

THE LEGACY OF CHE GUEVARA

NORMAN GALL

To the memory of Father John Higgins (1925-1967) of Nashville and La Paz, a servant of the Bolivian people who understood their revolution.

ERNESTO "CHE" GUEVARA, who had come to be Latin America's most feared and famous professional revolutionary, died this October on the southern fringe of the Amazon basin, in a jungle area of tortured ravines where a thousand streams make their way from the Andean highlands into the wild continental heartland below. The circumstances of his death are still unclear. There is some reason to suspect that considerable time elapsed between his capture by the Bolivian army and the day he "died of his wounds." It may also be that the guerrillas he led had been infiltrated by agents since the beginning of their Bolivian operations a year ago. This possibility is supported by the unusually high quality of documentary evidence, intended to prove Cuban "foreign intervention" in Bolivia, that was presented by Bolivian Foreign Minister Walter Guevara Arce (no relation) before a meeting of the Organization of American States in Washington last September 22—evidence which included a false Uruguayan passport, comparative fingerprints, a guerrilla diary, and excellent photos of "Che" in the guerrilla camp.

These suspicions may never be resolved. One thing, however, is clear: Che's death at age thirty-nine at the hands of the ragged Bolivian army, after less than six months of guerrilla combat, testifies less to one man's failure than to the profound weakness and incompetence of the current wave of "Marxist" revolutionary struggle in Latin America. In his last manifesto, published in April 1967 as an article in the Cuban magazine *Tricontinental*, Guevara declared: "Fresh outbursts of warfare will arise in the American countries, as has already occurred in Bolivia. They will continue to grow with all the vicissitudes involved in this dangerous business of a modern revolutionary. Many will die, the victims of their errors. [But] new fighters and new leaders will emerge in the heat of the revolutionary struggle. . . . We

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must wage a general-type action with the tactical goal of drawing the [U.S.] enemy out of his surroundings, forcing him to fight in places where his living habits clash with the actual situation." But Che's guerrilla diary, captured by the Bolivian army, contrasts strongly with this prophecy; it contains bitter complaints in his own handwriting about the indifference of the local peasants to revolution: "The inhabitants of this region are as impenetrable as rocks. You speak to them, but in the deepness of their eyes you note they do not believe you." Indeed, in the seven years since Che wrote *Guerrilla Warfare*, there has been no proof of the "three fundamental lessons that the Cuban Revolution contributed to the conduct of revolutionary movements in America: (1) Popular forces can win a war against an army; (2) It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making a revolution exist, [since] the insurrection can create them; (3) In underdeveloped America the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting." Instead, the chronicle of guerrilla disasters so far is a tale of hardship, failure, and wasted idealism.

Just a few examples will illustrate this point. In Ecuador, some forty students of the Revolutionary Union of Ecuadorean Youth were captured in 1962 by army paratroopers near Santo Domingo de los Colorados, just two days after the youths arrived to set up a guerrilla camp. In Paraguay, since 1959, at least three guerrilla movements have been dismantled by the authorities before they carried out a single action. In the Dominican Republic in 1963, members of the Castroite June 14th Movement were supplied with defective arms from a government munitions factory by a German-born CIA collaborator (who fled the country a few days later); seventeen of them were killed in cold blood when they found their weapons useless, and surrendered.* In Argentina, police in December 1964 raided key training

* These unfortunate youths constituted a sufficient "Communist menace" for the Johnson administration, then barely three weeks in power, to reverse President Kennedy's policy of denying recognition to the provisional regime which, in a September 1963 military coup, had deposed President Juan Bosch, the first freely-elected Dominican ruler in 38 years; however, the puppet head of the new provisional government resigned in protest a few days later when it was learned that his nephew was among the guerrillas slain.

camps and underground supply depots of the "People's Guerrilla Army" (which police agents had previously infiltrated), killing six guerrillas and capturing twelve others before the "army," after six months of training and preliminary contacts with the rural population, could even begin operations. In Peru, three Castroite guerrilla bands, which in 1965-66 had tried to establish themselves along the eastern slopes of the Andes, were knocked out of action within seven months of their first ambush. In the La Convencion Valley of southern Peru, the guerrilla band of Luis de la Puente Uceda, an old friend of Castro, was literally destroyed by internal quarrels; de la Puente himself was shot by the army a few days after he was captured without resistance.* In Guatemala, two rival insurgency movements that were gaining ground steadily for four years have been inactivated over the past year by an army campaign of rural slaughter in which peasants have been impressed into right-wing vigilante organizations (using weapons supplied in the U.S. military aid program).

THE DEATH OF Ernesto Guevara in Bolivia seems to fall quite naturally into place in this general history of failure and rout. But the Bolivian disaster is also compounded by the fact that that country seemed to be a relatively comfortable theater for guerrilla operations. It is a country with a strong revolutionary tradition; its army has been twice defeated by popular uprisings since World War II; and its sparsely populated national territory contains vast areas of lowland jungle and savannah—abundant in water and game animals—capable of hiding and supporting a small guerrilla movement for many years. In his 1965 article, "Castroism: The Long March in Latin America,"† Régis Debray, the young French theorist of Castroism, rhapsodized: "Bolivia is the country with the best subjective and objective conditions, the only South American nation where revolution is the order of the day, despite the reconstitution of an army totally destroyed [in battles with the workers and miners] in the 1952 revolution. It is also the only country where the revolution can restore the classic Bolshevik form—the proof is the 1952 proletarian insurrection—on the basis of soviets, that burst the state apparatus with a short and decisive armed struggle." The U.S. Army Area Handbook for Bolivia (1963) noted that in the fifteen-thousand-man Bolivian army "conscripts (mainly Indians speaking little Spanish) receive no regular pay for their services. Instead they are provided with food, clothing, and lodging and, on rare occasions when funds are available, they may be awarded small monetary gratuities or issues of alcohol. The details of the defense budget are not made known publicly, but a probably valid assumption is that rates of pay for officers and non-commissioned officers . . . range from the equiva-

lent of \$18 a month for colonel to about \$8 for the lowest noncommissioned officer grade. For that reason it is officially approved that service personnel are given sufficient free time to earn a supplementary income." The morale of the Bolivian army is such that officers often earn this "supplementary income" by selling the food raised for army rations on the open market, and by letting recruits go home months before completion of the usual one-year hitch in order to capitalize on their maintenance allotments and to reduce the "political risks" of barracks revolts.

The Bolivian army, it should be noted, has become the nation's leading political party since the November 1964 coup which ousted President Victor Paz Estenssoro and the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR) and installed René Barrientos, the former Vice President and air force chief of staff and a kind of Latin American Captain Marvel. Between 1964 and 1965 the military budget was doubled, army officers were named to key administrative posts, and General Barrientos's incumbency was formalized in rigged elections twenty months after the coup. An astute and glamorous loudmouth who, a Uruguayan journalist once wrote, "even looks like an American," Barrientos has maintained a popular base by buying off the leaders of the peasant *sindicatos* created by the 1952 revolution, and by being very kind to the faction-ridden officers' corps. He reacted to the outbreak of guerrilla warfare by screaming for \$1 million worth of modern U.S. military hardware: mortars, jeeps, jet aircraft, tanks, napalm, helicopters, and automatic weapons. This equipment was meant to replace the old Mauser rifles from the Chaco War with Paraguay (1932-35) with which his army had been combating the guerrillas. In turn, U.S. Ambassador Douglas Henderson initially cabled Washington that Barrientos was exaggerating the guerrilla emergency to exploit it for his own purposes. One U.S. official said: "We are certainly not going to supply the means for Bolivian army hotheads to start bombing and napalming villages or even suspected guerrilla jungle hideaways. Civilians would inevitably be killed and we have a long experience that this inevitably produces a stream of recruits for the guerrillas."*** Shortly thereafter, Barrientos complained publicly that Bolivia was fighting "all America's war," in the long-range interests of the United States, without adequate support. (His problems were complicated during the guerrilla insurrection by the sudden need to send troops into the nationalized tin mines to suppress a rebellion by the miners, who had expelled the police from the two biggest mining areas and declared them "free territory.")

