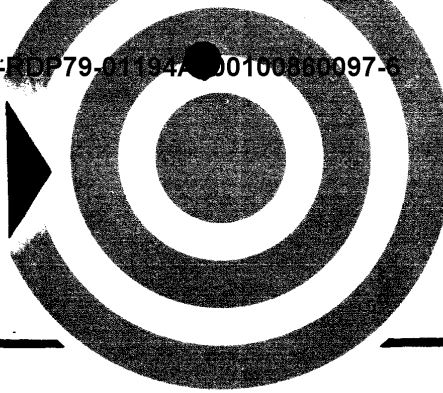


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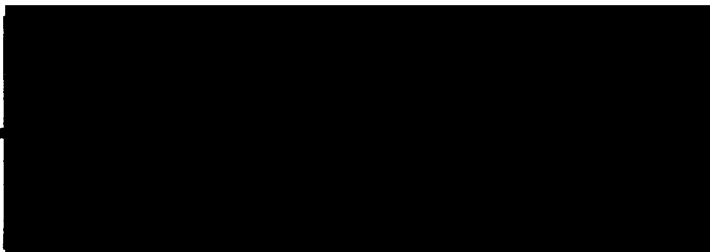


"THE DEATH OF THE LATIN AMERICAN GUERRILLA MOVEMENT", Alan Riding,
World, 3 July 1973.

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Because it highlights some of the repressive measures often needed to crush guerrilla movements, this article is not suited for replay in most countries. It is, however, a highly realistic appraisal of the birth and demise of the continental guerrilla movements and the reasons for their failure. It is essentially a call for a reasoned approach to alleviating social discontent and living conditions in those areas where guerrilla movements have heightened impatience for a better life. The main point is that nationalism can succeed where violent revolution fails.

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WORLD AND SR—A BRIEF REPORT

The bankruptcy proceedings concerning the *Saturday Review* have been under way for more than a month. The editors of *WORLD MAGAZINE* have been attempting to acquire the title and the subscription list of the *Saturday Review*, which would then be combined with *WORLD*. There are some 400 creditors whose majority consent is essential to any plan of reorganization.

Court hearings concerning the bankruptcy were held in federal court in San Francisco on May 23. Most of the proceedings concerned the sale to E. P. Dutton & Co. of the book-publishing house called *Saturday Review Press*.

Slow and complicated though the negotiations may have been, we feel that substantial progress has been made. As this is written (June 8), we have every reason to be optimistic about the outcome and are proceeding with plans to publish the first combined issue September 11.

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Cover design by Ned Levine

Cartoons: Bernard Schoenbaum, Herbert Goldberg, Henry Martin, Everett Opi, William Hoest, Robert Censoni

World Magazine published biweekly by World Magazine, Inc., 488 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022. Norman Cousins, President; S. Spencer Grin, Executive Vice-President; Richard L. Tobin, Senior Vice-President; Roland Gelatt, Editorial Vice-President; Joseph S. Iseman, Corporate Vice-President and Secretary; Lyn White, Vice-President, Corporate Relations; Robert A. Burghardt, Vice-President, Director of Advertising Services; Fraser S. Howe, Travel Manager; Larry Leins, Automotive Marketing Manager; Joseph Luyber, Special Projects Manager; Peter J. Brandon, Corporate Development Manager; Judith Adel, Production Manager; Bruce E. Miller, Regional Manager—365 Notre Dame, Grosse Pointe, Mich. 48230; Advertising Representatives—Western Region, R. J. Friedman Associates, Inc., 3242 West Eighth Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90005; Midwestern Region, Joseph Wall & Associates, 400 Ascot Drive, Park Ridge, Ill. 60068; Southeastern Region, James A. Kridel, Inc., 7600 Red Road (Suite 215—A), Miami, Fla. 33143; Harry W. Hochman, Circulation Director; S. O. Shapiro, Marketing & Circulation Consultant. Subscription price in U.S. and its possessions, APO, FPO, & Canada: one year—\$12; two years—\$20; three years—\$25 (all other countries—\$2 per year additional postage). Vol. 2, No. 14, July 3, 1973. Back issues are \$1 per copy. Entered as second-class mail in New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. © 1973 by World Magazine. All rights reserved under the Berne and Pan-American copyright conventions. Reproduction in whole or in part of any article (in English or other languages) without permission is prohibited. Printed in the United States of America. Available also in 35 mm microfilm and microfiche. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a properly addressed envelope bearing sufficient postage. Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of address to Subscription Department, World Magazine, P.O. Box 1226, Flushing, N.Y. 11352.

