

MUNICH, 15 March 1971 (CAA/X)

The wave of kidnappings of diplomats and other prominent personalities by extreme left-wing terrorists which began in Brazil in September, 1969, and bred imitations in a succession of Latin American countries, reflects the continuing emphasis on urban tactics and the decline in rural guerrilla activities since the death of Che Guevara in October, 1967. It also shows that the accession to power of an extreme left-wing coalition government in Chile by peaceful, electoral means is not necessarily seen as relevant to the strategies employed by Communists and other extremists elsewhere.

Although rural guerrilla activities continue in a number of countries, in none do they represent a threat to the stability of established governments. In Bolivia, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), originally set up by Guevara in 1966-67, made an unsuccessful attempt to renew its rural activity in July, 1970, when a group of 30 guerrillas attacked a gold-mining company in Teoponte, in North-Eastern Bolivia, kidnapped two West German engineers, and demanded as ransom the release of ten "political prisoners". A communiqué published in the Cuban Press on July 23 claimed that the guerrillas had "returned to the mountains"; but by October the ELN commander, "Chato" Peredo, had been captured and the members of his group killed, captured or dispersed. About 15 may have managed to make their way back to the capital, where the ELN may still have a rudimentary urban base. Exiled to Chile at the beginning of November, Peredo told the extreme left-wing journal Punto Final (December 8) that the ELN still held the ideas expressed by Che Guevara and believed that political and social conditions in Bolivia were right for guerrilla warfare. His views have been repudiated by the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB), however; a meeting of the PCB Central Committee, reported by Moscow's Radio Peace and Progress (December 4), criticised attempts to revive guerrilla activity and denied that these were the only valid revolutionary tactics in Bolivia.

The Venezuelan guerrilla movement, which was probably the most influential in Latin America in the early 1960s, is now in complete disarray. Repudiated in 1967 by the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV), one of its original co-sponsors, and, apparently, abandoned by Cuba in 1969, it has few members and is ideologically split and physically ineffective. The small remaining groups of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN), led by former PCV Politburo member Douglas Bravo, and the Castroite Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), reportedly formed a "revolutionary integration committee" in January, 1970, to coordinate their activities, but nothing has been heard of it since. The pacification programme launched by President Caldera's government in 1969, the legalisation of the PCV, and the termination of Cuban moral and material support (publicly denounced by Bravo in January, 1970), all contributed to the decline of the rural guerrilla movement. Sporadic raids still occur, but they are comparatively insignificant; and in January, 1971, there were persistent rumours that Bravo himself had died of cancer.

Rural guerrilla activities in Colombia have also declined, although three groups, geographically and ideologically separate, still exist. Lack of success has led all of them at various times to embark on urban operations, but they have made little progress. The Castroite Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which is believed to have been responsible for a number of urban raids and kidnappings in 1970, has been weakened by a split in its main "José Antonio Galán" Front, due as much to personal as to ideological rivalries, and aggravated by general demoralisation. In early January, 1971, unconfirmed reports said that ELN leader Fabio Vásquez had been "executed" by his own men.

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The pro-Chinese Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), virtually inactive during 1969, suffered further losses when it tried to resume operations in late 1970. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), numerically the largest group with about 150 members, has continued at a reduced scale the activities it resumed immediately after the April, 1970, elections. The pro-Soviet Colombian Communist Party (PCC) still supports the FARC, and that support continues to be endorsed by Soviet propaganda. Gilberto Vieira, PCC Secretary General, told the Uruguayan Communist Party newspaper El Popular (December 23, 1970) that "mass political struggle" was most important in Colombia at the present time, but the PCC believed that the guerrillas had to be maintained - even if their methods did not yet constitute the principal form of struggle - in order to defeat "the violence of the government against the peasant areas".

#### Kidnappings multiply

The swing from rural to urban tactics has been most marked in Guatemala, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina - all of which were the scene of much-publicised political kidnappings in 1970. In Guatemala - where members of the Castroite Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) in March, 1970, kidnapped the Foreign Minister, a US labour attaché and the West German Ambassador (the last of whom they murdered when ransom terms were rejected) - there has been comparatively little terrorist activity in the past few months.

In Brazil urban terrorism continues. In 1970, members of the Castroite Vanguardia Popular Revolucionaria (VPR) and the Acao Libertadora Nacional (ALN) were responsible for the abduction of the Japanese Consul in Sao Paulo (March); the West German Ambassador (June); and the Swiss Ambassador (December) - thereby securing the release of a total of 115 "political prisoners". Both the VPR and the ALN plan to develop rural as well as urban activities, but the aim of the late ALN leader, Carlos Marighella, to make 1969 the "year of the rural guerrilla", did not materialise. The ALN itself, badly hit by the death of Marighella in November, 1969, suffered a further blow when his successor, Joaquín Camara Ferreira, died of a heart attack while resisting arrest in October, 1970. However, Marighella's Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla, produced in June, 1969 (which recommends kidnapping as one tactic), remains a basic handbook and its contents have been widely publicised by Cuban propaganda. The pro-Soviet Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) (from which Marighella was expelled in 1967) is the only extreme left-wing organisation in Brazil to oppose violent tactics. The Chilean newspaper La Prensa (December 29, 1970) reported that PCB Secretary-General Luis Carlos Prestes had attacked kidnappings and urban guerrilla tactics in general in an article in a recent issue of the New International Review. He called such activities "adventurism" which caused grave harm to the revolution.

