

● CUBA

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FIDEL AND THE "PSEUDO-REVOLUTIONARIES"

The international communist movement, to our way of thinking, is not a church, it is not a religious sect or a Masonic lodge that obliges us to hallow any weakness, any deviation, that obliges us to follow the policy of a mutual admiration society with all kinds of reformists and pseudo-revolutionaries. Our stand regarding communist parties will be based on strictly revolutionary principles... and if in any country those who call themselves communists do not know how to fulfill their duty, we will support those who, without calling themselves communists, conduct themselves like real communists in action and in struggle.

Fidel Castro, March 13, 1967.

The unique domestic history of the Cuban revolution -- its non-communist origins and the unorthodox brand of totalitarian communism into which it evolved under the highly personal leadership of Fidel Castro -- is closely linked with its external, continental history. Here again, Castro himself is the key figure. As one observer has put it, "from the very outset (he was aware) that his radical social revolution was an inherent part of the Cuban revolutionary dynamics -- needed to become a Latin American revolution of the same brand if it were to survive, or at least not to become hemmed in and isolated."

Thus, even in the first year of his rule, in the "humanist" phase before he proclaimed his regime a socialist one, Castro had already begun to promote revolution abroad by backing rather

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- 1) Tad Szulc, "Exporting the Cuban Revolution," in John Plank, Ed., Cuba and the United States, Washington D.C., 1967.

clumsy moves against right-wing governments in the Caribbean area. These attempts began in April 1959, when a curious and obviously opportunistic alliance between Castro and the Panamanian diplomat Tito Arias (better known as the husband of the English ballerina, Dame Margot Fonteyn) led to an "invasion" of Panama by an overwhelmingly Cuban force, which was quickly rounded up.² In the months that followed small-scale, badly-planned expeditions were sent against the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Haiti. These used exiled rebels instead of Cubans, but they were no more successful than the fiasco in Panama. The main result was to aggravate U.S. distrust of the new Cuban regime and to put other Latin American governments on guard against Castroist subversion.

Castro fell back to regroup, as it were. Such clumsy attempts at direct revolutionary intervention were abandoned. They were replaced, beginning in 1960, by a sustained and shrewdly conducted campaign to promote anti-establishment and anti-Yankee forces not only in the Caribbean area but throughout Latin America, as Havana gradually became the continental capital of revolutionary voluntarism. The militant broadcasts of Radio Havana played an important part in this developing campaign, as did the network of correspondents established by Prensa Latina, and the groups of exiled radicals who found a home (and an organizational base) in the Cuban capital.

The attitudes and hopes behind the campaign were expressed most clearly at this early stage not by Castro himself but by his trusted lieutenant Che Guevara in the latter's book, La Guerra De Guerrillas (guerrilla warfare), published early in 1960. Significantly poor in ideological content, Guevara's work was in the main a practical handbook for guerrilla struggle in Latin American conditions, to be carried on by neglecting the traditional urban class struggle and instead mobilizing the peasantry in "liberated areas." The most important argument of the book, however, had profound ideological implications: it was, in effect, that the communist leaderships of Latin America were wrong -- that it was not necessary to wait until "subjective conditions" were ripe before taking the road of armed struggle. In any Latin American country, Guevara claimed, twenty to thirty determined men could create a revolutionary focus and initiate a successful armed struggle.

Castroist Offensive

This implicit challenge to the old-guard communist leaderships of the continent was clarified and given programmatic expression by Castro himself in his second declaration of Havana in February 1962 -- just a month before his denunciation of Anibal Escalante opened a purge of the "old communist" apparatus in Cuba. "It is neither just nor correct," proclaimed

2) The invasion force of some 90 men reportedly included about 80 Cubans and only three Panamanians.

Castro, "to mislead the peoples with vain and comfortable illusions of snatching power by peaceful means -- as Corvalan, Prestes, Codovilla and other Latin American communist leaders were doing. Reformist democracy was a sham, an obstacle to be swept aside on the road to the socialist liberation of the masses. Castro, who had proclaimed his Marxist-Leninist faith just two months earlier, was more careful than Guevara had been to guard himself against charges of ideological heresy. Thus, he paid vague tribute to the doctrine of the proletarian vanguard: "the initial struggle of small groups of fighters is unceasingly strengthened by new forces, the mass movement begins to spread, the old order slowly cracks into a thousand pieces, and then the moment comes when the working class and the urban masses decide the battle." But, despite such nods to Communist tradition, the message was clear: revolutionary situations existed in most, if not all, Latin American countries; and "the duty of a revolutionary is to make a revolution."