THE DEATH OF THE LATIN AMERICAN GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

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by Alan Riding

The revolutions inspired by Castro and Guevara have faltered and in some cases died. Yet the Latin American guerrillas "are not forgotten. . . . They have awakened many oppressed sectors to the need for change."

At dawn on February 3 this year, Colonel Francisco Caamaño Deñó and nine khaki-uniformed guerrillas scrambled ashore from a forty-two-foot launch at Playa Caracoles on the southern coast of the Dominican Republic. Caamaño, the charismatic leader of the Leftist forces during the 1965 Dominican civil war, had been in exile for more than six years, and this was his long-awaited return.

One of the guerrillas, wearing civilian clothes, set off for the capital of Santo Domingo to make contact with opponents of the right-wing government of President Joaquín Balaguer. The other guerrillas, including thirty-eight-year-old Caamaño, headed for the hills and jungles near San José de Ocoa.

The plan was simple: to emulate Fidel Castro's uprising in the Sierra Maestra fifteen years earlier, to establish a rural guerrilla force, and, eventually, to overthrow the central government.

Within a few hours of the landing, Caamaño's group was spotted and reported by local peasants; by the next day hundreds of government troops, helicopters, planes, and artillery had arrived in the area, about 100 miles west of Santo Domingo; two days later three soldiers died in a clash with the guerrillas

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near Testero de Mejía; then the government declared a state of emergency, arrested hundreds of Leftist sympathizers, and placed tanks around the capital; and on the afternoon of February 16 Caamaño and two of his *compañeros* were killed by troops. By late March three more guerrillas had fallen in battle, one had

guerrilla movement was strong, grabbing world attention with daring kidnappings and assaults and shaking nearly every regime on the continent. But more recently it has suffered a series of disastrous setbacks, and the list of martyrs is growing: Camilo Torres in Colombia; Ernesto Che Guevara in Bolivia; Carlos Marighela and Carlos Lamarca in Brazil; Turcios Lima and Yon Sosa in Guatemala; Genaro Vázquez in Mexico; and now Francisco Caamaño in the Dominican Republic.

Despite misery and unrest throughout Latin America, the continental guerrilla movement has effectively been crushed. There are still occasional extremist convulsions, as in Mexico and Argentina recently. But the wild, young adventurers of the late Sixties have almost all been killed or jailed; most guerrilla organizations have been broken up; and even Fidel Castro has withdrawn his support for the "violent path" to revolution.

Yet if social discontent is growing and living conditions are deteriorating across the continent, why have the guerrillas failed? Why has the Cuban example

not been repeated?

One problem was the Cuban example itself. Most young guerrillas were dazzled by the romance of the revolution, but they failed to examine it in detail. While they studied Fidel's military and political strategy against the Batista dic-



Joseph Scrofani

Che Guevara, 1928-1967—"... and the list of martyrs is growing."

died of starvation, two had surrendered, and one had sought asylum in the Mexican embassy.

The guerrilla uprising was over, and the impossible dream of the Left had claimed new victims.

A few years ago the Latin American

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tatorship, they overlooked elements peculiar to the Cuban experience.

The essential point, of course, is Cuba came first. Much of the Cuban bourgeoisie was already opposed to the Batista regime when Fidel and El Che began their offensive in the hills. Moreover, Fidel never claimed to be leading a Communist revolution, but rather a middle-class uprising against an unpopular dictatorship. In other words, many of Fidel's supporters in the late Fifties, including many liberal Americans, would have opposed him had they known how things would develop.

