

To Make the Revolution: Solidarity and Divisions among Latin American Guerrillas in the 1960s*

Jonathan C. Brown**

University of Texas at Austin, USA

Brown, Jonathan C. (2015) "To Make the Revolution: Solidarity and Divisions among Latin American Guerrillas in the 1960s"

ABSTRACT

Following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, both Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara attempted to unite Latin American leftists in a hemispheric-wide anti-imperialist front against the politico-economic hegemony of the United States. In important speeches, Fidel pronounced that "the duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution" and predicted that "the Cordillera de los Andes would become the Sierra Maestra of South America". Revolutionaries in Cuba welcomed political dissidents. They provided training to guerrilla groups from throughout the Third World, sponsored international conferences for Latin American solidarity, and provided haven to political dissidents. Che himself entertained 380 Argentinean youth in Havana's Gran Asado of May 1962. He exhorted them to unite in the spirit of San Martín and Bolívar.

Why did most Latin American guerrillas fail in the 1960s? I base this investigation on CIA and U.S. State Department reports, testimonies of surviving guerrillas of the 1960s, and limited Cuban documentation. My study suggests that nationalism and ideological particularism undermined efforts to unite the Latin American left into an effective anti-imperialist front. Che Guevara himself could not overcome Bolivian nationalism in his 1967 guerrilla campaign, which received little assistance from the country's Communists and Trotskyists. Prospective rural foquista guerrillas in Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina also suffered from rejections by militants of the Communist and Socialist Parties. Moreover, few Latin American nationals besides the Cubans volunteered to fight in countries not of their birth.

* I presented this paper to the Empire and Solidarity in the Americas Conference at the University of New Orleans in October 2014. I would like to thank Professor Jana K. Lipman for her incisive comments.

** Jonathan C. Brown is professor of History at University of Texas at Austin, USA (Email: j.brown@austin.utexas.edu).

Most of all, the failure of guerrilla movements can be explained by the fact that Cuba exported the revolution as Marxist-Leninist rather than the democratic nationalist movement that Fidel Castro led to victory on January 1, 1959.

Key Words: Che Guevara, Guerrilla warfare, Cold War, Cuba, South America

On May 25, 1962, Ernesto “Che” Guevara hosted an Argentinean-style asado (barbecue) for 380 of his paisanos (countrymen) then living in or visiting Cuba. The date denotes Argentina’s most important national holiday, which commemorates the beginning of the Revolution for Independence in 1810. The factional quibbling that the Argentineans had displayed in the guerrilla training camps had irritated El Che. He wanted all leftist factions to unite, for the revolution demanded no less. Ernesto Guevara de la Serna took advantage of his status as Latin America’s preeminent guerrilla commander and deployed his passionate eloquence. “That call to arms [*grito*] of May 25, 1810 was neither the first nor the only *grito*”, he said. “Nevertheless, it had the special virtue of guaranteeing and consolidating the struggle; the call to arms had the virtue of triumph in those moments. And the Cuban Revolution today is the same”, Che said. “The Argentinean armies crossed the Andes Mountains in order to assist in the liberation of other peoples. When these feats are remembered, our pride always [...] is that of having obtained the liberty in our own territory [...] and of having cooperated in the liberation of Chile and Peru with our revolutionary forces”. Today we must unify in alliance, Che said, “notwithstanding that sometimes we divide our own forces with internal quarrels, notwithstanding that sometimes in sterile discussions we fail to form the necessary union in order to fight against imperialism”.¹

Guevara also referred to the necessity of defeating Argentina’s military establishment and replacing it with a peoples’ army, as Cuba had demonstrated to the world. Che also left his countrymen and women with his vision of what the Continental Revolution would approximate. “In this moment of colonialism and imperialism, total change means the advance that we have made”, he told his fellow Argentineans, “the advance toward the declaration of the socialist revolution and the establishment

1 Claudia Korol(1999), “Cooke y el Che: En el cruce de caminos,” in Miguel Mazzeo(comp.), *Cooke, de vuelta (El gran descartado de la historia argentina)*, Ediciones La Rosa Blindada, p. 93. For more on the “gran asado”, see Gabriel Rot(2010), *Los orígenes perdidos de la guerrilla en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires: Waldhuter, pp. 144-148.

of a power that dedicates itself to the construction of socialism”. Even today, one of the surviving attendees of the famed barbeque reminds his Argentinean *paisanos* “that we were provincial. El Che always strove to create a continental vision”.²

INTRODUCTION

Following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, both Fidel Castro and Che Guevara sought to unite Latin American leftists in an anti-imperialist front against the United States. In important speeches, Fidel pronounced that “The duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution” and predicted that “the Cordillera de los Andes would become the Sierra Maestra of South America”. Revolutionaries in Cuba offered haven to political dissidents from Latin America and beyond. They provided guerrilla training to foreign nationals and sponsored conferences for Latin American and Third World solidarity movements. Armed rebellions in most countries from Guatemala to Argentina received Cuban support. Ultimately, the “export of revolution” did not succeed in uniting Latin America’s left – with the notable exception of Nicaragua in the 1979.

Despite revolutionary Cuba’s best efforts, why did the leftists of Latin America fail to achieve solidarity in the 1960s? This article utilizes case studies of guerrilla uprisings in Cuba, Venezuela, Peru, and Argentina in order to test one hypothesis: that nationalism and ideological particularism undermined efforts to unite the left into an effective anti-imperialist front. I base this investigation on CIA and U.S. State Department intelligence reports, testimonials of surviving guerrillas, and limited Cuban documentation. The entrenched pro-Moscow Communist Parties particularly threw up obstacles to armed resistance. Che Guevara himself could not overcome Bolivian nationalism in his 1967 guerrilla campaign, which received only limited assistance from the country’s Communists and Trotskyists. Prospective guerrilla focos in other countries also suffered from rejections by militants of the Communist Parties. Rebel fighters split among themselves over personal and ideological disputes. Moreover, unlike the troops of Generals José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar’s one hundred fifty years earlier, few Latin American nationals volunteered to fight in countries not of their birth. An additional factor played a large role in the failure of guerrilla struggle in the 1960s. The Cuban revolutionaries did not export the same model of insurgency that had

2 Claudia Korol(1987), *Che y los Argentinos*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones, p. 87.

brought them to power.

CUBA

Fidel and Che often spoke about the Cuban Revolution as the example of how the people's army could defeat the regular army that protected the *vendepatrias*, elites who sell out to the foreign interests. At first, they promised to follow the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations. "We cannot stop exporting the example, as desired by the United States, because the example is something spiritual that transcends borders", Che announced to the OAS economic ministers at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961. "That which we give, is the guarantee that not one rifle will be sent out from Cuba, that not one weapon will be sent out from Cuba to be used to fight in any other country of the Americas".³ Eventually, however, Cubans felt the need to promote revolution abroad or be stranded as the only socialist republic surrounded by enemies in the Americas.

Che and Fidel proceeded as if they believed that the Cuban Revolution had legitimized Socialism as an alternative model of governance and that the popular classes in other countries would anticipate the promises of the revolution in the same fashion that the Cuban masses had rallied to them after 1959. Therefore, Cuban training of Latin American dissidents emphasized Marxist-Leninist ideology. Fidel and Che acted as if mass support had always been with the guerrillas of the Sierra Maestra and did not materialize only after the military victory. Che and Raúl had been indoctrinating the guerrilla fighters in their commands during the revolutionary war. But all the other *comandantes* (commanders) in Castro's guerrilla forces, including Fidel himself, had not.

