By 1937, however, it was obvious that true power lay with the Guardia and its commander, Anastasio ("Tacho") Somoza Garcia.[8] Once in power, Somoza transformed the Liberal party into his own vehicle, the Liberal Nationalist Party (PLN).[9] Corruption within the PLN and its domination of the public institutions, insured the reelection of the Somozas. On the other hand, the opportunism of the Conservative leadership

often resulted in their collaboration with the Somozas and the PLN. The traditional political parties continued to decline in cohesion and efficacy under the dynasty.

Somoza Garcia ruled until his assassination in 1956; then his son, Luis, assumed the presidency until 1963. In 1967, Anastasio ("Tachito") Somoza Debayle became the third member of the family to occupy the presidency. Barred by law from succeeding himself, Somoza created a caretaker three-man junta in 1971 to rule until 1974, when he was elected to a second term.[10] Anastasio Somoza's second term as president would be his last. Resentment against his regime grew as increasing numbers of Nicaraguans objected to Somoza's heavy-handed tactics. His brutal treatment of political opponents convinced many that the regime would never tolerate democratic elections.[11] The business community was bitter and angry with Somoza's levying of kickbacks on the major commercial transactions conducted in the country. Residents of Managua were outraged by the regime's blatant misuse of international aid earmarked for the city's reconstruction following the disastrous 1972 earthquake.[12] Most liberals and leftists were offended by the dictator's ostentatious display of wealth.

The crucial jolt in the long chain of events leading to the overthrow of the Somoza regime came in January 1978, when assassins gunned down Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, long-time Conservative Party critic and publisher of the nation's leading newspaper, La Prensa. The Chamorro murder, combined

with the Guard's indiscriminate killing of many innocent people, cost the regime the vital support of the business leaders who then called for a general strike to demand Somoza's resignation.[13] The strike in turn brought more government reprisals. As the death toll mounted, the United States proposed a referendum to test national support for the Somoza regime. The plan was quickly rejected by the regime in November 1978.[14] This intransigent attitude convinced many Nicaraguans that only force would oust Somoza. For the first time, opponents of the regime began to unite throughout the nation. A broad-based coalition--ranging from marxist guerrillas to conservative business leaders--was formed to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship.[15] While the business sector continued its strikes to dry up the economy, the guerrillas battled the National Guard.

This birds-eye view of Nicaraguan history portrays persistent internal war to control the reins of government, aggravated by foreign intervention, resulting in a general lack of concern for the welfare of the masses.

Objective Conditions

Under the Somozas, every sector of Nicaraguan society experienced some form of deprivation that has inspired revolution in other situations. Social and economic power resided with a small but highly influential elite, which consisted of those individuals involved in commercial agriculture and newly developing post-World War II industries.

This elite group, totalling no more than 5 percent of the population, received over 30 percent of the national income. The more slowly developing middle class consisted of less than 10 percent of the two million total population and had a relatively nominal amount of economic and political power.[16] Socio-economic prestige or status was based on acquired wealth and family-related special position. Most of the elite were in fact members or relatives of the Somoza family.

The Somoza family controlled approximately 50 percent of all arable land and 40 percent of all industry in Nicaragua.[17] The holdings, estimated at over $1 billion in assets, represented a virtual monopoly of the best lands and the most lucrative business interests in the country. While Somoza family nepotism paved the way for this aggrandizement of economic power, the situation was not quite as promising for the remainder of the Nicaraguan people.

The lack of a broadly-based educational system inhibited the rapid development of the Nicaraguan middle class. About one-half of the population was considered illiterate in 1975, with some 75 percent in the rural areas accounting for this figure.[18] Those who had the good fortune of obtaining some education could, at best, look forward to some type of government service. When Nicaragua entered the Central American Common Market (CACM) in 1963, it began to experience a period of industrial and economic boom. Although this resulted in rapid growth of the

government and expanded middle-class employment, overall unemployment increased as the population grew faster than the work force.[19] Due to corruption of all kinds, government growth mainly subsidized personal fortunes. From 1960 to 1975, widespread poverty continued because the government repressed unions, kept wages low, and did not promote an effective agrarian reform program.