* See my "Letter from Peru," in COMMENTARY, June 1964, and "Peru's Misfired Guerrilla Campaign," *The Reporter*, January 26, 1967.

† In *Les Temps Modernes*, January 1965.

** *The New York Times*, April 12, 1967.

All in all, the Bolivian army was so unprepared for guerrilla warfare, according to one Bolivian colonel, "that our officers dressed differently and wore different arms than the soldiers when out on patrol, so that the guerrillas killed the officers first in the early ambushes. The soldiers, with their old rifles, could not respond to the fire of the guerrillas, who had automatic weapons, so we lost many men at first."* To bolster flagging morale, Barrientos himself went to the guerrilla zone on a few occasions to spend the night with army patrols. At the start of hostilities, a dark comedy of blunders prevailed on both sides. The guerrilla operation was discovered prematurely on March 23 when a guerrilla column—headed, the Bolivian government said, by a Cuban named "Marcos"—disobeyed orders to hold fire and ambushed an army patrol, killing seven, wounding five, and capturing two officers and several more soldiers, who were then stripped of their uniforms and arms and set free forty-eight hours later. Most of the dead were conscripts who had been in the army less than a week. According to the government, guerrilla defectors said that "Marcos" was stripped of his rank as "Comandante" for this act of disobedience. At any rate, the ambush led the army to find the guerrillas' main base, a cattle hacienda called "Casa Calamina." According to the army, Casa Calamina had been bought by Roberto Paredo Leigue — a known member of the Bolivian Communist party and a leader of the guerrilla band — and registered in his own name only a few months before the opening ambush,† about the time Che was said to have entered the country on a false Uruguayan passport. According to Defense Minister Alfredo Ovando, the "defectors" said the guerrillas were not scheduled to begin combat operations until August. However, it is also possible that Casa Calamina was never intended to be more than a relatively permanent

* The following reconstruction of events in Bolivia comes largely from the press and from statements of Bolivian and Cuban leaders. Unfortunately, very few foreign journalists ventured into the guerrilla zone to corroborate official reports of individual raids and ambushes. However, what seems to be an incisive and richly-detailed series of dispatches was filed by Edwin Chacon of the La Paz Catholic-leftist daily, *Presencia*.

† Some aspects of this story are strange, if not totally absurd: for example, the official contention that Paredo openly scouted the villages of the area looking for a suitable farm to buy. Or the claim that the guerrillas left behind, in a cave, clothing with the label "*Casa Albion de Havana*." But one must accept most of this story, though it reflects an almost incredible stupidity on the part of the guerrillas that is bound to be most damaging to Castro in his disagreements with Moscow and the Latin American Communists. For to fabricate such a story out of whole cloth would necessarily involve a conspiracy among Fidel Castro, President Johnson, the Bolivian government, Régis Debray, and from thirty to fifty persons in the guerrilla zone, not to speak of the prisoners, "defectors," and the families of some of the thirty-odd Bolivian soldiers said to have died. As Castro said himself in his October 16 speech confirming Che's death, such a fraud would be very hard to bring off.

training base, like several others the Cubans have been trying to establish along the eastern slopes of the Andes, with the Cuban army officers acting as guerrilla instructors. (This seems to be the explanation for the presence of Cuban guerrilla warfare specialists in Venezuela about the same time, after the Venezuelan Communist party withdrew its trained cadres and switched to electoral tactics.)

THE OFFICIAL VERSION cites the following incidents after the first ambush this year: army patrol waylaid at Iripiti on April 10, eleven soldiers dead, seven wounded, and a Major Sanchez taken prisoner; an ambush (no date given) at El Meson, killing a guide, a policeman, and a police dog; at the end of April, at Taperilla, two soldiers were killed by guerrillas; a few days later, another army patrol was ambushed at Nancahuazu, with three more dead and three injured. Further clashes are subsequently reported, with three guerrillas dead and "several wounded," after the guerrillas had split into three groups, the principal one—led by Che—heading north for the country's only paved highway, which connects the cities of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. After a few weeks without fresh battle reports, the guerrillas' apparent ascendancy reached its peak on July 7, with what the army calls an "audacious raid" on the town of Samaipata on the main highway. Before seizing control of the town for an hour, the guerrillas barricaded the highway, cut telephone lines, and halted several vehicles. They also wired beforehand, in military code, to Samaipata's small army garrison, sending the soldiers away in another direction. Around 11:15 p.m. they entered the town, disarmed and undressed the twenty remaining soldiers in the garrison, who offered no resistance. They entered the town's stores to stock up on food, clothing, and antibiotics, paying the merchants two and three times the normal prices. (Most of the town slept through the raid.) The guerrillas then commandeered a Gulf Oil truck (which they later returned) and drove to another town, La Tranca, where they took nearly all the local officials hostage and killed a soldier who resisted their entry. Then they disappeared before dawn, without a single loss.

In late July, the Fourth and Eighth Divisions of the Bolivian army were reinforced with specially-trained anti-guerrilla units brought in from the interior. This signalled the beginning of two counter-insurgency drives, "Operation Cynthia" in the southern part of the guerrilla zone, and "Operation Parabano" in the north. On July 20, four guerrillas were killed when an army patrol surprised the camp of Guevara's column, seizing ten knapsacks, small radios, a short-wave receiver, weapons, and some audiotapes. On August 31, an army patrol ambushed a column of ten guerrillas heading north across the Rio Grande river, which divides the Departments of Chuquisaca

and Santa Cruz. According to the army, the guerrillas had impressed an Indian peasant as a guide, and sent him across the Rio Grande to see if any trouble awaited them on the other side. He was caught by an army patrol, which forced him to betray the guerrillas' intention to cross the river that day. "The guerrillas were frightened because the guide did not return," an army officer said. "The army patrol waited for sixteen hours on the river bank before the guerrillas decided to cross. They held their fire until the whole guerrilla column of nine men and one woman were deep in the water. The army patrol was made up of Indian recruits, and it took a lot of discipline to hold their fire until the guerrillas were helplessly deep in the water. Nine of the guerrillas were killed and the tenth taken prisoner."

On September 2, a further clash occurred in Yajo Pampa; four guerrillas and one soldier died. A few days later, an army patrol stumbled on a larger group of twenty-five guerrillas, who withdrew from the scene leaving behind one dead and deposits of arms and documents. These and other captured documents, together with information gleaned from the interrogation of prisoners, led to a large roundup of political suspects in La Paz, after which the army claimed to have destroyed the guerrillas' logistical "rear-guard" support organization. By September 26, about six hundred Bolivian "Ranger" troops, who had been rushed through an intensive course taught by U.S. Special Forces instructors, had joined the final hunt for the guerrilla columns, which had been reduced from some fifty-four men to between twenty-five and thirty. It is possible that the reason the "Rangers" were sent in so precipitously was a strange event that had occurred a few days earlier, on September 22. At 4 A.M. on the morning of that Friday, a column of about twenty-five guerrillas had marched into the mountain village of Alto Seco while its three hundred inhabitants were still asleep. Alto Seco lies at the edge of a desert mountain area that forms the principal natural barrier to an escape route from the eastern jungle in the direction of the highland city of Cochabamba, the tin mines, and the Pacific coast. At 5 A.M. the villagers began emerging from their houses to find the guerrillas waiting for them. The guerrillas asked the location of the community's only telephone and then cut the line, although the phone had not been working for weeks. Apparently in no great hurry, the guerrillas dug trenches and built barricades near the cemetery which lies on the only trail leading to the village. They then asked for the village headman, whose wife said he had gone away. (He was hiding in a neighbor's house.)

