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Opinion • Commentary

Hearts and Minds

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THE contours of the Reagan administration's policy toward Nicaragua have been made sharper in the past several weeks. Thus, the CIA guerrilla warfare manual closely tied to that policy deserves greater scrutiny.

First, the policy itself. The current debate concerns continued

congressional funding of the *Contras*, the Nicaraguan rebels, consisting of two main groups having many factions, who are fighting the Sandinista government. At his February press conference, President Reagan called the *Contras* "freedom fighters," and he has previously referred to them as the "moral equal of our Founding Fathers." He has been pressing Congress to approve \$14 million in aid for them.

As part of the president's legislative strategy, he has tried to demonstrate that he still seeks a peaceful settlement with Nicaragua over the composition of its government and its relationship with Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the president says he wants the Nicaraguan government to "say uncle" — to democratize its regime, expel all Cuban and other foreign military advisers, stop spreading subversion in Latin America and maintain a military force consistent with defensive purposes.

The prospects for achieving these goals through a negotiated settlement are dim. The CIA pamphlet on guerrilla warfare, which circulated last year in Nicaragua, now becomes one of the central features of the Reagan policy. This policy is in direct conflict with the president's anti-terrorism statements and the 1982 federal law prohibiting the CIA and the Pentagon from attempting to overthrow the Sandinistas. But these are only part of the ironies.

The CIA has designed this pamphlet, "Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare," to "win the hearts and minds" of the people, precisely what the Americans tried and failed to do in Vietnam. Some of the language is in classical liberal-democratic tones. The irony is that the tactics used to accomplish a change in the government are far from being liberal or democratic. They are drawn from the guerrilla warfare concepts of Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh as well as the anti-personnel procedures of the Central Intelligence Agency.

This makes for a curious mixture of ideas that have very little theoretical coherence.

The manual characterizes the Sandinistas as "puppets" of Soviet and Cuban "foreignizers" and "imperialists," who for their own political and military reasons want to enslave the Nicaraguan people. The manual reiterates over and over again the sentiment that "our insurrection" consists of "Freedom Commandos" and that "we are determined to win freedom, equality, a better economy with work facilities, a higher standard of living and a true democracy for all Nicaraguans without exception."

The manual even lists several basic human rights, such as freedom of expression and the press, which could have been lifted directly from the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

There also is a tinge of democratic messianism in it. This parallels President Reagan's view of America as being divinely blessed to bring peace and prosperity to earth: America as "a city on a hill," as "a beacon of light" for all nations to emulate is a constant millenarian theme in American history. No one better expresses this than Mr. Reagan. The CIA

manual often refers to the "Christian guerrillas" who are fighting godless communism. These fearless Christian Crusaders "are not afraid of anything or anyone, neither the Soviets nor the Cubans."

The new democracy is to be achieved mainly by nonviolent means through education and persuasion. But this espousal of nonviolent tactics is inconsistent with the reality of the *Contras*' activities which have recently come to light. At least one faction has been accused in two separate studies of widespread attacks and atrocities against the local population including rape, murder and kidnaping.

The fact is that the manual itself suggests that the civilian population ought to be convinced that the intentions, if not the actions, of the guerrillas are peaceful and nonviolent. The tactics are neither. The success of the movement hinges on what the CIA calls "Armed Propaganda Teams," whose task is to persuade the people that a direct link exists between the guerrillas' armed might and the people's future freedom.

These teams resemble the "armed propaganda brigades" that Ho Chi Minh created in 1944 under the command of his chief tactician General Vo Nguyen Giap to combat the Japanese (later the French, then the Americans). According to Ho, these units proved that "greater importance should be attached to the political side than to the military side." This would lead to the liberation of Vietnam.

What are the composition of these teams? The individual guerrilla must be someone unquestionably dedicated to the cause. He must be able, says the CIA, to "persuasively justify his actions when he comes into contact with . . . the people of Nicaragua." Moreover, he must be willing to make sacrifices and to suf-

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fer "hunger, cold, fatigue, and insecurity" as he participates "in the cause of the struggle."

The CIA could have extracted this language directly from the Nineteenth-Century Russian anarchist, who, most likely along with Mikhail Bakunin, wrote the

notorious "Catechism of a Revolutionary." The "catechism" spoke of the revolutionary as a sacred person, who "has no personal interests or activities, no private feelings, attachments, or property, not even a name. He is absorbed by one single aim, thought, passion — revolution." It could well have served as a model for the CIA to create an imperfect reproduction of Nechaev's hero in Nicaragua.