The Nicaraguan economy, principally based on coffee, cotton and cattle production, employed over one-half of the population in support of these areas. However, tens of thousands of peasants experienced dislocation and unemployment due to the rapid expansion of cotton production which concentrated even further the ownership of land after 1950.[20] By the mid-1970s, 58 percent of the farms covered only 3.4 percent of the farmland, while 0.6 percent of the farms covered 31 percent of the agricultural area. A full one-third of the farm workers were tenants, sharecroppers or squatters living at subsistence levels with little or no hope for improving their lot. In the area of medicine and personal hygiene, there were only four physicians per 10,000 inhabitants or only one-third of the minimum number considered acceptable by world-wide standards. The average Nicaraguan could expect to live only 53 years, the lowest in Central America while infant and child mortality rates were the second highest in Central America.[21]

Probably the most important event which exacerbated the negative aspects of Nicaraguan society and helped to set the

stage for the overthrow of the Somoza regime was the earthquake of 1972. Within seconds, 90 percent of the downtown area of the capital city of Managua was leveled, and over 10,000 people perished with another one-half million rendered homeless. This traumatic event directly affected over one-quarter of the population of Nicaragua.[22] Despite intensive U.S. and third nation relief efforts in the form of medical aid, food, and reconstruction funds, by 1976 a full 22 percent of the population still did not have adequate housing and were unemployed. Somoza came under heavy criticism for exploiting the reconstruction efforts on behalf of his family's interests, further alienating the people.[23] The cyclical economic crisis which began in 1973, as well as increased labor and popular unrest, prompted many business groups to break with the regime and join the active opposition.[24] As the workers and peasants pursued economic goals through organizations and strikes, the regime responded with increased repression. Under a state of seige between 1974 and 1977 and again in 1978, constitutional rights were suspended and the National Guard was given free reign to deal with opponents of the regime.

Finally, the assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro on January 10, 1978, galvanized even the most reluctant of Nicaragua's business elite to work against Somoza. With Chamorro's death, Somoza had overstepped a critical boundary and alienated his last source of legitimacy. From then on, even the privileged economic elite were anxious to remove

Somoza from power. Somoza had created the classical ingredients for unrest among every sector of the populace, i.e., rising expectations contrasted with increased insecurity and diminishing rewards. All the elements necessary were present for a well-organized force to exploit the perceived relative depredation of the people. Such a force did exist in the form of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN).

Ideology

When Augusto César Sandino took refuge in the mountains of Segovia in northern Nicaragua in 1927 to begin his battle against the U.S. Marines, he did not have a well-developed ideology. Nevertheless, he consistently called for armed resistence against the U.S. occupation and interference for social reform, including workers and peasant cooperatives and land reform.[25] This anti-imperialist and nationalist thinking of Sandino was exploited by the FSLN to eventually create a popular spirit in Nicaragua.

The ideology and program of the FSLN altered significantly from 1961 to 1979 as the movement changed from a small armed conspiracy pledge to a lengthy struggle for power into a major contender for rule in need of broad backing from other opposition groups. Beginning as an anti-imperialist revolutionary organization dedicated to overthrowing Somoza, the FSLN developed a much clearer and more coherent program than did Sandino because its founders believed in the basic premises of Marxian socialism.[26] Yet, because the FSLN was

predominated by the Marxist-Leninist ideology, it had limited popular support until 1975.[27]

The FSLN had originally operated on the lines of Che Guevara's foco theory. By 1964 the organization had almost been destroyed and was forced to intensify political work among students and peasants to secure a broader base of support. In 1966-67 it launched a new guerrilla war, was again defeated, and subsequently came to place the major weight of its activity on political work among peasants and agricultural workers, whom it intended to organize and educate for a protracted people's war.[28] It was not until 1974 when it took 20 members of Somoza's inner circle hostage and successfully exchanged them for political prisoners that the FSLN gained national recognition and came to be considered a viable threat to the regime. The subsequent state of seige imposed by Somoza and the increased repression by the National Guard rapidly alienated ever larger sectors of the Nicaraguan people and forced many non-Marxists to turn toward the FSLN.