Then "El Che" himself appeared. The peasants subsequently told Edwin Chacon of the La Paz newspaper *Presencia* that "the chief" arrived on a mule. "He was a man of medium height with long chestnut hair. . . . It seems he was sick, because

they helped him to dismount." He wore army camouflage pants and red socks and carried an olive-green windbreaker and a worker's leather cap. Some of these clothes were changed when the guerrillas bought new provisions from the villagers and burned their old garments. The guerrillas called a town meeting, attended by only thirty-five peasants, at which a speech was given by the Bolivian leader of the group, Roberto "Coco" Paredo, who was killed in a clash with the army a few days later. Paredo asked for volunteers, saying, "Here you have no drinking water or electricity. You are abandoned, like all Bolivians. This is why we are fighting here." According to the peasants, Che then intervened: "We would like you to come voluntarily, not by force. The army says it killed Joaquin and other comrades, but this is a lie, all army propaganda. The corpses they showed in Vallegrande were taken from a cemetery. They haven't killed any guerrillas, and this I assure you because only two days ago I communicated with Joaquin." The peasants were frightened and did not volunteer. After they had rested and changed clothes, the guerrillas began leaving in three different groups. They had stayed in Alto Seco for three days.

ONE OF THE last pages of Che's handwritten diary, transmitted in facsimile by wirephoto throughout the world, contained this entry: "The eleven-month anniversary of our guerrilla organization has arrived without complications. Early in the day we descended with the mules, past some precipices that caused a spectacular plunge of the *macho*. . . . The trail was longer than we thought, and only at 8:15 we realized that we were near the brook, which Miguel followed at full speed, but could only reach the *camino real* [highway], since it was already completely dark. . . . We advance with precaution, and note nothing abnormal, for we occupied an empty house. The army hadn't come any closer, losing its chance. We find flour, oats, salt, and goats, killing two of them, making for a little feast together with the flour, although . . . we consumed the night expecting something. In the morning. . . ." In his October 16 speech, Castro read the last entry (October 7) of the diary: "At noon, an old lady grazing her goats entered the canyon where we had camped, and we had to hold her. The woman would not give any reliable information about the soldiers. To every question, she replies that she does not know, that she has not been there for some time. She only gave information about the roads. From the report of the old lady, we learn we are roughly one league from Lleras and another from Haguey, and six from Pusara. They give the old woman fifty pesos with orders to say nothing, but with little hope she will keep her word. Seventeen of us went out with a very small moon; the march was very dangerous, leaving many signs along the canyons. There are no houses nearby,

but only potato plots along the ravine, as we advance between two high ridges without vegetation. The army has a report that there are 250 revolutionaries.”

Colonel Joaquin Zenteno Anaya, commander of the Bolivian army's Eighth Division, said at a crowded press conference on October 10 that Ernesto Guevara had been gravely wounded two days before at the junction of two narrow ravines in a battle with an army patrol that lasted at least two hours. Five more guerrillas were killed (a Peruvian, two Cubans, and two Bolivians, Zenteno said), with four soldiers also dead and four wounded. In his speech of October 16, Fidel Castro reconstructed the incident to say that, instead of withdrawing quickly as guerrillas normally do when confronted with superior numbers, the members of the band chose to make a desperate last stand around the body of their wounded leader. The army said Che was taken in a coma to Vallegrande, where his body was exhibited October 10. A Bolivian medical examiner, Dr. José Martínez Cazo, subsequently told reporters that the fatal bullet wound—which pierced the heart and lung—had killed Guevara instantly only five hours before he, Martínez, examined the corpse on Monday afternoon, October 9. Then the Bolivian government suddenly announced that the body had been cremated, with two fingers severed beforehand for purposes of fingerprint identification. And this is all we know.

Are we to believe the official story? It is of course possible that the telltale photos of the guerrillas could have been taken by an infiltrator, or that some U.S. Special Forces troops out of uniform could have played a key role in hunting down Che and his men. (The Americans did assemble most of the impressive montage of evidence presented by Bolivia to the OAS.) But even if these possibilities were proved to be true, they would not change the essential nature of the disaster. Some doubts were relieved by Fidel Castro's October 16 speech to the Cuban people confirming the news of Che's death:

In other words, the diary [found in Che's knapsack] is authentic in our judgment. The photographs are authentic. It seems to us to be utterly impossible to organize all this on false grounds. Many forgeries can be made but it is impossible to forge the most subtle features of the personality, the bearing, and the facial features of a person. And having analyzed all the data, all the details, all the angles—diary, photographs, news reports, the manner in which the news breaks—in our judgment it was technically impossible to fabricate these facts.

But let us go further afield. In the bosom of the Bolivian regime there are so many rivalries and problems that it becomes absolutely impossible for them to get together and agree even to tell a lie. They could tell some lie or give some news that they killed some guerrillas and their bodies never turned up. But many of these re-

ports are usually given by reactionary governments and they have not the slightest importance. From the technical standpoint, [a fraud] would require a quantity of resources that does not exist there.

II

“**E**L CHE” WAS the only member of the Cuban Revolution's high command with extensive experience in South America, and the one most concerned—aside from Fidel—with the revolution's world role. The big billboard portraits of Che throughout post-revolution Cuba displayed him in the likeness of a soulful, husky movie star, with dark, distant eyes and a flowing mane, in a black beret and olive green uniform open romantically at the throat to expose his manly chest. (In reality, he was lean and asthmatic, with a catlike irony and quick, impish eyes.) A large portrait of him was also hung over the speaker's rostrum at the Chaplin Theater in Havana last August during sessions of the LASO (Latin American Solidarity Organization) conference, at which a kind of Castroite Comintern for Latin America was formally established. Che was the conference's “honorary president”; he was so much Fidel's other self that his mysterious “disappearance”^{*} enabled Castro figuratively to be at once in Cuba and in many other places throughout Latin America.

The rumors generated by the Che mystery placed him at different times in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Guatemala—as well as in the Congo, China, and Vietnam—always plotting revolution with some menacing and inscrutable bunch of desperadoes. Che's “disappearance” may be seen as a ploy to buy time to resolve a political conflict with the Russians over guerrilla warfare; at the same time, it generated a cheap and flattering windfall of publicity in the speculations over Che's whereabouts; in any case, it provides a telling example of Castro's propaganda genius. John Gerassi, an American writer who often reflects the hopes of the Cuban leaders, reported in an August 22 dispatch from Havana appearing in the October *Ramparts*:

Like a revolutionary phoenix, Che Guevara is rising from the ashes of his own, self-imposed obscurity. Long thought by the American press to have been killed or betrayed by the very Cuban revolutionary regime he had helped to create, Che has once again assumed a clear role as the world's foremost proponent of a revolutionary internationalism which knows no allegiances to state power or political party. And Che, by his independent vision of revolution,

^{*} The last time he was seen publicly was at Havana's Rancho Boyeros airport on March 15, 1965, when he returned from a three-month journey to Africa and Asia. There he had spoken in a way that foreshadowed a hardening of Castro's foreign-policy line.

also haunts the Kremlin policy-makers, complicating diplomacy within the Communist world and frustrating Russian hopes for a secure detente with Washington. The revolutionary spirit symbolized by Guevara is everywhere undercutting the influence and the dynamism of old-line Communist parties. . . .

It is always interesting to know how one acquires such revolutionary credentials. Guevara's road to Marxism began when he left his family home in Cordoba, Argentina, in 1952 (at age twenty-four) to cross the Andes on a motorbike to Peru via Chile. By coincidence, this writer happened on his path two years ago while covering a Castroite guerrilla insurrection based on the Hacienda Chapi in the mountains of central Peru—a wild and vast cattle estate at the approaches to the Amazon basin, requiring a week to cross on foot and situated at two days' walk from the nearest road. Neighbors in the area recalled that Che had worked on the hacienda in an anti-leprosy campaign headed by a Peruvian Communist physician, Dr. Hugo Pesce. (Childhood friends of his from Cordoba recently told me that, as an adolescent, Ernesto used to ride fifty miles by bike during his summer vacation to spend a few days at a leper hospital in the town of San Francisco, where he read Goethe's *Faust* aloud to the patients. As a guerrilla leader in the Sierra Maestra, he gave literacy classes to his peasant recruits, reading aloud to them from Cervantes, Robert Louis Stevenson, and the poetry of Pablo Neruda.)