In other words, the 26 of July Movement had achieved victory with an amorphous but definitively non-Communist political ideology. On connections between M26 and the Communist Party (PSP) during the struggle against Batista, State Department analysts concluded in 1958 that "[l]ittle evidence [...] exists to prove a strong tie between the two groups".⁴

3 Miguel Aguirre Bayley(2002), *Che: Ernesto Guevara en Uruguay*, Montevideo: Cauce Editorial, p. 75.

4 See Bureau of Intelligence and Research(1958), "The 26th of July Movement Since the Abortive General Strike of April 9, 1958," *O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports*, Vol. XIV, August 15; Paul Kesaris(ed.)(2001), *Latin America: 1941-1961*, Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, microfilm. Most historians do not believe that Fidel Castro professed Communist ideals, either secretly or openly,

Even Che Guevara had to admit to the non-communist ideology of his guerrilla chieftain. “Fidel isn’t a communist”, Che told Argentinean reporter Ricardo Masetti in the Sierra Maestra. “Politically you can define Fidel and his movement as ‘revolutionary nationalist’. Of course he is anti-American, in the sense that the Americans are anti-revolutionaries”.⁵ Che and Raúl Castro’s strong Marxist positions only later had persuaded Fidel to move to the left. During the anti-Batista insurrection, M26 operatives had had many ideological tendencies – nationalism and electoral democracy based on the 1940 Cuban Constitution comprising the most salient.

The Fidel Castro who exported the revolution in the early 1960s was not the Castro who commanded the M26 in the Sierra Maestra. After 1961, Fidel’s governed in Havana as a Marxist-Leninist. Therefore, the Cuban Revolution tended to unmask the very guerrillas whose insurrections it encouraged in the rest of Latin America. They were doomed to make the revolution in their own countries as Marxist-Leninists – not as the vaguely democratic nationalists Fidel’s guerrillas had been in the late 1950s. Subsequent armed movements lacked the broad base of support and aroused nationalist suspicions of Communist subversion. After 1961, every guerrilla in Latin America was considered to embody some form of Marxism, whether Leninist, Stalinist, Trotskyist, Maoist, Castroist, or socialist – all lumped together as “comunismo”. Eventually, every student protestor, every peasant land invader, every striking laborer, and every reformist politician became suspect!

Cubans were saying after the missile crisis that “Fidel’s head is with Moscow but his heart is with Peking”.⁶ The U.S. intelligence community also concluded that Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolutionary leadership had more in common with the Chinese than with the Soviets. In 1963, Cuba increased its subversive activities in Venezuela and sent a small cadre of guerrillas to Argentina.⁷ The CIA calculated that three thousand Latin Americans had received guerrilla training from the Cubans. Elsewhere,

as a guerrilla leader. See Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira, *De Martí a Fidel: A Revolução Cubano e a América Latina*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, pp. 172-178. Moniz Bandeira quotes Fidel as late as April 1959 disclaiming that the Revolution was communist but “Cuban and American”.

5 Jorge Ricardo Masetti(1958), *Los que luchan y los que lloran: El Fidel Castro que yo vi*, Buenos Aires: Freeland, p. 48.

6 Robert E. Quirk(1993), *Fidel Castro*, New York: W.W. Norton, p. 449.

7 The Venezuelan insurrection lasted through the 1960s but eventually failed; the Argentine insurrection ended within five months. See Aragorn Storm Miller(2008), “Precarious Paths to Freedom: The United States and International Communism in the Contest for Venezuela, 1961-1968,” MA thesis, University of Texas; Daniel Avalos(2005), *La guerrilla del Che y Masetti en Salta, 1964*, Córdoba, Argentina: La Intemperie.

Che Guevara planned for revolutions designed to strengthen Cuba in its struggle with the United States. This activity in the “export of revolution” increased the friction between the Cubans and the Soviets. Moscow viewed Havana’s aggressive revolutionary stance as a dangerous threat to Latin America’s pro-Soviet parties. Schisms broke out in Venezuela and other countries between the cautious Communist Party old-guard and the youthful guerrillas. Cuban speeches on the need for armed resistance to imperialism made the front pages of government newspapers in China. On the other hand, Soviet media hardly mentioned Cuba’s support for guerrilla warfare.⁸ It violated the Soviet foreign policy of “peaceful coexistence” and threatened direct confrontation between the two nuclear powers of the United States and the U.S.S.R.

The CIA estimated that the “great majority” of potential Latin American trainees flew into Cuba from Mexico City, and calculated the number to approximate five thousand passengers in 1962 (See Table 1 below). Che Guevara made it a point to meet all the foreigners who came to Havana with revolutionary projects. “He was extremely meticulous in seeking data and details on all those topics”, wrote the Cuban security chief, Manuel Piñero.⁹ To many of the frustrated youth of Latin America, Havana had become the mecca of hope for change in the status quo. US agents pressed hard on the Mexicans to scrutinize and, if possible, to restrict these entries.¹⁰ Mexico City did not end airlines service to Havana, but Mexican security agencies did cooperate with the CIA in identifying passengers.

One change in the overall strategy of revolution in Latin America came to light in the November 1964 meeting in Havana of the Latin American Communist Party leaders. Fidel had secured economic and military assistance from the Kremlin after two trips to Moscow. In deference to his benefactors, he therefore attempted to compromise in his revolutionary export project. In the communiqué that concluded this conference, Cuba promised to support only those guerrilla groups endorsed by each country’s Communist Party.

8 “Propaganda Report,” 18 Jan 1963, National Security Files [hereafter NSF], Cuba, box 59, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts [hereafter JFKPL].

9 Manuel Piñero(2001), *Che Guevara and the Latin American Revolutionary Movements*, Luis Suárez Sálazar(ed.), Mary Todd(trans.), Melbourne: Ocean Press, p. 14.

10 CIA, “Cuba: The Movement of Subversives and Subversive Trainees,” n.d. (circa March 1963), NSF, box 59, JFKPL.

Table 1. Origin and Volume of Foreign Visitors to Cuba, 1962

Country	No. of Visitors	Country	No. of Visitors
Jamaica	593	Peru	181
Chile	551	Uruguay	115
Bolivia	500	El Salvador	100
Argentina	500	Honduras	92
Brazil	400	Guatemala	80
Colombia	400	Paraguay	60
Mexico	300	Panama	56
Costa Rica	216	Nicaragua	50
Venezuela	200	Br. Guiana	40
Ecuador	208	Dom. Rep.	None

Source: CIA, "Cuba: The Movement of Subversives and Subversive Trainees," n.d. (circa March 1963), NSF, Box 59, JFKPL.