This development led to a new discussion on strategy in the FSLN, ending in the emergence of three distinct factions.[29] The Proletaria (proletarian) tendency held that guerrilla warfare should be abandoned and devoted itself to broadening the movement's mass base by organizing the working class. The Guerra Popular Prolongada (prolonged people's war) tendency preferred the strategy of developing forces for a protracted war in the countryside. The

Terceristas (third force) tendency maintained that the guerrilla struggle had to be brought into the cities by mobilizing the masses for a national insurrection. Clearly, the FSLN division was due more to strategic differences than ideological divergence. After 1975, however, the leadership of the Terceristas relaxed the Marxist line of the original FSLN and opened its ranks up to non-Marxists and at the same time began to construct a political as well as military organization in the cities.[30]

The FSLN undoubtedly pursued the goal of a socialist revolution, but saw it necessary to first destroy the Somoza regime together with its economic and military power. Its minimal program involved the nationalization of the Somoza clan's property and the dissolution of the National Guard.[31] The Terceristas believed that to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship a tactical alliance would need to exist between the popular and bourgeois opposition forces causing its ideological pluralization. In late 1977 the mass movement had begun to pick up mementum, so that by mid-1978 some 22 popular groups were organized by the FSLN to form the United People's Movement (MPU).[32] This new body promoted coordination among the member organizations and created a unified program to replace the dictatorship with a new popular and democratic government. All three tendencies of the FSLN endorsed this program.

As the revolutionary situation began to rapidly develop after Chamorro's assassination, the FSLN realized

that it needed to move in concert if it were to seize the moment. After the September 1978 insurrection and the breakdown in negotiations between the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) and the Somoza regime, the initiative had definitely moved to the FSLN.[33] The Sandinistas had come to the front of the struggle and needed to demonstrate their solidarity to guarantee indisputable leadership of the movement. By March 1979, the three tendencies were able to announce organic unity and adopted the multi-class strategy forged by the Terceristas. As Tomás Borge explained the reunification: "There were never serious ideological differences between us. The differences have been essentially of a political and strategic nature."[34]

The FSLN became a politico-military organization, whose strategic objective was to take political power by destroying the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the dictatorship and to establish a revolutionary government based on the worker-peasant alliance and the convergence of all the patriotic forces in the country. The prospect of widespread mass opposition to the regime led the FSLN to broaden its program to attract the diverse groups victimized by the dictatorship. The FSLN's ideology was changed to accommodate its internal and external allies, subsequently losing much of its Leninist flavor in the process.

Leadership

Nicaraguans from all classes actively participated in the insurrection. However, the revolutionary leaders shared predominantly lower-middle and middle-class origins. Many of the FSLN leaders were secondary school and university students who had become radicalized by frustrated efforts at moderate reform, especially after the traditional political parties became usurped by the corruption of the Somoza dynasty. While others, like Daniel and Humberto Ortega, had been socialized from birth into opposition to the regime.

The Ortega brothers' father, Daniel Ortega Serda, had fought with Sandino in Nueva Segoria and had spent time in prison after his capture.[35] Daniel Ortega Saavedra, born in 1944, had by the age of 16 already been arrested for participating in student protest movements. By the time he entered the Central American University in Managua to study law, he was a member of the FSLN. Following the FSLN defeat at Pancasán in 1967, Daniel spent the next seven years in prison. Believing it necessary to bring the war to the cities in combination with guerrilla action in the countryside, Daniel and Humberto lead the Terceristas tendency.[36]

When the FSLN was founded on July 23, 1961, Carlos Fonseca Amador was 26 years old and Tomás Borge was 30. They sought not only the overthrow of Somoza, but to change the entire politico-socioeconomic system. They wanted radical change based on Marxist-Leninist ideas. Carlos Fonseca, born in 1935, was the illegitimate son of a do-

mestic servant. In 1950 he enrolled in Matagalpa's high school where he became a student activist tremendously influenced by Marxism and in 1955 Fonseca joined the communist party. While studying at the National Autonomous University in Managua, he met other leftist thinkers like law student Tomás Borge. After the 1956 assassination of Somoza Garcia, both Fonseca and Borge were arrested and spent time in prison.