In Peru, Che fell in with the youth of the (then) leftist and outlawed APRA party, some of whom later said they had supported him during hard days in Lima. He went to Bolivia to look for a job—he didn't find one—in the government created by the convulsive revolution of 1952, a revolution which destroyed the Bolivian army, abolished serfdom, and nationalized the tin mines. Then he went to Guatemala and got a minor post in the land-reform agency a few months before the overthrow of the Communist-dominated regime of Col. Jacobo Arbenz—by a CIA-backed invasion from Honduras which the Guatemalan army refused to oppose. After two months of asylum in the Argentine embassy in Guatemala City, he went to Mexico City where he soon became a friend of Fidel and Raul Castro, who had just been released from jail for staging the abortive and suicidal attack on the Moncada army barracks at Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953. Guevara joined the group of young Cubans being trained in guerrilla warfare by General Alberto Bayo, an elderly Republican émigré from the Spanish Civil War, who had been born in Cuba; along with eighty-one of these youths, he took part in the "invasion" of Cuba in December 1956 under the command of Fidel Castro.

A Cuban exile who worked with Che for a year after he became President of the Cuban National Bank in October 1959, recalled recently how Che

would enter the bank daily at 1 P.M.—in his olive drab uniform and paratroop boots—to begin office hours that would last until 6 A.M. the next day. (Three nights a week, between 2 A.M. and 4 A.M., he would take tutorial classes in economics and mathematics as a self-imposed measure to compensate for his lack of training in these subjects. At the same time he required his bodyguards, peasant boys from his guerrilla column in the Sierra Maestra, to take literacy instruction; when they slacked off, he sent them to jail.) As Minister of Industries (1961-65), he involved himself in a long and acrimonious ideological debate with Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, an old-line Cuban Communist who had once served in the cabinet of Batista, Che arguing for "moral incentives" as against "material incentives" to increase production and efficiency in the Cuban economy. (Ultimately, in typical fashion, Fidel relieved Che of his ministerial post and Rodriguez of his job as director of INRA [*Instituto Nacional de la Reforma Agraria*] while temporarily deciding to use both pay incentives and psychological rewards to stimulate better work performance.)

Che's reading in Marxism was so meager at the time the rebel army of the July 26th Movement descended victoriously on Havana in 1959, that he, like Fidel, had to start becoming a Communist virtually from scratch. In both of these young men, the common denominator was anti-Yankeeism, an emotion of which Communism seemed to be the most extreme and dramatic form. This anti-Yankeeism has also been the *logos* of Cuban ambitions for Latin America, which is why Fidel's kind of "Marxism" has had so little positive ideological thrust, and has been so far confined—with a few exceptions—to the student circles that have adopted Castroism as a cult of adolescence.

CHE EMERGED again this year as the ideal example—second only to Fidel himself—of a new revolutionary personality defined by Castro in his acrid debate with the Venezuelan Communist party (VCP) over the VCP's "cowardice and repugnant opportunism" in abandoning the "armed struggle" (*lucha armada*) in the face of crushing military and police repression, as well as the growing viability of the Venezuelan democratic system. On March 13, the anniversary of the suicidal 1957 attack on the National Palace led by Havana University students in an effort to kill Batista, an anniversary used repeatedly by Castro to attack "orthodox" Communists in Cuba and elsewhere, Castro made what is perhaps the most daring theoretical statement of his career:

Our position toward Communist parties will be based on strictly revolutionary principles. To the parties without vacillation or contradiction in their line and that, in our judgment, take a consistently revolutionary position, we will give total support. But in any country where those who call themselves Communists do not know

how to fulfill their [revolutionary] duties, we will support those who, though not labeled Communists, behave like true Communists in action and struggle. Because all true revolutionaries, who carry within themselves revolutionary vocation and spirit, will always terminate in Marxism!

This could provoke a parting of the ways between insurrectional "Castroism" and official "Socialism" as molded by Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev, with the future role of Communist parties everywhere in dispute. The role of Che Guevara as a new kind of revolutionary—and the manner of his death—may help to shape this struggle.*

III

CHE GUEVARA was an inspiration to insurgents all over Latin America. His romantic portrait of the guerrilla fighter as social reformer, written in terse and graceful prose in his 1960 manual, *Guerrilla Warfare*, represented an attempt to elaborate upon Lenin's concept of the professional revolutionary. It was aimed at the idealism of Latin America's alienated population of students, ex-students, and non-students as truly as had been Lenin's appeal to the same class in Russia:

The guerrilla fighter . . . must have a moral conduct that shows him to be a true priest of the reform to which he aspires. To the stoicism imposed by the difficult conditions of warfare should be added an austerity born of rigid self-control that will prevent a single excess, a single slip, whatever the circumstances. The guerrilla soldier should be an ascetic. . . . The peasant must always be helped technically, economically, morally, and culturally. The guerrilla fighter will be a sort of guiding angel who has fallen into the zone, helping the poor always and bothering the rich as little as possible in the first phases of the war. But this war will continue on its course; contradictions will continuously become sharper; the moment will arrive when many of those who regarded the revolution with a certain sympathy at the outset will place themselves in a position diametrically opposed; and they will take the first step into battle against the popular

* The recriminations have already begun. In an October 25 *Pravda* article, Rudolfo Ghioldi, a Politburo member of the Argentine Communist party wrote: "Along with rejection of the international importance of Marxism-Leninism, petty bourgeois nationalists are creating the concept of local or continental exception in order to justify deviations from Marxist-Leninist teaching. . . . Maoism and related currents advertise extreme adventurism, adapting offensive theory to any situation regardless of the presence of objective conditions. They propose that a revolution can be initiated from the outside and artificially stimulated across the borders, considering the nature of revolution isolated from the process of class struggle in the countries involved." A few days later, a relatively unimportant Cuban functionary, Minister of Health José Ramon Machado Ventura, replaced President Osvaldo Dorticos as head of the Cuban delegation to the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

forces. At that moment the guerrilla fighter should act to make himself the standard-bearer of the people's cause, punishing every betrayal with justice. Private property should acquire in the war zones its social function. For example, excess land and livestock not essential for the maintenance of a wealthy family should pass into the hands of the people and be distributed equitably and justly.

One of the cardinal tenets of what may be called the Castroite theory of guerrilla warfare, insisted upon by Castro and Guevara alike, is the impossibility of "exporting revolution." This point was brought home by Castro in a talk he had on June 13, 1964 with a small group of foreign reporters (myself included): "You cannot export revolution," he remarked, "just as you cannot export counterrevolution." The same idea was expressed privately by Guevara to Marcos Antonio Yon Sosa, a young guerrilla leader whom I interviewed two years later in the dry, hungry, hillbilly country of the Guatemalan Oriente:

Before we really organized our movement, five of us went to Havana in September 1962, and stayed through the October missile crisis. It was arranged after a lawyer in Guatemala City called us and said Che Guevara wanted to see us. We met with Che four or five times and talked with Fidel once from 3 P.M. until 2 A.M. the next morning. The first time we met Che was when he walked into our house unannounced. We didn't know who he was until one of his aides finally told us. He had just come in without any fanfare or pretensions and just started chatting. We asked him later about how to organize our guerrilla movement and what would be the best part of Guatemala to start guerrilla operations in. Che told us very modestly that he couldn't answer these questions, that the Guatemalans have to make their own revolution and decide these things for themselves.