For their part, the pro-Moscow communists promised to "intensify solidarity in the anti-imperialist struggle" and promote "solidarity with Cuba". The Colombian Communist Party that heretofore had ignored the guerrillas in favor of gaining power through peaceful means now switched sides. It endorsed the Cuban-supported Army of National Liberation (ELN) operating in Colombia.¹¹ The show of unity did not have much impact one way or another. The old-line Communists, many leaders of which had grown cautious after decades of comfortable living on Soviet resources, still refused to take up arms or to defy Soviet policy of "peaceful co-existence". Fidel and Che finally decided not to expect much from Latin America's communists. Che reiterated that "bullets not ballots" would bring revolution to Latin America.¹²

In 1967, Havana hosted the foundational meeting of the Latin American Solidarity Organization (OLAS). The OLAS meeting could not remedy the very problem for which it had been convened – namely to resolve the disunity on the left in Latin America. Rodney Arismendi, leader of the Uruguayan Communists, attempted to work out a compromise. He

11 Department of State, "Havana Meeting of Latin American Communist Parties," 4 Mar 1965; CIA, "Cuban Subversion in Latin America," 23 Apr 1965, NSF, box 31, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas [hereafter LBJPL].

12 CIA, "Cuban Subversion in Latin America," 23 Apr 1965, Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] Records Station, National Archives of the United States, College Park, Maryland [hereafter CREST].

attempted to bridge the differences between the left-wing revolutionaries and the pro-Moscow parties. Arismendi's proposal acknowledged that the armed struggle of the Tupamaros and other guerrilla groups constituted one of the higher forms of revolutionary activity. But he wanted to recognize that popular-front activities of the pro-Soviet Communists contributed to the revolution as well. His pro-Soviet colleagues from other countries did not agree with Arismendi, and the proposal did not advance.¹³ Nonetheless, many non-communist delegates—including leaders of Venezuela's radical youth—vowed to continue the guerrilla struggle.

VENEZUELA

Venezuela was a special case. The Cubans lavished training, cash, and even arms on the leftist uprising in this country because party leaders there actually supported armed rebellion. Shunned by the President Rómulo Betancourt and his Acción Democrática government, the Communists formed an armed front in agreement with youthful dissidents in the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). Being no friend of Betancourt, Castro heartily approved.¹⁴ The CIA concluded that Cuba's "increased sense of urgency" in December 1963 led to a rare delivery of arms directly from Cuba intended for rebel groups in Venezuela. Betancourt's government uncovered the arms cache and accused Cuba at the Organization of American States for intervening in the internal affairs of another nation.¹⁵ Even at the time, United States backing for the Venezuelan resolution appeared hypocritical.

Castro had chosen the oil-rich nation of Venezuela to be his number one target in the promotion of revolution abroad. One CIA report estimated that Cuba had sent 400 trained men to Latin America, mainly to Venezuela, between August 1962 and June 1963.¹⁶ It was one of the few uprisings to be sponsored by the official Party, not from Moscow but from Caracas. Communist militants joined together with members of another leftist party

13 Robert Moss(1972), *Urban Guerrillas: The New Face of Political Violence*, London: Temple Smith, p. 236.

14 CIA, "Castro's Subversive Capabilities in Latin America," 9 Nov 1962, NSF box 37, LBJPP.

15 CIA, "Cuban Subversion in Latin America," 9 Aug 1963, CREST.

16 CIA, "Training in Cuba for Subversion in Latin America," 19 Jul 1963, NSF, box 53, JFKPP.

in 1962. Together they sponsored the armed guerrillas who took the name FALN, the Armed Forces of National Liberation. When President Betancourt announced a forthcoming trip to Washington, the FALN sought to dissuade him with random shootings and explosions in Caracas. Then FALN fighters hijacked the oil freighter *Anzoátegui*. The rebellion centered in the cities. Shootings and bombings had rendered Caracas unsafe after about ten o'clock in the evening. Two hundred Venezuelans received their guerrilla training in Cuba in 1962, although a premature opening of an armed insurrection in the countryside resulted in the capture and imprisonment of many former trainees. One Communist Party member told agents "that at present the unified command ha[d] less than 150 guerrillas in the field, in widely separated groups of 15 to 25 men each".¹⁷

It was as a tribute to these Venezuelan Communist Revolutionaries that Fidel pronounced his famous motto for the export of revolution. "The imperialists were given evidence of what revolutionary solidarity is", he said in January 1963, "the active solidarity of revolutionaries who do not sit in their doorways to wait for the corpse of their enemy to pass by, of revolutionaries who understand that the duty of all revolutionaries is to recreate the revolution".¹⁸

During 1964, Douglas Bravo of the FALN emerged the chief guerrilla leader. Fabricio Ojeda, hero of the resistance to the dictator Jiménez in 1958, gave Bravo a boost in revolutionary prestige when Ojeda himself joined Bravo's guerrilla group. He too fell into the hands of the police, served time, and escaped along with Luben Petkoff.¹⁹ Bravo and the Petkoff now assumed leadership of the guerrillas.²⁰ Bravo said that the battle would now shift to the countryside where the rebels would cultivate the support of the peasants, as Che had advised. "We did not prepare with the strategic realities in mind; we had only one idea – to overthrow the government immediately", he confessed.²¹ Bravo admitted that the election of President Raúl Leoni came as a blow to the guerrillas. Ninety percent of eligible voters turned out on election day of December 1, 1963 despite warnings of FALN snipers shooting anyone daring to vote.²²

17 CIA, "Draft Briefing Notes: Cuban Subversion in Latin America," 18 Feb 1963, NSF, box 53, JFKPL.

18 2nd Declaration of Havana speech, 4 Feb 1962, in CIA, "Propaganda Report," 18 Jan 1963, NSF Cuba, box 59, JFKPL.

19 Richard Gott(1972), *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*, Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, pp. 108, 110-111.

20 *Ibid.*, 113, 154.

21 Jean Lartéguy(1970), *The Guerrillas*, Stanley Hochman(trans.), New York: World Publishing Company, p. 194.

The year 1966 became the most decisive one in the decade-long insurrection. As the year began, the CIA reported that “the Venezuelan Communist Movement [was] undergoing a split of major proportions”.²³ Two breaches in the revolutionary front occurred, one between Cuba and Soviet doctrine and the other between the Venezuelan Communist Party and the FALN. Havana’s assistance to revolutions abroad did not decline but indeed increased. It was in 1966, that Luben Petkoff disembarked on the beach of Falcón state with 40 men freshly trained in Cuba and dressed in green uniforms – this on the July 24 anniversary of Simón Bolívar’s birth. Petkoff took his group to the mountains of Falcón state to join with Douglas Bravo’s rebels. There he told a journalist visiting the rebel camp that his landing had inflicted a “serious military and political setback for the government, the armed forces and American imperialism”. Later in November 1966, Cuba dispatched an additional seventy armed Venezuelans who landed on the Northeastern coast of Venezuela.²⁴

Nonetheless, the leaders of the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV) were becoming disillusioned with the armed rebellion. The soft-liners gained strength within the party and talked about rebuilding the labor base and drawing down rural violence. In turn, guerilla leaders such as Douglas Bravo and Luben Petkoff of the FALN complained about the “armchair leadership” of the PCV and suggested that the armed struggle be taken over by the guerrilla leaders on the front lines of the struggle.²⁵ But funding for the rural guerrillas was drying up; the CIA suspected that this decision came from higher-ups in Moscow. In their 1966 meeting, politburo members recommended a suspension of guerrilla activities in order to form a united leftist electoral front for the 1968 elections.