When Castro overthrew Batista, Fonseca saw in the Cuban experience hope for change in Nicaragua. He emulated the Castro model of guerrilla insurrection and spent a good deal of time in Cuba between 1959 and 1960 developing his concept of guerrilla war. Having secured some aid and training in Cuba, Fonseca travelled to Costa Rica, Mexico and throughout Nicaragua organizing revolutionary opposition to the regime. When the PSN leadership objected to his efforts, Fonseca quit the party. At the time of his death in 1976, Carlos Fonseca was perhaps the most important guerrilla leader.[37] Tomás Borge, the only surviving founder of the FSLN and a strong believer in guerrilla war, was a leader in the prolonged people's war tendency after the FSLN split.[38]

While the FSLN sought to achieve status as the vanguard, other students participated in the struggle primarily through the Student Revolutionary Front (FER).[39] They led demonstrations, conducted propaganda activities and organized neighborhood groups against the regime. After 1974,

student groups linked with the FSLN got more directly involved by committing acts of sabotage and terror, raising money, and recruiting for the guerrillas. When the FSLN organized the MPU in 1978, nine of the 22 member groups were student organizations. Clearly, the universities not only provided the Nicaraguan revolution with its key leaders, but until the situation became internationalized in late 1978, they also contributed the most critical source of assistance. The leadership of the Nicaraguan experience was generally young to middle aged, lower-middle and middle-class, well-educated, dedicated to its revolutionary objectives, and strongly influenced by Marxist-Leninist thought.

Party-Army Relations

The pro-Soviet Socialist party of Nicaragua (PSN) was founded in 1944 drawing its main strength from the urban proletariat.[40] Although some of its members had links with the Sandinistas, the PSN was never the main force behind the Nicaraguan Revolution. The PSN lacked confidence in the revolutionary potential of the Nicaraguan masses. The party was committed in theory and practice to await the social conditions for revolution to develop, and were content to continue organizing the proleteriat in the meantime. In 1959 Carlos Fonseca left the party because his desire for promoting a Cuban-style revolution directly conflicted with the pro-Soviet line.

Founded in 1961 by Carlos Fonseca, Tomás Borge and Silvio Mayorga, the FSLN was to be the revolutionary vanguard, totally divorced from the traditional Liberal-Conservative conflict. They believed that the FSLN "assured both the leadership of the struggle that had been crushed with the assassination of Sandino in 1934, and the strategy of popular revolutionary war that the vanguard put in practice..."[41]

FSLN defeats in 1963 and again in 1967, along with the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia, forced the guerrilla leadership to forgo the foco theory and concentrate on establishing a broad base of support in the urban as well as the rural areas. They improved relations with peasants to increase rural recruits while their student opposition group (FER) promoted their urban efforts. By early 1970, the FSLN was able to begin armed urban actions to support those in the countryside.[42]

Between 1970 and 1975, the Sandinista Front executed urban terrorist actions to free political prisoners, earn ransoms and increase their political visibility. At the same time that the FSLN was gaining popularity, the PSN was suffering from internal strains which resulted in a three-way split further weakening the potential influence of the party.[43]

While the ranks of the FSLN continued to grow, the Sandinista Front, under severe regime repression, split into three groups. What saved the FSLN from splitting apart entirely was the rapid escalation of popular opposition to

Somoza after the Chamorro assassination. The spontaneous rebellion in Monimbo in February signaled a popular revolutionary potential greater than even the FSLN leaders had expected.[44] The FSLN needed to seize the initiative if they were to compete with the economic elite coalition (FAO) for head of the struggle. The FSLN successfully took over the National Palace on August 22, receiving a series of concessions from Somoza and triggering new uprisings in cities across the country. Yet the FSLN lacked the structure to organize and channel the energy of the masses to facilitate its war effort. To fill this gap, in July 1978, they created the United People's Movement (MPU). The MPU became a mass-based coalition challenging the moderate FAO.

The successful attack on the National Palace by the FSLN in August 1978, stimulated a new wave of spontaneous uprisings throughout the country and once again revealed that the FSLN lagged behind the masses in preparation for a major offensive. This resulted in the expansion of the FSLN army from several hundred to over 7,000.[45] It also encouraged the reunification of the FSLN under a nine-member supreme command, the FSLN National Directorate (DNC), in March 1979. Additionally, the FSLN, having assumed undisputed leadership of the revolution after the decline of the FAO, expanded the MPU. The FSLN now organized the National Patriotic Front (FPN) which united the MPU with other opposition groups under a watered-down program. Once the FSLN was reunited and the masses were reorganized under the FPN,

the revolutionaires through Radio Sandino were better able to coordinate military operations against the National Guard with civil disturbances. When the FSLN announced the final offensive in May 1979, it was able to combine armed insurrection, a general strike, and violent demonstrations throughout the country.