All guerrilla strategy in Latin America over the past nine years has been founded on Guevara's contention that "a nucleus of thirty to fifty men . . . is sufficient to initiate an armed struggle in any country of the Americas with their conditions of favorable territory for operations, [peasant] land hunger, repeated injustices, etc." This assumption has been further developed, by Régis Debray and others, into a full-fledged "Leninist" theory of the insurrectional *foco* (a Spanish word used to describe the unitary focus or base of guerrilla operations). The *foco* theory was formulated by Debray in his 1965 article, "Castroism: The Long March in Latin America":

Although at the start it is a tiny group (ten to thirty persons, professional revolutionaries entirely dedicated to the cause and seeking the conquest of power), the *foco* does not intend to conquer power by itself, through an audacious strike. Nor would it seek power through war or a military defeat of the enemy. It seeks only to prepare the masses to overthrow established

power by themselves. [It is] a minority which, embedded in the most vulnerable part of the national territory, will extend slowly, like an oil stain, propagating concentric waves in the peasant masses, then in the cities, and finally over the capital. . . . The first contact with the peasants that inhabit the wilderness where the guerrillas install themselves for reasons of security and natural protection is the hardest to establish and consolidate. These isolated peasants, small owners of dry parcels . . . are also the most closed to political consciousness, the most difficult to guide and organize, because of their dispersion, illiteracy, and initial suspicion toward these strangers whom they believe will bring bombardment, looting, and blind repression. But later, when this sector is conquered, the guerrilla *foco*—already consolidated in provisions, intelligence, and recruits—will enter into contact with agricultural workers in the lowlands (sugar cane cutters, etc.), a social level much more receptive and prepared because of its concentration, chronic unemployment, vulnerability to market fluctuation, etc. And in neighboring cities, contact will finally be made with small concentrations of industrial workers who are already interested in politics, without the need of the slow work of approach so indispensable in the wilderness. . . . The *foco* installs itself as a detonator in the least-watched point of the explosive charge and in the most favorable moment for the explosion. By itself, the *foco* will not change a given social situation, nor even—in a single action—a political situation. It cannot have an active part if it does not find a point of insertion within the contradictions in development. In space: where class contradictions are the most violent and less evident politically, in the core area of agrarian feudalism, far from the repressive apparatus of the cities. In time: there is the *quid*. It is sure that a guerrilla *foco* cannot be born in tranquil times, but should be instead the culmination of a political crisis.

The long-term cost and political implications for a Latin American government in combating a guerrilla insurrection is an integral part of this strategy. A 1964 clandestine guerrilla handbook of the Venezuelan FALN (*Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional*) put it this way: "The uncontrolled increase in the armed forces would break the equilibrium of forces guaranteeing the stability of the government. In other words, a civil government cannot sustain itself in a Spartan Venezuela. When revolutionary operations constantly strike the reactionary military vanguard, it is probable that the military will insist on certain political controls for 'pacification' and finally will decide on a coup d'état."*

AND YET, despite the tactical validity of such analyses, the Castroite insurgencies in Latin America are not succeeding. Quite apart from the stiffer and more intelligent resistance which they have been encountering from the U.S. and

from Latin American military establishments, they have also violated some of the fundamental strategic precepts of their own revolutionary theory. Che himself wrote that guerrilla insurgencies cannot be successful against governments able to make a pretense of democratic legitimacy, but the Cubans have in fact spurred Castroite "National Liberation" movements against governments of precisely this kind in Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia. Castro himself voiced the fear privately to foreigners this summer that when the United States frees itself from its Vietnam commitment, it will turn full-force on Cuba, and that Cuba's only defense in that case will be to foment as many new "Vietnams" as possible, to commit American power elsewhere as well as to recoup the faltering prestige of her strategy of revolutionary "armed struggle" in the hemisphere.

Earlier this year, a few American officials privately expressed the belief that Cuba was making an all-out effort, after many defeats, to prove the efficacy of its guerrilla warfare theory by sending its own men to join insurgents in South America. This view was supported by the Cubans themselves; both Castro and the Cuban Vice Minister of Defense, Juan Almeida (who substituted for Castro as speaker at Havana's May Day parade), hinted broadly at Cuban participation in the Bolivian and Venezuelan guerrilla movements. (On May 8, Venezuelan authorities captured two Cuban military men in a guerrilla landing operation; a third was caught in a Caracas penthouse on August 24, after having participated in a terrorist bank robbery.) When Régis Debray was arrested with two other foreigners after leaving Che's guerrilla camp, he claimed that he had entered Bolivia on his own French passport and had obtained press accreditation from the Bolivian Foreign Ministry as a correspondent for the Mexican magazine *Sucesos*, a pictorial bi-weekly which is widely believed to enjoy a Castro subsidy and which has won special fame in Latin American journalism for its glamorous photo-interviews with Castroite guerrilla leaders.† The photos showing Che and the Cubans in the guerrilla camp—exhibited by the Bolivians at the OAS ministerial conference on September 22—are very much in the style of these pictorial reports.

It appears, then, that a desperate hunger for publicity severely prejudiced the security of the guerrilla operation while it still should have been in the secret stages of gestation. It seems too

* Yoboso, "Las FALN Vencerán: Notas Para una Tactica Militar Revolucionaria," 1964

† These *Sucesos* specials usually appear in series with color photos and a text that gives a very flattering estimate of the guerrillas' political and military strength. Just before Debray's arrest, the editor of *Sucesos*, Mario Menendez Rodriguez, was jailed for several days in Bogota after a guerrilla band staged a train robbery and a raid on a police post (leaving thirteen dead) for him to photograph and describe. By tracing Menendez's travels, police were able to dismantle the guerrillas' urban support organization. Menendez gave police additional details after his arrest.

that a deficient recruitment procedure led to several early defections, which gave the Bolivian army enough information to seek out the guerrillas when they were not yet prepared for action. Most important, the presence of a large proportion of foreigners (including former Cuban sub-cabinet officers and at least three former members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist party, according to photographic identification offered by the Bolivians) severely burdened the political thrust of Bolivia's "War of National Liberation." What is worse, this foreign presence flew in the face of Che's advice to younger guerrilla leaders that such wars must be fought by indigenous patriots and, preferably, by peasants from the guerrilla zone itself.

BUT IN assessing the full significance of the failure of the Bolivian guerrilla insurrection, one is lured beyond the errors of the guerrillas themselves to view the spectacular ecological changes that have been occurring recently at the fringes of the Amazon basin. Many of the basic conditions of life have been changed by the introduction into the area of new roads, cheap airplane travel, small electric generators, outboard motors, canned food, radio transmitters, and—most important—malaria control. The impact of these innovations has been felt most strongly over the past decade. Along the eastern Andean slopes of Bolivia and Peru, many thousands of Quechua-speaking Indian families from the highlands are descending to build "spontaneous settlements" alongside the new but still primitive dirt roads which penetrate trackless and unsurveyed areas. These Indians will go wherever there is a road; their tenacity is making a mockery of the small and shoddy government colonization schemes that have so far been tried.

Perhaps the most significant factor of all, however, in the recent history of the jungle frontier, has been the pervasive American presence in some of those areas where the national governments are unable to finance and execute development programs. This American presence is articulated in many ways. Since the closing of China in 1949, Latin America has become the main field of American missionary work. There are now relatively few aboriginal peoples that have not been reached by missionaries, many of whom have specialized in building schools and recording primitive languages. In jungle towns nowadays it is not unusual to see an American missionary fly in alone in a single-engine plane (with perhaps three or four aborigines in need of medical treatment) to buy supplies and then fly back into the jungle an hour or two later.*

In some areas the new tropical economies have been growing so fast that they have literally leapt out of their isolation. For example, the tiny jungle airstrip serving the Peruvian town of Tarapoto is the country's busiest air terminal

outside of Lima, shipping out the foodstuffs produced in the nearby tropical valleys that are heavily settled by highland peasant migrants. To reach Tarapoto with a road (a project fitting into President Fernando Belaunde's grandiose scheme for a \$300 million Marginal Jungle Highway running north-south along the eastern slopes of the Andes through four nations), Peruvian army engineers in 1965 had to appeal to the U.S. air force to airlift in five hundred tons of heavy construction equipment, too heavy for Peruvian military planes to carry. An American engineering firm solved the same problem by bringing its equipment into Peru on barges over more than two thousand miles from the Atlantic Coast of Brazil along the Amazon River and its minor tributaries. (In recent years the Brazilian air force has been dropping paratroops into Amazon jungle clearings to build small airstrips, which can later be expanded to accommodate C-47's for scheduled airline service.)