Bravo and Petkoff of the FALN ignored the party’s directives. Their continued assaults brought government retaliation on the PCV and prevented it from returning to the “peaceful political struggle”. Communist leaders persevered and joined with the moderate Nationalist Revolutionary Party to appoint Domingo Alberto Rangel, a former member of the MIR, as leader of a new electoral coalition called the Party of National Integration.

22 Gott(1967), *Guerrillas in Latin America*, p. 131; Tad Szulc, “Exporting the Cuban Revolution,” in John Plank(ed.), *Cuba and the United States: Long-Range Perspectives*, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, p. 77.

23 CIA, “Revolt of Hard-line Dissidents in the FALN against Established Leadership,” 30 Dec 1965, NSF, box 75, LBJPP.

24 Gott, *Guerrillas in Latin America*, pp. 150, 153; CIA, “Cuban Subversive Activities in Venezuela, 1959-1967,” 20 Jun 1967, CREST.

25 The author derived this analysis from the following extensive report: CIA, “The Venezuelan Communist Split and Present Insurgency,” 7 Jun 1967, NSF, box 75, LBJPP.

The Kremlin resumed funding for the Venezuelan Communist Party in February of 1967, and Pompeyo Márquez walked out of jail to resume his moderating leadership of the party. Many members of the MIR aligned themselves with the new election strategy. “Playing the guerrillaist (sic) game has once again confirmed the Leninist truth that the path of the ultra-leftist deviations coincides with the positions of the right”, PCV leaders concluded. “Unwitting or not [...], the action of the anarchy-terrorist group today serves the imperialist interest in extending reactionary hegemony and isolating and destroying the revolutionary movement”.²⁶

Havana thereupon mounted a political counteroffensive against Communist retrenchment. Fidel Castro resumed his emphasis on armed struggle at two conferences he hosted in Cuba, the Tricontinental and the Organization of Latin American Solidarity. Cuban military advisers began to show up in the FALN. Two separate groups of Cuban combat troops with caches of arms joined up with the Venezuelan guerrillas, one in July 1966 to the west of Caracas in mountains between Coro and Puerto Cabello and the other in May 1967 in the rugged hills southeast of the capital. Army soldiers ambushed the latter group of Cubans and Venezuelan fighters and recovered the Soviet-made landing craft used in these landings.²⁷

The factional splits on the left undercut the strength of the guerrilla movement in the Western Andes. The CIA concluded at the end of 1967 that “Douglas Bravo and his dissident communist FALN no longer constitute a serious revolutionary fighting force”. For every terrorist act he carried out in the countryside, the CIA surmised, there were nineteen in the cities. Fidel grew disenchanted with Bravo when the Cubans advisers attached to his FALN guerrilla group informed him that Bravo was grossly exaggerating the size of his forces.²⁸ Castro now criticized Bravo in the same way he used to praise him – with much fervor.

The Cubans anointed Petkoff as their champion and sent all their aid to the MIR guerrilla sectors in the eastern Venezuela. The CIA surmised that Venezuelan trainees from Cuba were still infiltrating to join Petkoff’s forces and that President Leoni’s pre-election amnesty for political prisoners

26 Robert J. Alexander(1969), *The Communist Party of Venezuela*, Stanford, C.A.: Hoover Institution Press, p. 105; William John Green(1989), “Revolution for Export?: Cuba and the Insurgent Left of Venezuela,” MA Thesis: University of Texas at Austin, p. 54; Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate(1967), *The First Conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, ix, p. 102.

27 Gott, *Guerrillas in Latin America*, p. 162.

28 CIA, “Fidel Castro and Prospects for Revolution in Latin America,” 28 Dec 1967, NSF, box 19, LBJPL.

would free up more recruits to rejoin their comrades in the struggle.²⁹

Then came the news in October 1967 that Che Guevara had died in Bolivia. Internationalism became the watchword of the Venezuelan movement in the immediate wake of Che's death. "To us, the armed struggle is not important simply as a way to liberate Venezuela", said Luben Petkoff in the 1968 interview on Radio Havana. "We see the armed struggle in Venezuela as an effective way to further the anti-imperialist struggle on a continental scale. We are not fighting the government of President Leoni [...] we are fighting US imperialism. Revolutionary leaders of today realize that to combat the ideas of the imperialist, it is necessary to carry our struggle beyond our borders". Petkoff concluded that "The nationality of the revolutionaries of America is American, nothing else. We must not think of [ourselves as] Venezuelans, Colombians, or Cubans".³⁰ Nonetheless, the rebellion in this oil-exporting country was reaching an end.

The election of December 1968 represented the final setback. The Democratic Action party relinquished the presidency to the Christian Democrat Rafael Caldera, who promptly legalized the Communist Party. Douglas Bravo negotiated with the new government and most of his FALN followers accepted a blanket amnesty. The MIR became isolated and demoralized.³¹ Clearly the Castro-inspired Venezuela guerrilla movement was ending with a whimper. As Jorge Dager of the MIR complained in the post-mortem, "We all wanted to be Fidel Castro. No one was content to be Che, let alone Raúl [Castro]". Peasants sympathized with rebels, but proved unwilling to risk their lives for them. One military officer who had joined the rebel cause noted that the revolutionary leaders "were just like everybody else. [...] there were very ugly things going on".³²

PERU

Hugo Blanco's struggle for agrarian reform in the southern Peruvian

29 CIA, "Status of Insurgency in Venezuela," 31 Oct 1968, LBJ, NSF, box 75, LBJPL.

30 CIA, "Extracts from a Radio Havana interview," 26 Mar 1968, NSF, box 19, LBJPL.

31 CIA, "Venezuela Legalizes the Communist Party," *Weekly Summary*, 4 Apr 1969, CREST; Donald L. Herman(1980), *Christian Democracy in Venezuela*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 66, 132-135.

32 Judith Ewell(2010), "Che Guevara and Venezuela: Tourist, Guerrilla Mentor, and Revolutionary Spirit," in Paulo Drinot(ed.), *Che's Travels: The Making of a Revolutionary in 1950s Latin America*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, p. 170.

Cordillera also found inspiration in the Cuban Revolution. “It proved that the Latin American revolution is a socialist revolution, that [it] will not be made by peaceful means”, he wrote, “and that it is indeed necessary to destroy —not reform— the capitalist system”.³³ Blanco’s ideology consisted of Trotskyism and hostility toward the mainline Stalinist Communist Party of Peru. He welcomed the Cuban example as an antidote to Peruvian communists who refused to support his rural activism. To them, it reeked of adventurism.