The Cuban example was therefore as much a warning to the oligarchies as it was an inspiration to the Left. It meant that all future guerrilla movements would immediately be branded as Communist and that the United States and the local ruling elites would mobilize at any cost to prevent "another Cuba." In April 1965 the United States dispatched 25,000 marines to the Dominican Republic to implement this policy. The political situation on the continent was further polarized, and Cuba became a "special case" that could not be repeated.

Nevertheless, Cuba has had immense political impact on the continent. It created a new political dimension, a new awareness of the social injustices, the economic inequalities, and the political repression that are the norm in Latin America. And it inspired a guerrilla movement that hoped to alter this state of affairs quickly and violently.

IN ALMOST all countries, the guerrillas were middle- and upper-class university students and intellectuals. They were impatient young fighters rebelling against the conservatism and pro-Soviet dogmatism of the traditional Communist parties; The Brazilian Carlos Marighela was a rare example of a Communist-party militant's turning guerrilla. Most guerrillas severed all relations with their local Communist party and sought ideological and strategic guidance solely from the Cuban example.

But the same individualistic flair that led young Latinos to become guerrillas also produced disciplinary problems and ideological disagreements. Frequently, small national guerrilla movements were fragmented into splinter groups following Mao, Castro, Trotsky, Stalin, and assorted local heroes. And contrasts between the Cuban revolution and the Soviet, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Algerian ones caused more disputes than moments of enlightenment.



"The guerrillas grabbed world attention with daring kidnappings and assaults . . . shaking nearly every regime on the continent."

Once the guerrillas were established in the hills, they suffered other problems because of lack of adequate support organizations in the cities. The local Communist parties were both jealous of the guerrillas and unwilling to risk their bourgeois comforts by helping the rebels with food, arms, and money. At times the situation in the hills became so desperate that some guerrillas actually died of starvation.

Disagreement, or just simple confusion over strategy, was common. For example, until Che Guevara's death in Bolivia in October 1967, Havana's policy was to sponsor rural guerrilla movements, as in Venezuela, Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, and Bolivia. But there were conflicts: Should the guerrillas try to be entirely self-sufficient, or should they rely on urban support; should they establish fixed bases or remain nomadic; should they fight in single columns or divide themselves up into small units? Many guerrillas adopted as their Bible the treatise *Revolution in the Revolution*, by the young French Marxist Regis Debray. Yet the book's argument that rural guerrillas should be entirely self-sufficient was later denounced by Havana as "erroneous."

Dissent within the revolutionary camp increased in the late Sixties with the eruption of urban guerrilla warfare

across the continent. Havana's strategists were strongly opposed to bringing the fight to the cities, arguing that governments could be toppled only by rural campaigns that would eventually isolate the capital. But it was the urban guerrillas of Guatemala, Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina who ultimately had the most impact.

In many cases urban guerrillas emerged after their rural colleagues had been eliminated. And being in the heart of each country, they could act with smaller numbers to greater effect. Diplomats and government officials could be kidnaped or murdered, banks could be assaulted, police patrols attacked, and student groups easily infiltrated. While rural rebels could be dismissed as isolated problems, urban guerrillas could draw world attention to the impotence of governments and the chaos of societies. Indeed, in the countries where urban guerrillas were most active—especially Brazil and Guatemala—foreign opinion focused on the repressive tactics employed by local regimes rather than on the terrorism of the guerrillas.

But the urban guerrillas also failed, and they, too, were largely wiped out. "We lacked experience, and we lacked structure," said one exiled Brazilian guerrilla. "We were too anxious to get away from the traditional schemes of the Communist party; we were in too much of a hurry. The early success spoiled us. Everyone wanted to join in. We thought we were going to overthrow the government, and we made no political preparations. We concentrated too much on the military aspects."