The revolutionary thrust of the United States in creating new conditions of life has been most apparent in the Santa Cruz area of Bolivia—less than one hundred miles from where Che was killed. Here the U.S. government has invested close to \$100 million since 1956, in what is now one of the few notable successes of the Alliance for Progress in regional development. This investment has financed the construction of all-weather roads, three sugar mills, and numerous schools; the clearing of twenty-five thousand acres of virgin land between 1955 and 1959 alone; and the providing of cattle, poultry, and supervised farm credit and loans for purchase of industrial and farm machinery—all this as part of the \$400 million in U.S. aid to Bolivia since the 1952 revolution. The investment was sufficient to consolidate the currency (at a time of wild inflation) to the point where the country's Indian peasants were able to retain enough purchasing power to acquire, over the past fifteen years, a wide range of imported goods: shoes, bicycles, trucks, transistor radios, etc. In the Bolivian Oriente, the invest-

* Two years ago, a Castroite guerrilla insurrection occurred in the Peruvian jungle area of the semi-aboriginal Campa Indians, who had wiped out several Franciscan missions in the 17th and 18th centuries. The leader of the insurrection was Guillermo Lobaton, who reportedly had been to China and Vietnam before returning to Peru and was apparently attempting to work with the warlike Campas the way General Vo Nguyen Giap worked with the mountain tribes of northeastern Vietnam during World War II. The difference, however, is that Giap worked *politically* with his tribesmen for two years before entering into combat; the Peruvian guerrillas worked with the Campas for less than six months in a very desultory fashion before ambushing a rural police patrol (killing seven), and provoking a repression by the Peruvian army that wiped out the guerrillas in six months and led to the death of hundreds of Campas. American missionaries working in the zone reported that the Peruvian air force had bombed a number of Campa villages. While the guerrilla insurgency was still alive, however, a special school was set up under AID auspices in the area to train the Peruvian rural police in counter-insurgency operations.

ment has laid important economic foundations, reinforced by the discovery of oil and natural gas in the area after Gulf Oil obtained an export concession in 1956. Both rice and sugar production have doubled between 1960 and 1964, converting Bolivia from an importer of these tropical products to a hard-pressed searcher for export markets. At the time Che's guerrilla operation was discovered last March, there were Peace Corps volunteers working in the guerrilla zone itself. Debray paid this American presence a rather stirring tribute earlier this year:*

The armed guerrilla unit and the people's vanguard are not dealing with a foreign expeditionary force, with limited manpower, but with a well-established system of local domination. They [the guerrillas] themselves are the foreigners, lacking status, who at the beginning can offer the populace nothing but bloodshed and pain. Furthermore, channels of communication are increasing; airports and landing fields are being built in the most remote areas, heretofore inaccessible by land routes. On the other side of the Andes, for example, between the mountains and the Amazon basin, there is a famous highway that is meant to skirt the jungle and link up the tropical zones of Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, as well as join each with its respective capital. As for North American imperialism, it has increased its forces in the field and is making every effort to present itself, not in repressive guise but in the shape of social and technical assistance: we are familiar with all the sociological projects now under way, staffed with international personnel. . . . Thousands of Peace Corpsmen have succeeded in integrating themselves in rural areas—some of them by dint of hard work, patience, and at times real sacrifices—*where they profit by the lack of political work by left-wing organizations* (my italics—N.G.). Even the most remote regions are today teeming with Catholic, Evangelical, Methodist, and Seventh Day Adventist missionaries. In a word, all of these close-knit networks of control strengthen the national machinery of domination. Without exaggerating the depth or scope of their penetration, we can say that they have indeed changed the scene.

IV

THE LAST YEARS of Ernesto Guevara's life were identified with two bitter causes: the creation of "two, three, many Vietnams" to pin down North American imperialism in long and debilitating struggles in as many places as possible in Latin America and elsewhere, and the parallel economic struggle between the rich nations and poor nations. In his last public speech, at an Afro-Asian economic conference in Algiers just before he returned to Cuba and dropped out of sight, he made a modest proposal concerning the burdens of progress within the socialist camp:†

The development of the countries that now begin the road of liberation should cost the socialist countries. We say it thus, without the least spirit of blackmail or theatricality, nor for a facile appeal for greater closeness to the grouping of Afro-Asiatic countries; it is a profound conviction. Socialism cannot exist if a new collective and individual attitude is not provoked by a change in conscience of a worldwide character toward the peoples that suffer imperialist oppression. . . . How can "mutual benefit" mean selling at world market prices the primary materials that cost limitless sweat and suffering for the backward countries, and buying at world market prices the machines produced in modern automated factories? If we establish this type of relationship between the two groups of nations, we should agree that the socialist countries are, in a certain way, accomplices of imperial exploitation. . . . The truths of socialism, and more so the crude truth of imperialism, have shaped the Cuban people and showed them the road toward Communism that later was taken voluntarily. The peoples of Asia and Africa proceeding toward their final liberation should begin the same route; they will take this road sooner or later. Although their socialism today takes one or another descriptive adjective, there is no other valid definition of socialism for us than the abolition of exploitation of man by man. . . . Our reasoning is that investments of socialist states in their own territories weigh directly on the state budget and are not recovered save through use at the end of the long manufacturing process. Our proposition is that investments of this type should be made in the underdeveloped countries. An immense force should be put in motion in our miserably exploited continents . . . to begin a new stage of the authentic international division of labor, based not in the history of what has been done until now, but in the future history of what can be done. The states in whose territories the new investments will be placed would have all the inherent rights of sovereign property over them (without any payment or credit attached), remaining obligated as possessors to supply [goods for] a determined number of years at determined prices.

The Russians must have been delighted with this proposal, having spent \$1 million daily over the past six years just to keep the Cuban economy afloat, and having learned many lessons from the Cubans just by watching the marvels of their manufacturing processes! The East European People's Republics have largely begged off from diverting significant amounts of their resources to the goal of Cuba's survival, save for straight cash and barter deals and for Czech and Bulgarian technical aid programs. And the shrinking foreign aid budgets of Western governments also reflect an increasing disbelief in the revolutionary rhetoric of the "Third World"; "Westerners" are becoming

* Régis Debray, "Revolution in the Revolution?" *Monthly Review*, July-August 1967, pp. 52-53.

† *Política* (Mexico) March 1, 1965.

peevish and bored at the incapacity of aid recipients to improvise for their own survival, and at the extraordinary variety of bastard socialisms that always seem to be stuck in the mud. The failure up to now of planned (as opposed to spontaneous) guerrilla insurrections in Latin America can only reinforce the impression left by the Chinese fiasco in Indonesia and the disarray created by the "Cultural Revolution" inside China itself. On the latter event, the *Economist* editorialized:*

What has been happening in China since the summer is the end of the road that started in Paris in 1789. We are seeing the last stages of the revolutionary cycle that began in France, was checked in central Europe in 1848, and picked up impetus again in Russia in 1917. It continued its eastward march in 1949, when it reached China, and it is in China that it finally seems to be working itself out. The ideas behind the social revolutions of the past two hundred years have changed their shape as the center of the storm has moved steadily eastward. The revolutionary doctrine first picked up Marxism, and now Mao Tse-tung's reinterpretation of Marxism. But the assumption shared by all revolutionaries throughout the whole period has been their belief that a radical act of violence will burst open the door to a better society: that the way to a juster form of government necessarily lies over the exploded ruins of the old order. It is this belief that Chairman Mao has now finally and perhaps decisively put in doubt.

IF THIS editorial is any sort of guide to emergent "Western" attitudes, what we seem to be heading toward in the very near future is an exchange of the social evangelism of the first half of this century for a perversion of the old Calvinist doctrine of the Elect. This "social Calvinism" represents the belief that a large portion of humanity—a clear majority—is naturally and irremediably condemned to the lower depths of poverty and misery, and that the more powerful elect of mankind can and must keep the condemned in place by force of arms. In the elect societies there is a high coincidence between social justice and individual "human rights," which are anchored in private property. The poorer societies are struggling with the seemingly intractable problems of a scarcity of capital and natural resources and of cultural poverty; these problems have impeded the development of better economic organization to deal with the pressures of proliferating marginal populations. Under these conditions, individual liberties are less prized, private property is coveted by the disenfranchised, and "Western" traditions of liberty and property tend to conflict with collective pressures for social justice. The "Western" response, understandably, is that what we have must be preserved in good condition and, for the rest, there just isn't enough to go around.