Not until after the FSLN's military success and the broad extent of the popular insurrection of 1978 became obvious, did the PSN realize that it had grossly underestimated the revolutionary potential of Nicaragua. Two of its factions then joined the MPU and FPN coalitions.[46] Indecision and internal conflict within the communist party excluded it from becoming a factor in the Nicaraguan experience. On the other hand, the FSLN evolved from a small guerrilla band in 1961 to become not only the military vanguard of the people, but the pre-eminent political group in Nicaragua.

U.S. Policy

Nicaragua's collaboration with the United States during the four decades of the Somoza dynasty to prevent the spread of communism in the Western Hemisphere is well-known and documented. In 1954 Nicaragua was the main staging area for the CIA-sponsored invasion of Guatemala which ousted President Arbenz. In 1961 the Somozas had a role in the staging of the CIA-organized Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. A few Nicaraguan troops also participated in the U.S. occupation

of the Dominican Republic in 1965. As a consequence, U.S. assistance to Nicaragua grew steadily from 1953 through 1975. Military aid rose from an average of $200,000 yearly for the 1953-1961 period to $1.8 million per year for 1967-1975. Overall economic assistance for the same periods grew from an annual average of $1 million to $17.3 million.[47]

Although 80 percent of Nicaragua's foreign investment came from the United States, throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. share of Nicaragua's exports and imports diminished. Fear of Cuba's revolution, however, boosted U.S. economic aid to Nicaragua under the Alliance for Progress substantially improving the equipment and training of the National Guard, and in 1961 the United States integrated Nicaragua into the Central American Defense Council (CONDECA).[48] This early aid, equipment, coordination and training helped the Guard defeat early guerrilla efforts of the FSLN in 1963.

When Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States, U.S. diplomatic support for Somoza began to erode. Nevertheless, military and economic aid to the Nicaraguan government continued to increase under the Ford administration. Then with the U.S. presidential election of James Carter and a growing consciousness of human rights, U.S. aid to Nicaragua began to decline until 1979 when it was completely terminated. The reduction of U.S. aid diminished the regime's military capacity and contributed to the growing instability in Nicaragua.[49] Subsequently this led many

of Somoza's economic allies into opposition as they increasingly perceived that their interests were being threatened.

After the September 1978 insurrection, the United States with the aid of the Dominican Republic and Guatemala, sought to mediate between Somoza and the Broad Opposition Front (FAO), an organization of the economic elite.[50] Their objective was to secure the resignation of Somoza while, at the same time, preventing a Sandinista seisure of power, i.e., reform without revolution. The U.S. objective was to create an interim government composed of the FAO and Somoza's National Liberal Party and insisted that the National Guard remain intact to insure stability. As the negotiations continued through the Fall of 1978, the FAO became disjointed over the proposed plan for an orderly transfer of power. Finally, in January 1979, the negotiations ended when Somoza rejected a proposal for an internationally supervised plebiscite.[51] This in effect terminated the solution sought by the Nicaraguan business elite and the United States. It also signaled the end of the FAO's influence.

In February 1979, the United States withdrew its military attaches, some diplomats, and suspended the delivery of appropriated 1978 aid. In May, as the FSLN launched its final offensive, the United States further withdrew its remaining nonessential diplomatic personnel.

In a last ditch effort to prevent the FSLN, now the acknowledged leadership of the revolution, from assuming

power, the United States wanted the OAS to send a multinational peacekeeping force to Nicaragua to end the crisis.[52] Finding little support, this plan was never introduced and the United States was forced to deal directly with the FSLN-created junta. The junta, sensing inevitable victory, rejected the U.S. insistence that the new government include the PLN and the National Guard. In the end, the only assurance that the United States received from the junta was that there would be no summary execution of the National Guardsmen and Somoza backers.[53]

The U.S. policy gradually eroded the regime's coercive strength and its support. At the same time, U.S. ambivalence about Somoza helped prolong his demise during the months of the mediation. This caused FAO to fall apart while the Sandinistas reunited themselves and formed their own political coalition to fill the vacuum created by the defunct FAO.