Nevertheless, the failure of both rural and urban guerrillas was due more to outside factors than to their own shortcomings and divisiveness. Above all, lack of popular support left them vulnerable when the inevitable repression came.

Once again, the Cuban example: Fidel's main backing came from the middle classes of Havana, but this same social stratum in other Latin American countries has by now been awakened to the guerrilla threat. In any event, the revolutionary purity of the later guerrillas taught them to seek a partnership with the rural and urban masses, not with the petite bourgeoisie. And here they failed disastrously.

After 450 years of external and internal colonialism, the Latin American masses are oppressed and apathetic. In country after country the rural guerrillas have enormous difficulty in communicating with the peasantry. In Cen-

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tral America and the Andean nations of South America, the rural populations consist of isolated groups of Indians, or *mestizos*, who live in extreme poverty and communicate in Indian languages, and who are invariably exploited by the local landowner, or *cacique*.

The guerrillas, on the other hand, are usually white, or at least whiter than the rural *mestizos*, and are immediately identifiable as "foreigners." Frequently there is a language barrier; invariably there is a cultural barrier. The peasants feel no loyalty to the guerrillas and, if anything, are afraid of them. The tradition of paternalism has taught them to respect authority: News of the arrival of "foreigners" is therefore quickly conveyed to the local *cacique*, and soldiers arrive soon afterward. Both Che Guevara and Carlos Lamarca died after peasants had revealed their whereabouts. "We were like a heart transplant," one former guerrilla said. "The heart worked well, but the body rejected it."

In isolated cases, however, owing to conditions of extreme poverty and exploitation, peasants have assisted the guerrillas. But this has always brought on fierce repression of the rural inhabitants who, unlike the mobile guerrillas, are highly vulnerable. For example, in 1966 and 1967 Guatemala's Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) were active in the Zacapa region. Yet when the government response came, it was the peasants who were shot down indiscriminately. At present, in Mexico's turbulent Guerrero state, a local guerrilla leader, Lucio Cabañas, has emerged and is unquestionably supported by the impoverished local peasantry. Because the army has been unable to capture Cabañas, it has adopted a policy of broader repression in the hope of turning the guerrilla leader's protectors against him. On April 24 this year, for instance, soldiers entered the village of Piloncillos and executed six peasants for giving food to Cabañas. Obviously a point is reached where peasant hatred for the army is surpassed by resentment of the guerrillas. Then the guerrillas are also vulnerable.

In the cities the guerrillas need not depend on local support for the basic necessities of food, clothing, and medicine. Formed into small cells and racially assimilated, they can lead double lives without easy identification. Nevertheless, they have failed to awaken the urban masses to their cause.

Most inhabitants of Latin American cities are slum-dwellers, and most of these are recent migrants from the *campo*. They bring with them a sense of social hierarchy and fear of author-

ity; if they manage to build a home or even find a job, they are unwilling to risk political involvement. Control of the media by government or oligarchy also prevents the urban poor from recognizing and appreciating the alternative of violent rebellion. "The slum-dwellers were not unsympathetic," one Brazilian exile recalled, "but they didn't feel part of the movement. It was our fault for not bringing them in."

The trade-union movements, on the other hand, are invariably interested in protecting the rights of their members, not against the private sector of the government, but rather against the masses of unemployed. The unionized therefore cultivate good relations with the authorities in order to preserve their privileges as "proletarian elite." These are the "new" middle classes, and as the Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist has pointed out, it is the middle class and not the guerrilla that is taking over the continent. Of course, the guerrillas do receive student backing and occasionally even clandestine support from factions of local Communist parties. But they are not "the people." And "the people" are not with them.

Yet despite internal divisions and external apathy, the guerrillas were at first able to score dramatic military successes against the Establishment because local security forces were ill-prepared. The guerrillas suddenly erupted with assaults, bank robberies, and kidnappings, and the governments were constantly caught off-guard.