Recent developments in Latin America, indeed, have led many to believe that "revolu-

tionary" pressures of the type generated in poor societies can be easily contained. It is probable, for instance, that the guerrilla forces in several countries, despite their own weaknesses, would have scored a much wider success if the Latin American regular armies opposing them had not been backstopped by large amounts of U.S. military aid and advice. Since 1950, the U.S. has provided roughly \$1.5 billion in military aid to Latin American armies, mostly in arms donations; in one place alone—Fort Gulick, Panama—the U.S. has trained more than eighteen thousand Latin American military men in counter-insurgency techniques. On April 6, 1966, General Robert W. Porter, chief of the U.S. Army Southern Command in Panama, explained the value of the military aid program before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. He said the program was "austere in the light of U.S. objectives, Latin American military needs, and the total U.S. effort in Latin America. The cost is only 3.9 per cent of the total U.S. effort, and I believe that 3.9 per cent is a low premium rate for the insurance received."

In Guatemala, to take but one example, the presence of U.S. military advisers in the guerrilla zone has been reported by foreign missionary priests and by guerrillas themselves. U.S. officers, some of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent, were reported accompanying Guatemalan army patrols. General Porter revealed in his testimony that U.S. army engineers were engaged in the guerrilla zone in a "civic-action" program of public works, and were being helped in their work by U.S. army Special Forces officers with Vietnam experience. "In [neighboring] Honduras the [U.S.] engineer battalion is also working up in the high country along the Guatemalan border," Porter said. "This is a part where you don't know where the border is." Earlier this year, a correspondent for the *Economist* described how the Guatemalan counter-insurgency drive subsequently developed:*

The clean-up of the guerrilla zone has been carried out in military style by a proliferating number of right-wing terrorist groups. Some of these are phantom organizations under whose name soldiers in civilian dress carry out their more grisly operations. The principal terrorist organization, the "White Hand," is a creature of the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*. In 1954, the MLN spearheaded the CIA-organized invasion from Honduras which, with the connivance of the Guatemalan military high command, overthrew the pro-Communist regime of Col. Jacobo Arbenz. Since last July the MLN leaders in the Oriente and many of their followers have been disappearing into Honduras. A new low-range radio station, Radio America, based in Honduras, has been warning peasants of a new invasion with massive American support. The Americans have made no visible move, but the White

* The Last Revolution," January 14, 1967.

† "Guatemala: Death in the Hills," June 10, 1967.

Hand's anti-Communist vigilantes in the Oriente have received roughly two-thousand rifles and machine guns which were given to the Guatemalan army under the American military aid program. These weapons have been used in the slaughter of guerrilla collaborators and sympathizers in the towns and villages along the Atlantic Highway, where guerrillas used to harass trucking and troop movements with near impunity. Since the army began its offensive, between forty and fifty of the estimated two hundred to three hundred hard-core guerrilla fighters have been killed. Army sources have put the death toll at roughly two thousand in the eastern departments of Zacapa and Izabal, the central area of rebel activity. The surviving rebels have withdrawn into a deeper portion of the thicket, or into Guatemala City. Captured guerrillas in black hoods are now accompanying army patrols in order to point out those who have collaborated with the insurgents, as well as guerrilla campsites and buried arms deposits. As a result, rebel activity has dropped to almost nothing in recent weeks, and the leaders of the MLN have begun to talk of a "definitive solution." . . . The violence of recent months is believed to have claimed more lives than all the insurgent activity of the past five years.*

V

MOST REVOLUTIONS are born of war, and others of foreign intervention. "When the enemy comes we fight, when he goes we plough," wrote the great North Vietnamese strategist Truong Chinh in 1947 at the beginning of the Vietminh war with the French.† The fusion of nationalism and social vindication in the scramble of global war produced the wave of revolutions issuing from World War II (China, Vietnam, Egypt, India, Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, Algeria, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Kenya), nearly all in countries that were hosts to the greater conflict, with foreign troops fighting on their soil and the "democratic" propaganda of the Allies vying for the support of colonial and semicolonial populations. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the Nazi revolution in Germany issued from national defeats in World War I, with Lenin and Hitler both using returning war veterans and "treason" propaganda in what have become classic techniques of agitation. Similarly in Bolivia, it was returning veterans from the disastrous Chaco War (1932-35) with Paraguay who started the major events in motion. Like the Russians at the front in World War I, the Bolivian veterans included intellectuals as well as illiterate peasants (mostly Indians who had left Andean villages and haciendas for the first time to fight a dimly understood war, in an inhospitable lowland desert, under a military leadership whose corruption and incompetence dissipated the Bolivian advantage in numbers). The mobilization of 250,000 Bolivians for war (56,000 died, 10,000 deserted, and 17,000

were taken prisoner) gave many their first sense of nationhood; Bolivia's humiliating territorial loss to Paraguay provoked widespread reflections on national destiny and sent thousands of veterans home to organize peasant and miners' *sindicatos* as well as radical political movements that were the engines of the social revolutions of 1946 and 1952.

The rural slaughter this year in Guatemala is somewhat reminiscent of the World War II anti-Communist "extermination" campaigns carried out in China and Yugoslavia by the Japanese and Nazi armies, which drove thousands of peasants to seek refuge in the ranks of Mao's and Tito's partisans.** It also recalls the incredible campaign in Colombia—led by Conservative President Laureano Gomez, a starchy oligarch impressed by the Fascist success in Spain—to eliminate the Liberal party by sending the police to kill, burn, and destroy crops (especially coffee trees) in rural Liberal areas. This in turn led to what has become known as the *violencia*, the savage tribal warfare between Liberals and Conservatives which in ten years (1948-58) cost some two hundred thousand lives and sent many more peasants for refuge in the proliferating slums of Colombia's cities, the five largest of which doubled in population between 1950 and 1965.

Not long ago, in a wildly-vegetated ravine of the Cordillera de los Cobardes in the mountains of eastern Colombia, I met a peasant named Juan Prada, a lean man in his late fifties with narrow, ironic eyes, taut lips, and a hairless face. Prada had been a Liberal "soldier" in the *violencia*, and had followed a former Liberal police chief named Rafael Rangel Gomez who was subsequently elected to Congress. Since 1958, he had been organizing peasant "self-defense committees" in collaboration with some Communist labor leaders from nearby oilfields. He still walked with the exaggerated swagger common in those mountains. Above a boxwood table in his unfinished straw hut was an old photo of a group of armed men, including himself, in khaki peasant clothes and cheap Panama hats, with ammunition belts and blankets draped over one shoulder and old rifles of many kinds posed in their hands for the photographer. "I saw the police carry their dead in burlap bags down from the hills to the town of

* On May 9, Guatemala's Catholic Bishops' Council issued a statement which said: "We cannot remain indifferent, while entire populations are decimated, while each day leaves new widows and orphans who are victims of mysterious struggles and vendettas, while men are seized in their houses by unknown kidnappers and are detained in unknown places or are vilely assassinated, their bodies appearing later horribly mutilated." *Grafica* (Guatemala) May 10, 1967.

† "The Resistance Will Win," in Truong Chinh, *Primer for Revolt*, Praeger, 1963.

** An excellent comparative account of these wartime movements is given in Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, Stanford, 1962.

San Vicente de Chucuri," Juan Prada told me. "They came into the hills—uniformed policemen, detectives, revenue agents, and peasant bands from Conservative villages—to take Liberal peasants from their houses in the middle of the night. They were marched to the edge of a ravine and either beheaded or shot. On many farms the cattle were led away by these bands. Entire harvests were stolen and entire plots of coffee trees, which take so many years to bring into cultivation, were burned. Many peasants were frightened of such a death. They had no way to live but to go to the hills. I had a small piece of land in Rio Sucio when the *violencia* began in Santander. My woman had gone away and my two little boys had died before, but I took my little girl called Yolanda—who was seven years old—into the mountains with me when the *violencia* began. I carried my little girl with me through the forests with the Liberal guerrillas for two years. All that we took with us was rifles and cartridges, and we slept on the ground. Very little food was grown in the country."