Neither did the youth on the left in the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance party (APRA) support the Trotskyist labor organizer. APRA youth leader, Luis de la Puente Uceda, emerged from the reform movement that was APRA. De la Puente had resisted the dictatorship of General Manuel Odría in the 1950s, suffered imprisonment and exile, and returned later to write a university law thesis on agrarian reform. De la Puente attended a land reform conference in Havana in July 1959. Back in Peru in 1962, he journeyed to La Convención valley to interview Hugo Blanco. But the two neither formed a friendship nor shared the brotherhood of struggle. Blanco had learned to speak Quechua as a boy growing up in Cuzco. He felt alienated from this white-skinned, Spanish-speaking son of a landowner of coastal Trujillo. De la Puente, one of the founders of Peru’s Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), later voiced some animus towards Blanco and his followers.³⁴ The MIR in 1963 withheld its support for Hugo Blanco. University students in Lima also ignored the Blanco uprising, which had significant peasant support. Police patrols finally found Blanco after they had infiltrated a circle of his supporters. Agents from the Civil Guard closed in on Hugo Blanco, exhausted and hungry, in a small hut. A policeman spied the fugitive flattened out in a mud wallow. “Shoot him”, the commander ordered from afar. The policeman fired a shot to the side, purposefully missing the target. The commander vented his fury that his order had not been heeded but, with so many witnesses gathering around, the prisoner gained a margin of safety.³⁵

33 Hugo Blanco(1972), *Land or Death: The Peasant Struggle in Peru*, New York: Pathfinder Press, p. 74.

34 Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*, pp. 253, 256; Leon G. Campbell(1973), “The Historiography of the Peruvian Guerrilla Movement, 1960-1965,” *Latin American Historical Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring, p. 52.

35 Blanco, *Land or Death*, pp. 11, 90; *Las guerrillas en el Perú y su represión*, Lima: Ministerio de Guerra, 1966, pp. 69-70; Luigi R. Einaudi, “Peruvian Military Relations with the United States,” Rand Corporation, June 1970, *Latin America: Special Studies, 1962-1980*, University Publications of America, microfilm, p. 10.

Then in the Andean winter of 1963, government troops captured the remaining few of Blanco's armed associates at his remote camp. Following the capture of Hugo Blanco, one officer pronounced that "it [was] not enough to destroy or paralyze the Marxist enemy; it [was also] necessary to gain the support of the masses". A Peruvian court sentenced Hugo Blanco to a long term in jail.³⁶ Meanwhile, other leftist leaders were organizing indigenous communities in order to invade the pasture lands of the Central Andes, especially those belonging to the U.S. and British mining companies such as the American-owned Cerro de Pasco Corporation. Approximately 200 Peruvians of De la Puente's MIR returned from the training camps of Cuba at a time when university students were protesting, workers were striking, and peasants were invading hacienda lands.³⁷

Towards the end of May 1965, De la Puente summoned commanders of the MIR to his headquarters on the remote highlands of Southern Peru. Héctor Béjar of the National Liberation Army (ELN) had not been invited, because his group was linked too closely to Fidel Castro. The *mirista* leaders, though training their followers in Cuba, had traveled to China and received money and weapons from Mao Zedong. Their revolutionary proclamation predicted the "final destruction of the large estates, with ownership being given to the peasants".³⁸ The MIR did not promise a "Bourgeois Revolution" of the type that Castro originally had led against Batista.

Years later, one Peruvian trained in Cuba, reflected on his youth as a guerrilla. "The fact is that we spent the sixties in military training camps under truly tough conditions that tested the firmness of our resolve", wrote Héctor Béjar of Peru's ELN. "Traveling with false passports in Europe and Latin America, hidden in safe houses in Bolivia, crossing the Bolivian jungle on foot or by other means, making secret contact and fooling the police. [...] And, finally, fighting in the sierra of Peru".³⁹ Nonetheless, the left failed to unite in Peru in 1965. The MIR dismissed Béjar's ELN, just as De la Puente had rejected Hugo Blanco's peasant unions in 1962. "Thus [...] it lost a revolutionary opportunity", wrote

36 Daniel M. Masterson(1991), *Militarism and Politics in Latin America: Peru from Sanchez Cerro to Sendero Luminoso*, New York: Greenwood Press, p. 211.

37 CIA, "Preparations of Peruvian Revolutionary Groups to Seize the Government of Peru," 1 May 1963, NSF box 52; Thomas L. Hughes, "Communist Subversion in Peru," n.d., NFS box 151, JFKPL.

38 Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*, pp. 263-264.

39 Michael F. Brown and Eduardo Fernández(1991), *War of Shadows: The Struggle for Utopia in the Peruvian Amazon*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 85; Héctor Béjar(1984), "Aquellos años sesenta," *30 Días*, Vol. 1, No. 8, July, p. 10.

Béjar.⁴⁰ The truth may have been more prosaic: many Peruvian radicals suffered from the hubris of their overly optimistic Cuban example.

Béjar of the pro-Castro ELN testified that he and the MIR could not work together because of a dispute as to the value of “the revolutionary party”. De la Puente and his confederates had formed up the party, the MIR, before entering the armed struggle (as did the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution and Mao Zedong’s Communist Party in the Chinese Revolution). Perhaps they had learned in China about the importance of the revolutionary party. As Mao had said, “Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party”.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the ELN chose to take up arms first and later form the revolutionary party out of the guerrilla movement itself (as in the case of Cuba’s M26).⁴² Much of the disunity also revolved around personal rivalries. De la Puente could not collaborate either with Hugo Blanco or with Héctor Béjar. They in turn would not follow De la Puente’s orders. Ideological reasons might have come second.

Before it engaged in any battle, De la Puente’s MIR issued a “call to arms” in a news release to Peru’s major newspapers. It appealed for unity on the left under De la Puente’s leadership. Peruvian journalists estimated that potential subversives now numbered some eight hundred Peruvians.⁴³ The number seems exaggerated in view of subsequent events. It is doubtful even that all two hundred of the Peruvian young men trained in Cuba were still affiliated with any of the three guerrilla groups of the MIR.

The leader of the MIR group operating separately in Huancayo would rise to mythic levels among the common folk of the central Andes. Guillermo Lobatón had grown up in the Lima shantytowns as a young man of African origins, his name suggesting Haitian heritage. He found himself one of the few mulattoes in the University of San Carlos and suffered the barbs of being poor and of Afro-Peruvian background. During the Odría dictatorship, he participated in student protests and spent time in prison. In 1954, Lobatón travelled as a political exile to Paris, attended classes at the Sorbonne, collected scrap papers for a living, and married

40 Héctor Béjar(1969), *Perú 1965: Apuntes sobre una experiencia guerrillera*, La Habana: Casa de las Américas, p. 59.

41 Cecil Johnson(1970), *Communist China & Latin America, 1959-1967*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 123.

42 Béjar, *Perú 1965*, p. 69.

43 “More than 800 Peruvians Trained in Bloc Countries,” 6 Dec 1964, NSC, box 4, LBJLL; Roger Mercado(1967), *Las Guerrillas del Perú*, Lima: Fondo de Cultura Popular, pp. 136-137.

a French woman of leftist leanings. In Paris, he came to know Ricardo Letts, a dogmatic Peruvian Marxist who, despite his white, aristocratic upbringing took the indigenous pen name of Pumaruna. Lobatón started to travel a great deal beginning in 1961 – Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Above all, he had committed himself to revolution in Peru. When he went into the field in 1965, Lobatón wrote to his mother. “Give me your blessing, mother, and let me go forward. Your son will never forget you”.⁴⁴

In the meanwhile, De la Puente ensconced himself in La Convención Valley, scene of Hugo Blanco’s organizing the early 1960s. But Peruvian army intelligence surmised that the activities of the MIR had actually alienated the peasants. *Campesinos* (peasants) turned against the rebels, said Army spokesmen, because of De la Puente’s white skin and his inability to speak Quechua. They called him “el gringo” (the white-skinned newcomer) and resented his brand of iron discipline.⁴⁵ In fact, a local peasant leader, Albino Guzmán, turned against De la Puente for being out of touch with the local peasantry. Guzmán assisted the troops in locating the various guerrilla encampments within La Convención Valley and particularly the secret paths leading up to De la Puente’s hideout in the Mesa Pelada. As a MIR member, Guzmán knew of the locations of all hidden weapons and food supplies.⁴⁶

At the height of the guerrilla uprising in November 1965, each resistance column operated in different territories. The ELN began armed invasions of haciendas in Ayacucho. The MIR had three areas of operations – east of Cuzco, in Huancayo in the center of the Peruvian Andes, and Ayabaca in the north. Therefore, the Peruvian military concentrated overwhelming firepower on one area at a time, beginning with De la Puente in the South. In the first months of 1966, the struggle ended as army troops hunted down Comandante Lobatón.