Where the local oligarchy was united, however, the police and armed forces were given intense counterinsurgency training—under the guidance of U.S. military advisers provided under Agency for International Development (AID) programs—and within a few months they were able to respond to the guerrillas. Interrogation techniques and antiguerrilla tactics developed in Vietnam were used with even greater effectiveness in Latin America.

In the countryside huge numbers of troops were used—the "ideal" ratio was about a hundred soldiers for each guerrilla—to isolate and surround the rebels. Peasants were then intimidated or tortured for more detailed information on the guerrillas' whereabouts. Aircraft would frequently bomb or napalm suspected rebel hideouts. And eventually, direct contact would be made, a battle would follow, soldiers would die, and the guerrillas would be eliminated.

The torture of captured guerrillas or suspects has been the single most suc-

cessful technique used against urban guerrillas. The absence of strong structures in the rebel movements and the brutality of the torture methods left the young guerrillas highly vulnerable. According to one former guerrilla, who was himself badly tortured, "One *compañero* would be caught, and after a few days of beatings and electric shocks, he'd reveal a name or two. Another *compañero* would be picked up, then another and another. In no time the entire group was dead or in jail."

Brazil's military regime, which was able to crush the guerrilla movement in about eighteen months, won fame for its "sophisticated" torture methods. But every government on the continent that has faced or faces a guerrilla threat has resorted to similar techniques. In the war to prevent "another Cuba," normal constitutional and human rights are ignored. In Mexico suspected guerrilla contacts or their relations often disappear for months; in Guatemala they disappear forever. But from a military point of view—which is the point of view of the passionate anti-Communists who run most security forces in Latin America—the end justifies the means. And the objective is achieved consistently.

Only in one set of circumstances—when the local oligarchy has been divided along traditional party lines or between moderate reformists and ultra-reactionaries—have the guerrillas been able to survive. The Cuban case is well known. In Guatemala the guerrillas flourished between 1966 and 1970 because of just such a division; but when the bourgeois majority turned to a "law and order" government under Gen. Carlos Arana Osorio three years ago, the guerrillas were quickly smothered. In Uruguay the Tupamaro guerrillas took dramatic advantage of social disintegration during the mid-Sixties and early Seventies. But when the Tupamaro-backed "Broad Front" candidate won less than 20 percent of the vote in the November 1971 elections, the army took the initiative and within a year rounded up most of the young guerrillas, including Tupamaro leader Raúl Sendic. Even more recently, in Argentina, the political confusion wrought by seven years of ineffective army rule has enabled the Trotskyist People's Revolutionary Army and other groups to make great headway in a short time, concentrating mainly on gathering funds through bank robberies and kidnappings of wealthy foreign industrialists. Following the victory of the Peronist candidate, Hector Cámpora, in the March elections, the guerrillas stepped up their

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activities, presumably to improve their bargaining position within the broad Peronist coalition now that Dr. Cámpora has taken over. This was the same tactic adopted by Chile's Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR), which since President Allende took office in November 1970 has grown from 1500 to about 30,000 members and now acts as a revolutionary lobby close to the regime. But in both Argentina and Chile, the guerrillas lack mass support, and they are acting essentially as extremists and not as vanguards of a popular government.

Cuba's loss of interest in the continental guerrilla movement became apparent after El Che's death in 1967. There were, of course, other factors, notably Cuba's economic problems and its need to depend more closely on assistance from the Soviet Union, which had long opposed Fidel's dream of "exporting revolution" and El Che's dream of "one, two . . . many Vietnams." But Che's death was the real blow: The chosen leader of a continental revolution was dead, and the Cuban model, implemented by one of its creators, had failed on the South American mainland.

THE GAP BETWEEN Cuban and other Latin American revolutionaries grew markedly after 1968 when Fidel opposed the switch to urban guerrilla warfare and reduced his assistance to several rebel groups. Many Latin American guerrillas also began to resent Havana's revolutionary dogmatism and its apparent insistence that Cuba's experience should be the model for all continental revolutions. For example, Venezuela's perennial guerrilla leader, Douglas Bravo, began to complain publicly about lack of Cuban support. Havana-based guerrillas found themselves discouraged from launching new offensives. And more recently, it has been rumored that Francisco Caamaño was forced to leave Cuba in order to prepare his "invasion" of the Dominican Republic this February.