The Cuban promotion of revolutionary struggle throughout Latin America was, then, essentially a Castroist policy: inaugurated by Fidel himself in the first months of his rule, it was developed by him without perceptible intervention by the old-guard communists of Cuba, and it represented a clear challenge to the communist leaderships of other countries. Before examining the disruptive impact which this campaign has had upon the Latin American Communist movement, we may pause to consider what probable motives led Castro to initiate and pursue it.

Castro's own character is one obvious strand in the complex pattern. Temperament and pride of achievement have made him a prototypical revolutionary leader, exulting in his role as architect of a new order; the ideological justification of that role has changed, but not its charismatic substance. The sense of exceptional destiny evident in his famous courtroom speech of 1953 ("History will absolve me") has grown into something like a conviction of messianic destiny that cannot be confined to one small island -- an island which has assumed the challengingly exemplary title, "First Territory of Free America." The fact that he now invokes the name of Bolivar more often than he does that of Marx suggests that he dreams of going down in history as a continental hero: the second great Liberator who completed the work of the first.

But this picture of a romantic (and egotistical) revolutionary leader aspiring to greater glories is only part of the picture. Behind the romantic lies the rational: a shrewd and bold calculation of how the interests of Cuba and of Castro can be furthered.

First, Castro is aware, as his adversaries are aware, that as long as his revolution remains literally isolated -- confined to one island -- it is in danger of losing momentum, of coming to represent not the dynamics of regional change but dependence upon an alien power, of being regarded not as the model of the

future but as the relic of a freakish past; as long as Cuba remains merely the "First Territory of Free America" it is in danger of being the last.

Furthermore, in his campaign to make Havana the secular Mecca of Latin American revolutionaries Castro can exploit some important currents of regional change. Even the most stubborn Communist exponents of the peaceful way will concede, in esoteric debate with the Cubans, that an "objective" revolutionary situation exists in most Latin American countries. Indeed, the need for radical social and economic change is so clamant, and growing popular pressures so significant, that, generally speaking, the question is whether the necessary transformations will come about through violence or through President Frei's "revolution in liberty": the status quo has become historically intolerable. Hence, one element of Castroism is a relatively undoctrinal appeal to the dispossessed and the deprived, to "the revolutionaries of our America -- the America of the mestizos, the mulattoes, the Negroes and the Indians."³

But there is also an appeal to the conscious agents, or would-be agents, of revolutionary change. Specifically, the appeal is to the scattered, heterogeneous forces of the continental current which Professor Alexander has termed the "Jacobin Left" -- ultra-nationalist, activist radicals, whose intransigent hostility to the local establishment is subsumed in what President Frei of Chile has called their "strategic hatred" of the United States.⁴ As noted in an earlier paper in this series, Castro's victory in Cuba produced, from about 1960 on, a marked proliferation of such groups throughout the continent. Within the past few years there has followed a sustained campaign to make these movements into a movement, by giving them some organizational cohesion and something approaching a common "ideology" of revolutionary voluntarism -- a campaign which, as we have seen, has culminated in the recent Havana Conference of Latin American Solidarity.

We shall return later to the significance of this development, and to a closer consideration of relations between Cuba and these "Castroist" groups. Meanwhile, it should be noted that, whatever its varying extent, Castro's influence over these groups offers him several important advantages. First, it gives him an external political strength which offsets his economic dependence on the Soviet Union, and helps to reduce the effect which that dependence might otherwise have upon his internal policies. Secondly, in some countries (notably Chile, Uruguay and Mexico) local Castroist movements, aided by the broadcasts of Radio Havana, can help to create a climate of sympathy for Cuba which may deter these governments from undertaking anti-Cuban

3) OLAS Conference resolution on colonialism in Latin America, Radio Havana, August 24, 1967.

4) Cf. Ernst Halperin, Nationalism and Communism in Chile (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 3-12.

actions at the behest of the U.S. or the Organization of American States. Finally, the external campaign fulfils a very important internal function, one which other totalitarian regimes have found indispensable: constant emphasis on the national mission and on the external enemy helps Castro to strengthen his island regime by fostering "revolutionary morale", and makes it easier to maintain the domestic tension needed to build the new Cuba, peopled by new Cubans.⁵

If Castro's efforts to promote revolutionary violence throughout the continent can be largely explained in terms of self-interest, the same criterion can be applied to the response of the Latin American communist leaderships. The Cuban campaign threatened the interests of these notably unadventurous veterans on two levels: the ideological and the political.