Soviet Influence

Soviet influence during the Nicaraguan experience, as elsewhere in Central America, was generally weak and indirect. As previously noted, the pro-Soviet communist party of Nicaragua (PSN) had traditionally been small and distrustful of the revolutionary potential of the Nicaraguan masses. Although the revolutionary struggle in Nicaragua agreed in theory with Soviet anti-imperialist strategy, its geographical location placed it within the U.S. sphere of influence,

even more remote from Moscow than Cuba. Additionally, the death of Che Guevara in 1967 and the anti-Allende coup of 1973 made the Soviets even more pessimistic about the prospects for revolution in Latin America. The modest Soviet support for the FSLN can also be explained in part by the fact that they as well as the Cubans were preoccupied with military involvement in Angola, Ethiopia and Afghanistan.[54] Even when the FSLN was reunited under a national directorate and managed to create a national opposition coalition, the PSN's role was limited to propaganda support and financial aid.

The Cubans, on the other hand, had been involved with the FSLN from the very beginning. Many Nicaraguan revolutionary leaders, such as Carlos Fonseca, visited Cuba as early as 1959 seeking weapons and financial support from Castro. Cuba did provide some aid in the 1960s, and during the 1970s continued to train FSLN elements.[55] Besides weapons from Cuba to the FSLN via third party countries like Costa Rica and Panama, the FSLN received weapons from Venezuela, Panama and the Middle East.[56] Castro and the Soviets seemed to fear that major influence and aid would result in direct U.S. intervention despite President Carter's concern for human rights. Eden Pastora, an FSLN commander, quoted Castro as saying, "The best help I can give you is not to help at all."[57]

As the Nicaraguan experience became internationalized

after the September 1978 uprising due to increased regime repression and atrocities committed by the National Guard, the Sandinistas received active political, economic and moral support from various groups in Venezuela, Panama and Mexico. The FSLN not only found sanctuaries in Costa Rica, but San José became the site for the FSLN government in exile. Eventually, leftists from other Central American countries such as the Victoriano Lorenzo Brigade from Panama and groups from Costa Rica fought along side FSLN forces in Nicaragua.[58]

In summary, the strategy initially adopted by the FSLN was a form of Guevara's foco theory. When it failed to achieve the revolutionary objectives, the FSLN diverged on what course to follow. A debate surfaced as to whether they should continue guerrilla warfare centered in the mountains or concentrate on organizing armed struggle focused on the masses. The Tercerista tendency decided on a combination of the two giving rise to Guerra Popular Revolucionaria.

Fulfilling its role as vanguard, the Terceristas seized the National Palace in August 1978, further stimulating the mass violence which had been aroused earlier by the assassination of Chamorro. This led to the September-October insurrection and clinched the active participation of the masses in the armed struggle. Although some spontaneous activities not called for by the revolutionary leadership occurred, in most cases the FSLN was able to channel these

efforts toward the overall objective. They made a conscious effort to focus their political and military activity on building mass support for a national insurrection.

The FSLN sent cadre into the cities to instigate violent mass action and attempted to coordinate it with the ongoing guerrilla struggle in the country. Finally, the whole Sandinista movement agreed on a single strategy to support the insurrection, based on a flexible policy of alliances and the need for a broad-based program. This policy succeeded in isolating the Somoza regime, achieved nationwide anti-Somoza unity and neutralized the more moderate currents in favor of intervention.

Clearly, there were many variables which contributed to the Sandinista victory. Some of these factors were designed while others were self-generated which greatly taxed the FSLN leasership. Nevertheless, their opportunistic attitude and their determination prevailed.

In the final analysis, the Guerra Popular Revolucionaria strategy emerged from this revolutionary experience. The guerrillas' cohesion was strongly ideologized by Marxism-Leninism. After several defeats they became hardened and gained both military and political experience. They showed flexibility in politics which attracted people and enabled them to mobilize the masses. The people were organized into different kinds of structures, all of them under the control of the FSLN. Then with the support of these groups, plus arms and resources coming from abroad, they launched a final and successful armed confrontation against the Somocistas.

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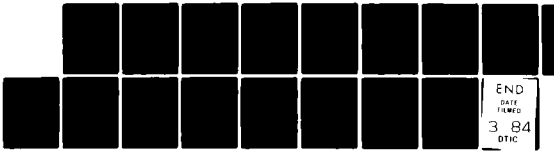

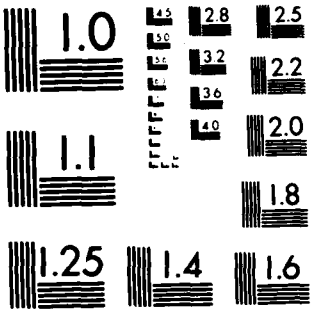

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24. Wheelock Román, Imperialismo, pp. 180-188; Woodward, Central America, pp. 250-58; Booth, The End and and the Beginning, pp. 101-103; Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua," p. 3.