Once formed, the Armed Propaganda Teams are to grow gradually in size and number. According to the manual, the teams' activity "allows the expansion of the guerrilla movement, since they can penetrate areas that are even under the control of the combat units." As early as 1929, Mao Zedong envisioned the same thing occurring in China. "In an independent regime with stabilized territory," he wrote, "we adopt the policy of advancing in a series of waves." His idea was to widen the area of indoctrination, and thereby increase political support "wave after wave."

Mao's oft-quoted statement that "political power grows out of a barrel of a gun" also contains this meaning. With guns, "we can also create cadres, create schools, create culture, create mass movements." In other words, the guerrillas must teach the people, just as the CIA manual says, that "our weapons are, in truth, your weapons, yours." This is another way of saying that political power is inextricably linked to the barrel of a gun.

Once the people can identify with the guerrillas' weapons, two tactics will help the freedom fighters achieve a successful indoctrination campaign.

First, they will win the people's trust by living and working among them. Mao did this in China from 1935 until his victory in 1949 when he sought to forge a link between "the masses of the people," as he called them, and "the People's Liberation Army." In liber-

ated areas, guerrillas should therefore help grow crops and provide rudimentary social services.

The other tactic, terror, is also necessary. Those who are suspect or antagonistic to the *Contras* will have to be harshly dealt with by "the selective use of violence for propaganda effects." Thus, "it is possible to *neutralize* (emphasis added) carefully selected and planned targets," such as various political and military leaders associated with the Sandinistas. The term "neutralize" is emphasized because it is the term the CIA itself used in Vietnam in its highly controversial "Phoenix Program."

From 1967 on, the CIA developed this program to neutralize suspected agents of the Vietcong or North Vietnam. According to Vietnam historian Arnold R. Isaacs, this program had "the image of an indiscriminate CIA-controlled Murder, Inc., in Vietnam." Provincial and district chiefs were given quotas for the number of suspects they were supposed to neutralize. Mr. Isaacs says up to 90 percent of these quotas were filled by counting in thousands of Vietcong killed in battle. Because of that, Mr. Isaacs adds, the program was not particularly successful.

But Stanley Karnow, another expert on Vietnam, disagrees. He cites a number of former Vietcong and North Vietnamese leaders who admitted that it was "an extremely destructive" and "a very dangerous" program. The point here is that the neutralization that the CIA advocated years ago in Vietnam is now once again being promoted in Nicaragua.

Yet another CIA tactic the manual advances is the recruitment of "the unemployed" and "professional criminals" to "carry out specific selective 'jobs.'" These "jobs," while left vague, are placed in that section of the manual having to do with political agitation and demonstrations. These criminals are to "be equipped with weapons (knives, razors, chains, clubs, bludgeons) and should march slightly behind the innocent and gullible participants." This use of the "lower sort" is highly reminiscent of CIA actions in Iran in 1953.

At that time, the agency's chief operative in Tehran, Kermit ("Kim") Roosevelt (Theodore Roosevelt's grandson), carried out orders to bring down what the United States thought was a Communist-dominated Iranian government. Mr. Roosevelt created so much turmoil and unrest that the civil order was destroyed. Moving from the steamrooms and the gymnasiums to the streets, CIA agents put together a huge crowd of musclemen and weightlifters chanting pro-shah slogans. They eventually gathered mobs of the unemployed, criminals, and the *lumpenproletariat* to run rampant through the streets of Tehran.

According to Eisenhower biographer Peter Lyon, "the uprising brought riots, terror, violence, bloodshed, and death." And ultimately the return of the shah who had been in Rome meeting with Allen Dulles, the then-head of the CIA.

What, then, can we say about this manual? First, it is obviously quite explicit in its goal of ending or at least substantially altering the Sandinista government. Second, it is a curious compilation of factors ranging from liberal-democratic ideals to their complete opposite, namely terrorist subversion, precisely what the United States has traditionally found to be reprehensible and disgusting. And finally, it represents a direct interference in the affairs of a sovereign country in violation of American law and norms.

The greatest irony is that the American government now seems to be in the position of trying to change or overthrow a government it claims to be totalitarian by using the very means it says it is trying to destroy.

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