The emergence of a Left-leaning military regime in Peru in October 1968 and the election of President Allende in Chile two years later gave Cuba further cause to reconsider its view that violent revolution was unavoidable. Since 1970 Havana has not only supported Peru and Chile but has "blessed" nationalist trends in Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Argentina. In other words, far from "exporting" revolution, as the Nixon administration maintains, Cuba is actively seeking friends among the bourgeois governments of Latin America.

What guerrillas then still exist, and

what are their prospects?

Argentina's rebels are still strong, but they may be outmaneuvered by the new Peronist regime. In Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Venezuela, there are remnants of the once-strong guerrilla movements, but they are broken, leaderless, and concerned with survival, not revolution. In Brazil new Maoist-line groups have appeared in the Amazon jungles, but they are isolated and, by definition, relatively harmless.

In Colombia three different groups—one pro-Soviet, one Maoist, and one Castroist—have been active in the countryside for a decade. But in terms of national politics they are unimportant. Despite frequent clashes with troops, the guerrillas are restricted to remote mountain districts and are unable to operate on a large scale. A similar situation exists with Lucio Cabañas and his followers in Mexico: They have killed several dozen soldiers but are limited to a region they know. In effect, there is a standoff that Cabañas cannot win. Several small urban guerrilla groups have also appeared in Mexico in the past two years—including one that kidnaped the U.S. consul general in Guadalajara, Terrance G. Leonhardy, in May and freed him only after thirty political prisoners had been released and flown to Cuba. But the Mexican police and army have always managed to break up these groups quickly. Leonhardy's captors are similarly doomed.

Against this background, the reasons for Caamaño's failure this year are apparent. His attempt to reinstate the reformist president Juan Bosch during the 1965 civil war won him great fame and popularity locally. But in 1967 he disappeared from his diplomatic post in exile in London; he went to Cuba, lost contact with his mass supporters, and lost touch with the Dominican reality. He could not have hoped for active support from the rural population where he planned his base; yet the Dominican Republic's repressed Leftist groups were not ready for him. In addition—and in this case crucial—the conservative government of President Balaguer enjoys the full support of the army, which had been equipped and trained by U.S. "advisers" for just such an eventuality.

But why have the Latin American guerrillas failed when the Chinese and the Viet Minh succeeded, when Black September and other Palestinian groups continue? Perhaps the main difference is that the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Arabs all had apparent foreign enemies: Mao's guerrillas gained strength against the Japanese invaders; Ho Chi Minh's guer-

rillas resisted the French; Black September, the Israelis. For the Latin American Left, the United States is the obvious foreign enemy, but the American presence is more symbolic than visible. The real enemy is the domestic Right, and in an underground civil war, the Left does less well. The Palestinian guerrillas discovered this when they challenged King Hussein's loyal forces in September 1970 and were crushed. And they suffered a new drubbing when they took on the Lebanese army this spring. In other words, nationalism can succeed where revolution fails.

But perhaps the guerrilla efforts and sacrifice have not been entirely in vain. They have failed to seize power in any country other than Cuba, but they have awakened many oppressed sectors to the need for change. Previously apolitical sectors have been made aware of their own leftism by the martyred guerrillas. In a quasi-religious sense, the idea that El Che or Camilo died fighting on their behalf has had enormous impact. Although the guerrilla tactics failed, the dead heroes personify the dreams of more and more Latin Americans. The impossible dream of the guerrilla revolution has been replaced by impatience for a better life. "The outcome of today's struggle is not important," Che Guevara wrote shortly before his death:

As far as the final result is concerned, it does not matter whether one movement or another is temporarily defeated. What is decisive is the determination to struggle which is maturing daily, the awareness of the need for revolutionary change, and the certainty of its possibility.

The guerrillas are gone but not forgotten. □