IT IS HARD under these circumstances to talk of a "definitive solution." But we should, for a start, consider the spontaneous character of most revolutionary developments in Latin America, where "Marxism" evidently has come with too little, too late, and has extended itself far beyond its bases of intellectual and material supply. Throughout the world, these major social conflicts are activated, if not by war itself, then by some other jolt. In this connection it might also be opportune to cite Lin Piao's prophecy* that "U.S. imperialism, like a mad bull dashing from place to place, will finally be burned to ashes in the blazing fires of the people's wars it has provoked by its own actions."

If we were to take this remark seriously, and adjust our sights accordingly to the "spontaneous" rather than to the "ideological" aspects of social revolution, we would, I believe, be in a better position to reap the advantages of revolutionary aspirations in underdeveloped societies. Let me offer but one example. All Castroite guerrilla insurgencies in Latin America, including Castro's own rising in Cuba's Sierra Maestra, have occurred in or very near coffee-growing areas† with dispersed hillbilly populations living on *minifundia* (tiny subsistence plots) where endemic conflicts between landlord and peasant have been aggravated by declining world coffee prices. Colombia President Carlos Lleras Restrepo said last year in an interview: "I believe *minifundia* are far more dangerous politically than *latifundia* [great estates]. These increasingly smaller properties cannot maintain a family, and the *minifundia* problem is constantly aggravated by the divisions imposed by inheritance laws and by the powerful demographic explosion [doubling Colombia's population every twenty-five years], creating a class of 'proletarian proprietors' with even lower in-

comes than the miserable sugar cane cutters." Lleras claimed that the fall in world coffee prices has cut Colombia's per capita export income from \$53 in 1964 to \$32 in 1966. A 1965 survey of Latin America by the *Economist* said the region has never recovered from the world depression of the late 1920's: between 1928 and 1932, Latin America's exports dropped by nearly 60 per cent, and the real per capita value of its exports (excluding those of oil-rich Venezuela) are now only 32 per cent of what they were in 1928. Food production, moreover, has been declining in relation to population growth. Under these circumstances, it may be wiser to devote more energy toward developing a substitute for this moribund coffee economy than to try to convert "counter-insurgency" into a viable political doctrine.

In the meantime, while guerrilla movements in Latin America so far have failed to demonstrate, in Lin Piao's words, that "the countryside, and the countryside alone, can provide the revolutionary bases from which the revolutionaries can go forward to final victory," the region's cities are developing a revolutionary profile strikingly similar to that of the European urban concentrations at the time of the popular revolts of 1848 and 1871. Professor William L. Langer has written on the subject:**

In the years from 1800 to 1850 the growth of the European capitals was stupendous, with the result that at the end of the period a large proportion of the population was not native-born. It consisted largely of immigrants, permanent or temporary, coming either from nearby areas or abroad. In the 1840's alone about 250,000 persons came into London, 46,000 of whom were Irishmen, who were particularly disliked and feared by the English workers because of their incredibly low standard of living. As for Paris, the number of inhabitants just about doubled between 1800 and 1850, due very largely to immigration. . . . Most of the newcomers were from the neighboring departments, but there were many foreigners as well. . . . The situation in Vienna and Berlin was much the same. Overall conditions in the crowded cities of the early or mid-19th century were such as to create chronic social tension. . . .

Following the 1848 revolutions, Marx wrote that "Europe has taken on a form that makes every fresh proletarian upheaval in France directly coincide with a world war."†† In Latin America, the two world wars have generated or coincided with major upheavals in Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. The effect of the great agrarian revolutions

* "Long Live the Victory of the People's War!" *Peking Review*, September 3, 1965.

† The only exception was Che's Bolivia experiment.

** William L. Langer, "The Pattern of Urban Revolution in 1848," in *French Society and Culture Since the Old Regime*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966.

†† Marx, "The Class Struggles in France," 1850.

(and land reform programs) has been a proliferation of tiny and (eventually) desiccated peasant subsistence plots which, even in their uneconomic form, have failed to keep pace with the growth of the rural population. Studies by Mexicans predict a rural population including five million landless peasants in the not-too-distant future;* 27 million Mexicans of a total population of 45 million have a monthly family income of less than \$10—this at a time of spectacular economic growth with per capita income having doubled since 1940 (despite a doubling of the population during the same period). The great Mexican land reform of the 1930's and 1940's drew the peasant back into primeval village life (the basic unit of land distribution was the communal *ejido*) while industrialization with depressed wages permitted large capital accumulations in the postwar years, after Mexico had served as an international money haven in World War II. Yet Mexico seems to be approaching a Malthusian bottleneck, not so much because of population growth as because of a lack of sufficient land and water to keep the proliferating peasant population in agriculture. Thus the complex and expensive land reclamation projects in Mexico's northwest desert-states of Sonora and Sinaloa have been imperiled in recent years by a decline in the underground water table as a consequence of the use of deep-draft mechanical pumps for agriculture. The scarcity of arable land, and the rising urban living standards, have sent the peasants scurrying for the cities—which now double in population roughly every seventeen years—and for the border towns along the U.S. frontier, which have increased fivefold in population over the past generation. If Mexico is an indicator, within a relatively few years Latin America will have developed such heavy urban slum concentrations, and disposable land for agrarian reform will have become so scarce, that for the first time in our century land reform will cease to be a meaningful revolutionary banner.

THE LONG MARCH of Latin America's rural population is one of the great social epics of the postwar years, and one to which both "Marxist" and "Western" political thought have given very scant attention. According to the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, 37 per cent of the region's urban population (130 million) live in squatter slums, and this figure will rise to 43 per cent (216 million) by 1980. The population of Santo Domingo doubled during the 1950's alone, and is expected to have doubled again by 1968; a full-scale inundation has oc-

curred since the 1961 assassination of Rafael Trujillo. In the crowded warrens of wood-and-cardboard shacks beneath the Duarte Bridge, where the slum dwellers of Santo Domingo defeated crack tank and infantry units of the Dominican armed forces in the April 1965 revolution, unemployment has reached 90 per cent among adult males in some *barrios*, and the people talk constantly of resuming their revolution as if the fight against the Americans had been their finest hour. The American "anti-Communist" intervention in 1965 to save the Dominican army attempted to stop the revolutionary effervescence uncorked when the CIA supplied the arms for the Trujillo assassination four years before.† The whole episode recalled the words of Ho Chi Minh when he was an obscure Indochinese exile in Moscow in 1923: "They began hunting down Communists among the Annamese peasantry at a time when there wasn't a trace of a Communist. And that way they spread the propaganda."**

Other capitals in the hemisphere offer the same perspective. Lima has tripled in population since 1940, with hordes of *cholos* (Indians converting to Hispanic culture) subverting the old Viceregal social structure which had stayed intact for four centuries. Since 1936, Venezuela's demographic pattern has shifted from 70 per cent rural to more than 70 per cent urban (Caracas having doubled in population since 1950), and virtually every major city in the region is growing by at least 5 per cent yearly. In rural areas, feudalism has been abolished and for the first time peasants are acquiring radios,†† schools, roads, store-bought clothes, bicycles, shoes, trucks, and buses; after acquiring these things they move even faster into the cities. In Latin America one must distinguish between informal and formal revolution; that is, between spectacular social change and the seizure of political power by a "Marxist" revolutionary organization. In view of this distinction, the legacy of Ernesto Guevara may turn out to be other than it at first appears. While the guerrillas have so far failed, the revolution is in full career; what is lacking today is the leadership of a revolutionary party.

* "Mexico: South of the Border," by Mary Goldring. *The Economist*, May 13, 1967.

† See my "How Trujillo Died," *the New Republic*, April 13, 1961.

** "An Interview with Ho Chi Minh—1923," by Osip Mandelstam. *COMMENTARY*, August 1967.

†† The USIA has estimated that there are 38.6 million radio sets in Latin America—a ratio of almost one to a family.