The Peruvian revolutionaries had not demonstrated much solidarity due to reasons of personality and ethnic differences. Nonetheless, two veterans of Héctor Béjar’s ELN, Juan Pablo Chang Navarro (known

44 Brown and Fernández, *War of Shadows*, pp. 100-103.

45 “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” 24 Nov 1965, 7 Feb 1966, box 7, Central Intelligence Agency Press Information, National Archives of the United States; Campbell, “The Historiography of the Peruvian Guerrilla Movement,” p. 54.

46 Béjar, *Perú 1965*, p. 80; Armando Artola Azcárate (1976), *Subversion!*, Lima: Editorial Jurídica, p. 84; Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley (1992), *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 116, 137; Mercado, *Las guerrillas del Perú*, p. 167; Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latin America*, pp. 215-216.

by his code name, “Chino”) and Lucio Edilberto Galván (“Eustaquio”) survived to fight again. They subsequently enlisted in Che Guevara’s Bolivian campaign. A third Peruvian, Dr. José Cabrera Flores (“Negro”) also joined Che after several years practicing medicine in Cuba.⁴⁷ Besides these Peruvians, few other Latin Americans besides the Cubans fought in lands other than their own.

No sooner had the Peruvian guerrillas met their doom than the theorists of revolution debated over the lessons learned and the theses proved. Régis Debray emphasized how the Asian models, formulated and practiced by Mao, did not apply to Latin America as much as the Cuban prototype. He charged De la Puente with following the incorrect strategies he had learned in China – particularly by establishing “supportive bases” that army troops could then attack and destroy. The Peruvian rebels, he said, should have remained on the move, avoiding contact with government forces until they had built up support among the peasants. “To wage a short war, to destroy the *foco* in its embryonic stage, without giving it time to adapt itself to terrain or link itself closely with the local population or acquire a minimum of experience, is thus the gold rule of counter-insurgency”, concluded Debray.⁴⁸

Others following the orthodox Moscow line criticized the spread of guerrilla “adventurism” from Cuba to Peru. Pumaruna, the Peruvian leftist intellectual who lived in Paris, faulted Debray’s theory that *foquista* armed rebellions could bring about socialism. A survivor of the guerrilla uprising, Silvestro Américo, took offence at Pumaruna’s self-righteousness. Américo expressed disappointment that the students and leftists in the cities had not joined the fight. Moreover, the rebel regretted that he did not have the opportunity, like Pumaruna, to escape to France, there to be able to properly analyze the revolutionary situation in Peru. “Now you [Pumaruna] have made me realize that [my commanders] were lacking in theoretical training or ideological understanding”. One final thing, said the former rebel fighter to Pumaruna: stay in Paris! “Imagine our misfortune if [...] we would have to bear the loss of someone like you, with your ability to write critical epitaphs on the guerrillas.”⁴⁹

47 Paulo Drino, “Awaiting the Blood of a Truly Emancipating Revolution: Che Guevara in 1950s Peru,” *Che’s Travels*, p. 116.

48 Régis Debray(1967), *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America*, in Bobbye Ortiz(trans.), New York: Grove Press, Inc., pp. 59, 62.

49 Luis Mercier Vega(1969), *Guerrillas in Latin America: The Technique of the Counter-State*, in Daniel Weissbrot, New York: Praeger, pp. 53-56.

ARGENTINA

The guerrillas of the Southern Cone had many antecedents. The 1955 coup d'état on the presidency of Juan Domingo Perón generated increasing frustration in the once vibrant labor movement. The succeeding generation of right- and leftwing youth of the middle class expressed dissatisfaction with the weakness of both the military and civilian governments that governed Argentina while Perón remained in exile. A group of working class youth in Tucumán began a short-lived, pro-Perón rural uprising in 1959 fashioned on Castro's guerrilla movement. In the cities, fascist youth clashed with leftists for control of the student movement. Inconclusive elections kept the nation in ferment and the police busy because the military would not permit Peronist candidates. About one-third of the electorate –diehard supporters of Perón– remained disenfranchised.⁵⁰ In this atmosphere, the attractiveness of the Cuban revolutionary example grew over time and remarkably, so did guerrilla solidarity. Che Guevara wanted to break the cycle of hopelessness in his homeland.

Che had planned the 1962 Gran Asado in Havana in order to prepare Argentinean leftists of all political stripes for his return to the land of his birth. Che's long range plan, besides serving as minister and principle planner for Cuban socialism, consisted of mounting an Argentinean rural rebellion. The site of his guerrilla rebellion was to be the remote Andean foothills of Salta Province near the sparsely inhabited border region with Bolivia. Che planned to combine his Cuban assets –proven warriors from his guerrilla column and the security apparatus of the Americas Department of the Interior Ministry– with an Argentinean cadre of leaders trained in Cuba. He chose five trainees who were to establish the rebel column in Salta prior to his future return as commander of field operations. He called his group the Guerrilla Army of the People or EGP. Che placed his journalist friend Jorge Masetti in charge as second in command or *comandante segundo*.

Masetti and his cadre of four Argentineans and Hermes Peña, a Cuban guerrilla adviser, crossed the border into Salta in July 1963. The Bolivian Communist party had assisted with guides, safe houses, and the procurement of equipment. Once in the Andean foothills, the group established contact

50 Ernesto Salas(2003), *Uturuncos: El origen de la guerrilla peronista*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos; Alejandra Dandan(2006), *Joe Baxter: Del nazismo a la extrema izquierda: La historia secreta de un guerrillero*, Buenos Aires: Grupo Norma Editorial; Federico Finchelstein(2014), *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, New York: Oxford University Press, Chapter 5.

with leftists such as Trotskyists, Maoists, and Gramscians in Córdoba and Buenos Aires. Some thirty recruits arrived.⁵¹ None of these youths had had any prior guerrilla training in Cuba. Later, an Argentinean recruit asked the Cuban peasant Hermes Peña why he was risking his life to fight in Argentina. “If Che is in Cuba”, replied the Cuban, “why shouldn’t I be here? How else can we repay to Che what he did for us?”⁵² From Cuba, Guevara had decided not to contact Argentina’s pro-Moscow Communist Party, Latin America’s largest with fifty thousand members, or the Peronists. They were “too infiltrated” by police agents, he said.⁵³ The chosen wilderness area had few peasants and none of them enlisted with the rebels.