The most active and best organised of urban groups in Latin America is the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN) or "Tupamaros" in Uruguay, who in July, 1970, kidnapped a Brazilian diplomat and a US AID official (murdering the latter), and in August a US soil adviser. On January 8, 1971, they seized the British Ambassador to Uruguay, Mr. Geoffrey Jackson. They have proved adept at carrying out other types of urban terrorism, such as bank raids, attacks on foreign-owned property and murder of members of the security forces; but their vague ideological base, their increasing brutality and the adverse effects of their activities on some aspects of the economy (e.g. the normally lucrative tourist trade) have alienated popular sentiment. The Uruguayan Communist Party (PCU), which is currently pledged to united front tactics

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designed to emulate the electoral success of the Chilean Communists (the Uruguayan Frente Amplio was launched on February 7, 1971), does not openly support the Tupamaros, though it may welcome the atmosphere of unrest they have created.

One reason for the shift to urban tactics in Uruguay is the lack of isolated, mountainous terrain. The same factor has in part influenced the emphasis on urban tactics in Argentina, where many small terrorist groups have existed since mid-1968. Best known of the Argentine groups are the "Montoneros" (or the "Juan José Valle" Command, named after a Peronist general executed in 1956 under former President Aramburu for leading an attempt to restore Perón to power). The various terrorist groups, which show a continuing tendency to splinter and reform under new names, have few connexions with each other. But their exploitation of industrial unrest (as in the Córdoba riots in May, 1969) and sporadic raids and proclamations have aroused the resentment of the pro-Soviet Argentine Communist Party (PCA). This pursues "peaceful co-existence" and has been inspired by President Allende's electoral victory in Chile to seek the formation of a similar political front in Argentina - an ambition so far thwarted by the refusal of the Peronist movement to cooperate.

#### Lack of coordination

There is little evidence that any significant degree of international cooperation exists between the various Latin American guerrilla movements. Despite Guevara's failure and the disillusionment it caused the hope still lingers in certain quarters that Bolivia, being in the heart of the continent, may provide a suitable starting-point for a unified guerrilla movement. A committee of support for the Bolivian ELN was set up in Chile in January, 1970, but little is known of its activities. A number of Chileans, Argentinians, Brazilians, Peruvians and Colombians, allegedly joined the ELN in 1970: it was claimed that they signed an ELN communiqué, publicised by Cuban propaganda in July, calling for "a continental and coordinated armed response" to imperialism in Latin America. The ELN also claimed it had received assistance from the Uruguayan Tupamaros (the Cuban party organ, Granma, August 1, 1970). However, members of the extreme left-wing Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas (FAP) in Argentina claimed in an interview published by Granma (December 12, 1970) that their group had held talks with the Bolivian ELN but these had broken down over the latter's insistence on leading any continental guerrilla organisation.

So far as is known, Cuba has given little or no material aid to Latin American guerrilla groups since mid-1969, although it is likely that some training facilities are still being provided in Cuba. This may be due in part (as Douglas Bravo alleged) to Cuba's increasing preoccupation with her own economic plight. Russian pressure may also be a factor since Soviet efforts at political and economic penetration in Latin America have continued in the past year. (The Soviet Union established relations with Guyana and Costa Rica at the end of 1970, and a number of important trade and aid agreements have been concluded or offered with Costa Rica, Bolivia and Peru). Castro may also be viewing the guerrillas with greater realism. Propaganda support nevertheless continues, including the publication of lengthy interviews with guerrilla groups in Granma (for example with the Tupamaros on October 8, 1970, and with various Argentine groups on December 10 and 12), full reportage of their activities, and dissemination of Marighella's Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla - which was re-issued in November in the monthly bulletin of the Havana-based Afro-Asian-Latin American People's Solidarity Organisation, Tricontinental.

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Chile "an exception"

The Cuban Minister without Portfolio, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, told a Press conference in Chile (published in Punto Final on November 24) that Chile's electoral result did not invalidate the armed struggle formula: Cuba and most revolutionary groups in Latin America had always viewed Chile as an exceptional case. In most countries democratic possibilities were non-existent. The same point was made by Castro himself in an interview with Chilean journalists in Havana carried by the same journal in February, 1971. Chile's example could not be applied to other Latin American countries, in most of which armed struggle was still the only way to "liberation".

This may in part be posturing by a Cuban leadership that is anxious to retain a reputation for militancy. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that Castro's long-term aims have changed. It is also clear that the Russians are anxious to keep their options open in Latin America. Moscow has implicitly supported the Colombian Communist Party's maintenance of a guerrilla wing and has more directly incited Haitians to violence (a broadcast by the "unofficial" Radio Peace and Progress on February 4, 1971, criticised Haitians for not taking advantage of an opportunity to "eliminate" a group of tontons macoutes, reminding them that they could achieve this aim only by "determined actions").

The Russians have demonstrated that they will support armed struggle if they consider it to be appropriate to local circumstances. An article in the November, 1970, issue of the World Marxist Review gave approval to a new book, Lenin, Revolution, and Latin America, by Rodney Arismendi, First Secretary of the Uruguayan Communist Party. Arismendi, it said, had pointed out that the choice of revolutionary paths should be left to each individual party. He had also categorically rejected "revisionist" attempts to distort the decisions of the 20th Soviet Party Congress and the statements of the 1957 and 1960 World Communist Party Conferences by claiming that these had directed Communists "exclusively" towards peaceful means of achieving Socialism. Arismendi "convincingly" showed that the Soviet party and the international Communist movement were "creatively developing the theory of the paths of revolution in the new conditions of history". His book also discussed guerrilla activities in Latin America "as one aspect of the armed rising of the proletariat and the oppressed". But, the review concluded cautiously, he "trenchantly" criticised those who sought to copy mechanically the example of Cuba: Cuba's experience could be applied in other countries "only after careful appraisal of the alignment of forces".

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