25. Humberto Ortega, 50 años, pp. 104-107.

26. See "The Historic Program of the FSLN," in Bruce Marcus, Sandinistas Speak, pp. 13-22.

27. Epica, Nicaragua, p. 6; Richard R. Fagen, "Dateline Nicaragua: The End of the Affair," Foreign Policy 36 (Fall, 1979):182-183.

28. Epica, Nicaragua, pp. 9-10; Booth, The End and the Beginning, pp. 137-41; Gorman, "Power and Consolidation," p. 134; Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua," pp. 3-4.

29. Epica, Nicaragua, pp. 10-11; Booth, The End and the Beginning, pp. 143-144; Fagen, "Dateline Nicaragua," p. 183; Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua," p. 6; "Sandinista Perspectives: Three Differing Views," Latin American Perspectives 6 (Winter, 1979):114-126.

30. Booth, The End and the Beginning, pp. 143-144: Fagen, "Dateline Nicaragua," p. 183; Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua," pp. 4, 6.

31. Booth, The End and the Beginning, p. 147.

32. For specific member organizations of the MPU see Epica, Nicaragua, pp. 33-34 and on the MPU's program see NACLA, "Crisis in Nicaragua," NACLA Report on the Americas XII, 6 (November-December 1978):36.

33. The FAO was an organization composed of the economic elite who were opposed to the Somoza regime, but like the United States they preferred reform to revolution.

34. Epica, Nicaragua, p. 11.

35. Bernard Diederich, Somoza: And the Legacy of U.S. Involvement in Central America (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1981), p. 85.

36. Booth, The End and the Beginning, p. 143.

37. On the importance of Carlos Fonseca to the revolution see Rogue Dalton, "Solidaridad con Carlos Fonseca Amador," Casa de las Americas 20 (nov-dec, 1979):181-184.

38. Booth, The End and the Beginning, p. 143.

39. Epica, Nicaragua, pp. 26-29; Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua," p. 5.

40. Jiri Valenta, "Soviet and Cuban Responses to New Opportunities in Central America," in Richard E. Feinberg, Central America: International Dimensions of the Crisis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), p. 146; Carlos Fonseca, "Nicaragua: Zero Hour," pp. 31-32.

41. Humberto Ortega, 50 anos, p. 113.

42. Ibid., pp. 77-110; Crawley, Dictators, Chap. 20.

43. Booth, The End and the Beginning, pp. 115-116.

44. Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, Nicaragua," p. 4-5. On the Monimbo uprising see Epica, Nicaragua, pp. 20-22 and Juanita, "Se siente, se siente, Monimbo esta caliente. Se siente, se siente, Monimbo aguerrido y valiente," Casa de las Americas 20 (nov-dec 1979):169-72.

45. Thomas W. Walker, "The Sandinist Victory in Nicaragua," Current History 78 (February 1980):58; Harnecker's interview with Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua," p. 5.

46. Humberto Ortega, 50 anos, pp. 82-83.

47. Data from the Agency for International Development, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Assistance from International Organizations," workpapers as of April 1976, cited in G. Pope Atkins, Latin America in the International Political System (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 166-69.

48. CONDECA was a unified international command equipped and trained to coordinate with the U.S. Army's Panama-based Southern Command to protect against a possible Cuban invasion and to conduct anti-communist counterinsurgency in the region.

49. Booth, The End and the Beginning, pp. 129-130.

50. The complete documentation of these negotiations can be found in Organization of American States, "Report to the Secretary of State on the Work of the International Commission of Friendly Cooperation and Conciliation for Achieving a Peaceful Solution to the Grave Crisis of the Republic of Nicaragua," (Washington, D.C.: 1979); a critical account is provided by William LeoGrande, "The Revolution in Nicaragua: Another Cuba?" Foreign Affairs 58 (Fall, 1979):28-50.

51. N. S. Leonov, "Nicaragua, July 1979," Latinskaya Amerika 6 (November-December 1980):11.

52. Walker, "Sandinist Victory," p. 59.

53. Ibid.

54. Carmelo Mesa-Lago and June S. Belkin, eds., Cuba in Africa (Pittsburg: Center for Latin American Studies, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburg, 1982).