Comandante Segundo Masetti proved a poor guerrilla leader. He divided his forces, hounded the recruits, executed two of them for “disobedience” and undermined esprit de corps. Argentina’s national army never went on alert, but the Salta rural police sent patrols into the area where armed *barbudos* (bearded men) had been spotted. A firefight between rebels and police resulted in the death of the Cuban Peña and the capture of thirteen guerrillas. Masetti escaped into the wilderness and died amidst the brambles.⁵⁴ Subsequently, the urban infrastructure of the EGP came apart under police interrogation. As one survivor observed, “I think that Masetti had many qualities as a diplomat and politician, but I could not see him as a military leader.”⁵⁵

With the end of the EGP, Argentina had two other rural uprising consciously using the rural *foco* theory attributed to Guevara. The first had Peronist linkages and centered in the Andean region of Tucumán. The police captured all the guerrillas before they went into action in 1967. The other challenge to the government, that of the Revolutionary Army of the People [ERP], was rooted in Trotskyism and sugar worker organization. It had reached the stage of armed resistance in 1974. President María Estela Martínez de Perón turned Tucumán over to Army generals

51 Raúl Burgos(2004), *Los gramscianos argentinos: Cultura y política en la experiencias de Pasado y Presente*, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, pp. 85, 89-90.

52 “Los sueñeros del Che, Oran, 1964,” *Sudestada: Cultura, Arte y Actualidad*, June 2007, Buenos Aires, pp. 4-15, 17.

53 Rot, *Los orígenes perdidos*, pp. 189, 194, 198; CIA, “Planned Trip to Habana by Hector Villalon,” NSF, box 32, LBJPL.

54 Ciro Bustos, *El Che quiere verte: La historia jamás contada del Che en Bolivia*, Buenos Aires: Javier Vergara Editores; Avalos, *La guerrilla del Che y Masetti*, p. 189; Eduardo W. Garay(2005), *Misión cumplida: Una historia olvidada*, Buenos Aires; Jorge G. Castaneda(1997), *Compañero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara*, New York: Knopf, pp. 244-251; Jon Lee Anderson(1997), *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, New York: Grove Press, pp. 537-560, 573-594.

55 “Los sueñeros del Che, Oran, 1964,” p. 15.

who defeated the ERP.⁵⁶ By that time, the urban guerrillas had taken over the initiative in Argentina though still influenced by the Cuban Revolution.

The armed resistance group that came to be known as the Montoneros holds the distinction of being the largest guerrilla organization in the Americas during the Cold War. They numbered more than two thousand fighters and several thousands more in supporters. Two reasons account for their size. First, they deliberately diluted ideological distinctions among themselves and secondly, the Montoneros operated exclusively in the cities with middle class, university-aged youth. Historians have traced the origins of this powerful organization to the conservative Catholic students of the prestigious Colegio Nacional (National Secondary School) in 1965. A handful of friends evolved through the Third World movement of socially committed priests until they incorporated radical Peronists into a group that earned the description as Soldiers of Perón. They fought against the military dictatorship in order to bring ex-President Juan Perón back to Argentina from his Spanish exile. Among its founders were Fernando Abal Medina and Mario Firmenich.

Abal Medina and Firmenich attracted adherents through audacious acts of defiance against the military junta of General Juan Carlos Onganía. The twenty-year old Norma Arrostita, whose father was an anarchist, joined the nascent group with her Communist husband. When the latter went to Cuba for a year of military and ideological instruction, Norma separated from him. She and Abal Medina eventually became lovers. They themselves made the pilgrimage to Cuba in August 1967 in order to attend the OLAS conference. They shared membership in the Argentinean delegation with Peronist resisters. The Organization of Latin American Solidarity “brought together twenty-seven delegations from parties and movements of Latin American leftists with the goal of coordination the anti-imperialist fight on a continental scale”, says one surviving delegate. “There were many Argentineans who went to Cuba [...]”.⁵⁷

Growth of the Montonero organization owed much to the Cordobazo

56 See Eduardo L. Duhalde and Eduardo Pérez(2002), *De Tacó Rabo a la Alternative Independiente: Historia documental de las 'Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas' y del Peronismo de Base, Las FAP*, Vol. 1, La Plata, Argentina: De la Campana; María Seoane(1977), *Todo o nada*, Buenos Aires: Planeta Bolsillo; Alejandro Guerrero(2009), *El peronismo armado: De la Resistencia a Montoneros*, Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma; Paul H. Lewis(2002), *Guerrillas and Generals: The “Dirty War” in Argentina*, Westport, C.N.: Praeger.

57 The witness is Eduardo Jozama. See Gabriela Saidon(2005), *La montonera: Biografía de Norma Arrostita*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, pp. 44-45; Dandan, *Joe Baxter*, p. 268.

of May 1969, in which workers and students briefly took over the industrial city of Córdoba in several days of street fighting with police. That event spurred Abal Medina, Arrostita, and Firmanich to kidnap and execute one of the premier anti-Peronists in the Argentine military, the former junta chief General Pedro Aramburu. This action of 1970 led directly to the fall of General Onganía's junta. It also led to the firefight between urban activists and police that resulted in Abal Medina's death. Nonetheless, a meteoric expansion of the Montoneros occurred as Peronist militants joined forces with Arrostita and Firmanich. Only the state terror of 1976 military coup d'état sufficed to defeat these revolutionaries.

Be they Peronists, socialists, communists, or proponents of Catholic Action, the Montoneros appeared to represent a remedy for the political repression and economic stagnation gripping the Argentinean Republic. They had decided to stop arguing over ideological semantics, just as Che had urged eight years beforehand at the Gran Asado. "Deeds unite us", said one Montonero, "words separate us".⁵⁸ The Montoneros gathered together the largest group of fighters—numbering some twenty-five hundred—in the cities of Argentina in the 1970s. Their bank robberies and kidnappings netted them millions of dollars in revenues. Nevertheless, they proved to be no match for determined policemen and soldiers of the last Argentinean military government. They killed some eleven thousand victims in defeating the urban guerrillas. In the final analysis, no amount of solidarity could have achieved victory over a resolute and well-armed military willing to shed innocent blood to repress the revolution.

CONCLUSION

The last observation about the Argentinean Army pertains to the issue of this essay as well. We asked why the left could not achieve enough solidarity to succeed in overthrowing the governments in the 1960s. This article suggests that factionalist divisions between the socialists, communists, Trotskyists, and Guevaristas tended to weaken rebellion from below. If the state under attack has armed forces as competent as Argentina's, Peru's, and Venezuela's, perhaps no amount of solidarity among leftists only could have achieved victory. They needed the middle class and some dissident elites as well. The original guerrilla war in Cuba illustrates well

58 Saidon, *La montonera*, p. 42. Also see Felipe Celesia and Pablo Waisberg(2010), *Firmanich: La historia jamás contada del jefe montonero*, Buenos Aires: Aguilar, Altea, Taurus, Alfaguara.

this conclusion. Fidel Castro had thousands of non-combatant supporters of all social classes who believed that the M26 fighters in the Sierra Maestra would return honest elections to Cuba. Also, it should be noted, that Venezuela and Peru had elected governments when the guerrilla revolt broke out. By then Cuban leaders embraced Communism and sought to spread their form of revolution to other countries.