55. See a statement by W. H. Duncan, a vice-president with the American Chamber of Commerce of Latin America in Nicaragua, in U.S. House Committee of Foreign Affairs, Central America at the Crossroads: Hearing before the Subcommittee on American Affairs, September 11-12, 1979, p. 47; and "Who's Behind the Rebels," Newsweek, July 9, 1979, p. 7.

56. Booth, The End and the Beginning, pp. 151-152, Leonov, "Nicaragua, July 1979," pp. 15-16.

57. "Who's Behind the Rebels," p. 7.

58. James N. Goodsell, "Nicaragua," in R. F. Starr, ed., Yearbook on International Communist Affairs, 1979 (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), pp. 369-371; Leonov, "Nicaragua, July 1979," p. 15.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the evolution of the revolutionary process in Latin America leading to the formulation of Guerra Popular Revolucionaria strategy. It is clear that every revolutionary experience incorporates some of the lessons of its predecessors and in turn contributes to future endeavors. In seeking an explanation for the emergence of this latest formulation of revolutionary strategy, we can summarize some major findings based on the variables used in this study.

Each revolutionary experience is preceded by some combination of social, political, economic and psychological factors or objective conditions which will vary depending on the given situation. They cannot all be created, but they can be manipulated. The eventual objective of the revolutionary is to mobilize the masses and he will make every effort to exploit the occurance of new opportunities in order to raise the revolutionary consciousness of the people.

All popular sectors, most importantly the lower-middle classes of peasants and workers, are necessary for a revolutionary victory. Close cooperation between the guerrillas and the masses is an obvious characteristic of successful revolution. If the political objectives of the revolutionaries do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and

their sympathy, cooperation and assistance cannot be gained. At a certain point in the struggle to seize power, a coalition that mobilizes all social sectors against the principal enemy must be created. By intensifying their ideological flexibility, the FSLN managed to represent the unity and demands of all sectors fighting against the Somocista dictatorship. A "purist" ideology can be detrimental to a popular struggle.

A popular revolutionary leader is more than a social reformer. He has become dissatisfied with the ineffective legal means of reform and is fully dedicated to the destruction of a social order to replace it with something new. It is not only necessary for the leadership to be determined, but it must be highly trained and prepared to deal with political as well as military contingencies.

The traditional communist parties have not been able to become the revolutionary vanguard of popular movements in Latin America. Their ideological rigidity prohibits their dedication to the destruction by force of the established order. Historical experience has shown that an organization oriented on guerrillas in combination with mass mobilization is best suited for the armed struggle. The revolutionary army not only becomes the vanguard, but also the political and military center of the movement. In Nicaragua, the FSLN became an alternative to the Somocista dictatorship and to all the reformist parties, which failed to meet the needs of the people.

Opposition to guerrilla forces in Latin America is strongly supported by the United States, and it is probable that the United States will continue to strengthen this position. However, the United States has not demonstrated conclusively that it can cope with popular revolution. The skillful utilization of its military superiority in and around Latin America has neither succeeded in containing guerrilla wars nor Soviet and Cuban support for them. The emphasis in revolutionary strategy has shifted from military to economic, social, and ideological dimensions. These factors must be more heavily weighed in the formulation of U.S. policy toward the strategy of popular revolutionary war. Reaction will have to be a lot more than mere counter-insurgency.

Soviet influence in Latin America has been ambiguous and ambivalent. There is no vital Soviet interest in the region and nothing could be more abhorrent than the prospect of becoming entangled in a direct military confrontation with the United States in Latin America. This is not to say that the Soviets would not be pleased to see the United States become involved in another Vietnam-like conflict, provided it could be controlled. Therefore, to maintain its world image, the Soviet Union will continue to officially give political, diplomatic, and propaganda support to popular revolutionary movements. Clandestinely they will probably provide much more.

What are the implications of these major aspects for revolutionary strategy? They support the theory of popular revolutionary war. In the long run, the war will be based on mass support. The guerrillas will fight to incorporate the population into their organizations and ally with existing groups. They will not fight initially to seize power but to gain and secure a broad base among the people. Only when a substantial part of the people have been mobilized and partially organized will there be an attempt to take power. In the final analysis, mass support and mobilization are the keys to success.

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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34