This essay does not refer to other successful revolutions in Latin America. Yet a case may be made that revolutionaries in Mexico in 1910, Bolivia in 1952, and Nicaragua in 1979 also espoused enough nationalism and democratic reforms to overturn autocratic regimes. Even in these cases, the insurrectionists faced army forces debilitated by graft and factionalism. But when faced with guerrillas appearing to represent some variant of Marxism, officers and soldiers in the 1960s mustered the resolve to prevent their countries from becoming another Cuba.

REFERENCES

- Aguirre Bayley, Miguel(2002), *Che: Ernesto Guevara en Uruguay*, Montevideo: Cauce Editorial.
- Alexander, Robert J.(1969), *The Communist Part of Venezuela*, Stanford, C.A.: Hoover Institution Press.
- Anderson, Jon Lee(1997), *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, New York: Grove Press.
- Artola Azcárate, Armando(1976), *¡Subversion!*, Lima: Editorial Jurídica.
- Avalos, Daniel(2005), *La guerrilla del Che y Masetti en Salta, 1964*, Córdoba, Argentina: La Intemperie.
- Béjar, Héctor(1969), *Perú 1965: Apuntes sobre una experiencia guerrillera*, La Habana: Casa de las Américas.
- _____(1984), “Aquellos años sesenta,” *30 Días*, Vol. 1, No. 8.
- Blanco, Hugo(1972), *Land or Death: The Peasant Struggle in Peru*, New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Brown, Michael F. and Eduardo Fernández(1991), *War of Shadows: The Struggle for Utopia in the Peruvian Amazon*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bureau of Intelligence and Research(2001), “The 26th of July Movement since the Abortive General Strike of April 9, 1958,” in Paul Kesaris(ed.), *O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports*, Vol. XIV: *Latin America: 1941-1961*, 15 Aug 1958, Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, microfilm.
- Burgos, Raúl(2004), *Los gramscianos argentinos: Cultura y política en la experiencias de Pasado y Presente*, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
- Bustos, Ciro(2007), *El Che quiere verte: La historia jamás contada del Che en Bolivia*, Buenos Aires: Javier Vergara Editores.
- Campbell, Leon G.(1973), “The Historiography of the Peruvian Guerrilla Movement, 1960-1965,” *Latin American Historical Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1.
- Castaneda, Jorge G.(1997), *Companero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara*, New York: Knopf.
- Celesia, Felipe and Pablo Waisberg(2010), *Firmenich: La historia jamás contada del jefe montonero*, Buenos Aires: Aguilar, Altea, Taurus, Alfaguara.
- Central Intelligence Agency Press Information, National Archives of the United States, College Park, MD.
- Central Intelligence Agency Records Station, National Archives of the United States, College Park, Maryland, CREST.
- Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate(1967), *The First Conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Dandan, Alejandra(2006), *Joe Baxter: Del nazismo a la extrema izquierda: La historia secreta de un guerrillero*, Buenos Aires: Grupo Norma Editorial.
- Debray, Régis(1967), *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle*

- in Latin America*, Bobbye Ortiz(trans.), New York: Grove Press, Inc.
- Drino, Paulo(2010), "Awaiting the Blood of a Truly Emancipating Revolution: Che Guevara in 1950s Peru," in Paulo Drinot(ed.), *Che's Travels: The Making of a Revolutionary in 1950s Latin America*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Duhalde, Eduardo L. and Eduardo Pérez(2002), *De Taco Ralo a la Alternative Independiente: Historia documental de las "Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas" y del Peronismo de Base*, Vol. I, Las FAP, La Plata, Argentina: De la Campana.
- Einaudi, Luigi R.(n.d.), "Peruvian Military Relations with the United States," *Latin America: Special Studies, 1962-1980*, Rand Corporation, June 1970, University Publications of America, microfilm.
- Ewell, Judith(2010), "Che Guevara and Venezuela: Tourist, Guerrilla Mentor, and Revolutionary Spirit," in Paulo Drinot(ed.), *Che's Travels: The Making of a Revolutionary in 1950s Latin America*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Finchelstein, Federico(2014), *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Garay, Eduardo W.(2005), *Mision cumplida: Una historia olvidada*, Buenos Aires.
- Gott, Richard(1972), *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*, Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.
- Green, William John(1989), "Revolution for Export?: Cuba and the Insurgent Left of Venezuela," MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin.
- Guerrero, Alejandro(2009), *El peronismo armado: De la Resistencia a Montoneros*, Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma.
- Herman, Donald L.(1980), *Christian Democracy in Venezuela*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Johnson, Cecil(1970), *Communist China & Latin America, 1959-1967*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Johnson, Lyndon Baines, Presidential Library, Austin, Texas [LBJPL].
- Kennedy, John F., Presidential Library, Boston, Massachussets [JFKPL].
- Korol, Claudia(1987), *Che y los Argentinos*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones.
- _____(1999), "Cooke y El Che: En el cruce de caminos," in Miguel Mazzeo(comp.), *Cooke, de vuelta (El gran descartado de la historia argentina)*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones La Rosa Blindada.
- Lartéguy, Jean(1970), *The Guerrillas*, Stanley Hochman(trans.), New York: World Publishing Company.
- Lewis, Paul H.(2002), *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina*, Westport, C.N.: Praeger.
- Masetti, Jorge Ricardo(1958), *Los que luchan y los que lloran: El Fidel Castro que yo vi*, Buenos Aires: Freeland.
- Masterson, Daniel M.(1991), *Militarism and Politics in Latin America: Peru from Sanchez Cerro to Sendero Luminoso*, New York: Greenwood Press.
- Mercado, Rogger(1967), *Las Guerrillas del Perú*, Lima: Fondo de Cultura Popular.
- Mercier Vega, Luis(1969), *Guerrillas in Latin America: The Technique of the*

- Counter-State*, Daniel Weissbrot(trans.), New York: Praeger.
- Miller, Aragorn Storm(2012), "Precarious Paths to Freedom: The United States, the Caribbean Basin, and the New Politics of the Latin American Cold War, 1958-1968," Ph.D. Dissertation thesis, University of Texas.
- Moniz Bandeira, Luiz Alberto(1998), *De Martí a Fidel: A Revolução Cubano e a América Latina*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.
- Moss, Robert(1972), *Urban Guerrillas: The New Face of Political Violence*, London: Temple Smith.
- Piñeiro, Manuel(2001), *Che Guevara and the Latin American Revolutionary Movements*, Luis Suárez Sálazar(ed.), Mary Todd(trans.), Melbourne: Ocean Press.
- Quirk, Robert E.(1993), *Fidel Castro*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Rot, Gabriel(2010), *Los orígenes perdidos de la guerrilla en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires: Waldhuter.
- Saidon, Gabriela(2005), *La montonera: Biografía de Norma Arrostita*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana.
- Salas, Ernesto(2003), *Uturuncos: El origen de la guerrilla peronista*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos.
- Seoane, María(1977), *Todo o nada*, Buenos Aires: Planeta Bolsillo.
- Wickham-Crowley, Timothy P.(1992), *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Article Received: 2014. 11. 20

Revised: 2015. 02. 04

Accepted: 2015. 02. 06