The ideological challenge was clear. Castro's message of revolutionary voluntarism, making successful violence the ultimate criterion, represented a direct attack upon the fundamental Marxist-Leninist doctrine (or myth) of the avant-garde communist party. If the duty of a revolutionary was to make the revolution, as Castro proclaimed in his Second Declaration of Havana (February 1962), then all the elaborate analyses, in which communist party leaderships demonstrated why conditions were not yet ripe for revolution, were of no avail: they had failed this basic test; and the vanguard role which they claimed for themselves on the basis of a "scientific" ideology would be taken over by other forces which, without having the doctrine, could supply the deeds. Again, the Cuban claim, advanced during the past few years, to lay down not only the general road ahead for Latin American countries (guerrilla struggle) but also the tactical methods to be employed -- and on occasion even to decide which are the "true" local revolutionary forces -- challenges the now firmly established right of each national communist party to chart its own path in response to domestic realities.

On the political level the challenge to the interests of many national communist leaderships was equally evident. Only two communist parties in South America (those of Chile and Uruguay) enjoy full political rights, but most of the rest operate not in complete clandestinity but in varying degrees of semi-legality. This enables them to pursue their preferred policies

5) Of course, Castro is also taking internal measures to keep the bow-string of revolutionary morale taut. These include his scheme (to be fully implemented by 1975) for Cuban children to be brought up communally from the age of one month. He recently spoke of this educational project in terms which emphasized the messianic side of his complex character: "We will be in the world vanguard in developing the generation to come .. we will be in the vanguard of revolutionary ideas, in the vanguard on the path toward socialism, in the vanguard on the path toward communism" (Granma weekly edition, February 5, 1967). So much for the Russians, the Chinese, and other lagging comrades.

of opportunistic alliances with other political forces, attempts to influence the trade union and student movements, anti-Yankee agitation, and so on.⁶ In general, these policies have not been very successful, but cautious communist leaderships are not anxious to risk what they have gained by participating in "adventurist" guerrilla struggles which, with little prospect of success, would invite drastic counter-measures: harried guerrilla groups might survive such repression, but the open or semi-legal communist party apparatus would be wrecked by it.

The conflict of interests between the Cuban regime and the old-guard communist leaderships of Latin America developed gradually and unevenly, with varying reactions at different stages from individual communist leaderships. This was partly because the Cuban campaign itself developed gradually: thus, for a period of a year or so following Castro's first visit to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1963 the Cuban emphasis on revolutionary voluntarism was noticeably modified. Moreover, each party reacted (and that cautiously) only to the extent to which its own local interests were directly threatened, being naturally reluctant to publicize differences with the only communist regime in the hemisphere.⁷ Only rarely did local communist leaders make such a direct response as the Brazilian Communist veteran, Luis Carlos Prestes, did in 1963, when, during his first visit to Havana, he told the "old communist" organ Hoy:

There are persons who mistakenly believe that the initiation of an armed struggle in Brazil to overthrow the government would constitute the best support for Cuba. In the present conditions of Brazil, this would be completely wrong.⁸

In general, however, the intermittent debate between the Cubans and these foreign party leaderships was conducted in indirect terms. Old-guard spokesmen, paying ritual tribute to the glorious Cuban revolution, would cheerfully admit that in almost all countries of the continent armed struggle was the only possible way to the socialist revolution; but they would hasten to rationalize their own refusal to undertake that struggle in present conditions by emphasizing the familiar formulas of evasion -- the absence of "subjective conditions," the need to exploit "all forms of struggle," the necessity for "broad

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- 6) Ernst Halperin has remarked that "there is probably no conservative or liberal party in all of Latin America that has not staged more insurrections and incited more civil wars than the communists" (Nationalism and Communism in Chile, p. 13)
 - 7) Thus, even when the Venezuelan Communist leaders condemned Castro's blatant factionalist intervention in their affairs, they felt obliged to stress their continued support of the Cuban revolution itself (Politburo statement, Ultimas Noticias, Caracas, March 17, 1967).
 - 8) Hoy, Havana, March 9, 1963.

opposition fronts," etc.⁹

Even the few communist parties actually associated with a guerrilla struggle were uneasily mindful of the wider ideological and organizational implications of the Castroist campaign. Thus, a spokesman for the Guatemalan communist party, which controlled and fully supported the guerrilla struggle of the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), stressed in an article published in mid-1965 that "the revolutionaries in the different countries of the continent should find their own solutions arrived at through a strictly scientific method of investigation" (a clear criticism of revolutionary voluntarism). He added pointedly:

It should be noted that the existence of a revolutionary situation in one or another country does not necessarily mean that revolution will break out there and that the revolution will be triumphant. Nor does it mean that the revolution will be victorious simultaneously in all countries, or that it will develop only along the tactical path followed by the Cuban revolution, that revolutionaries must use only methods of armed struggle.¹⁰

Since that article was written, the Cuban challenge to the Latin American communist leaderships has become stronger and more explicit, as a result of two important developments -- the institutionalization and organizational strengthening of the Cuban claim to regional leadership of revolutionary forces, mainly through the Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS); and the direct Cuban attack upon the official leadership of the Venezuelan communist party.

Since the sustained Cuban campaign to regroup the scattered forces of the continental Jacobin Left in Havana-based organizations under predominant Cuban leadership has already been discussed in an earlier paper,¹¹ we need not dwell upon it here. As we have seen, the primary instrument of that campaign, which got well under way at the Havana Tri-continental Conference of

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- 9) In an article published in World Marxist Review of August 1965, the Brazilian Communist leader, Pedro Motta Lima, blandly asserted as an evident truth that successful revolution in Latin America "presupposes the creation of a broad united opposition front taking in, wherever possible, also those sections of the oligarchy which are not directed with the ruling camarilla ... [This strategy also] presupposes utilizing all the elements of effective democracy -- democratic institutions, rights, parties, trade unions, etc." The contrast with the Castroist line needs no emphasis.
- 10) Jose Manuel Fortuny, "Has the Revolution Become More Difficult in Latin America?", World Marxist Review, August 1965; emphasis added.
- 11) RFE Research report, "Castro and The Communists", August 12 1967, by Kevin Devlin

January 1966, has been the OLAS organization. Some of the national committees of OLAS -- those of Uruguay, Chile and Costa Rica, for example -- are either dominated by old-guard communists or divided between moderate and Castroist positions. But the militant resolutions passed at the recent conference in Havana -- passed unanimously but, as Castro noted in his closing speech, not without "an ideological struggle" -- were completely Castroist in tone and substance, and dealt another blow at the ideological pretensions and political hopes of the old-guard communist leaderships.

The twenty-point program contained in the General Resolution disposed brutally of the doctrinal subtleties advanced by old-guard spokesmen in the pages of World Marxist Review, by contemptuously ignoring them. Pertinent sections insisted, without qualification --

That the armed revolutionary struggle is the primary path of the revolution in Latin America;

That all other forms of struggle must serve and not hinder the primary line, which is armed struggle;

That those countries in which this task is not being considered as an immediate task should consider this task as an inevitable prospect in the development of the revolutionary struggle in their country.¹²

This challenge to the self-proclaimed vanguard role of each national communist party, and its right to decide its own strategy and tactics, was strengthened by the role which the OLAS statutes adopted by the conference assigned to the new, Havana-based (and Cuban-controlled) Permanent Committee. National committees are to be formed by anti-imperialist organizations which accept the General Declaration and the OLAS statutes; and "in countries where armed revolutionary struggle is in progress, anti-imperialist organizations and movements are those which participate in the struggle or effectively support it." The decisions as to which organizations meet this exacting criterion (which the Venezuelan Communist Party, for example, is declared to have failed to meet) lies with the Havana committee:

The permanent committee can propose the enlargement or reduction of the national committees. These

12) Points 5-8, Radio Havana, August 11, 1967.

propositions shall be discussed with the national committee, whose composition may be changed to find a unanimous solution. If no agreement is reached, the permanent committee shall make the decision.¹³

The implicit threat which this organizational development represented to the prerogatives and policies of the old-guard communist leaderships had already been made explicit in the case of the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV). The story of the open rift between the PCV leadership and the Cuban regime over the former's decision to abandon an unprofitable guerrilla struggle need not be recounted again here.¹⁴ But the implications of these dramatic developments -- Castro's denunciation of the official leadership of a fraternal party as pseudo-revolutionary traitors, and his blatant factionalist intervention on behalf of the anti-party rebel, Douglas Bravo -- were not lost upon other communist leaderships. Other parties would not join the provoked Venezuelan Communists in publicly denouncing Castro's claim to "assume the role of a kind of arbiter of the revolutionary destiny of Latin America... the only person who is to decide what is and what is not revolutionary"¹⁵; but they would recognize the kernel of truth in that angry formulation. This meant the final collapse of the precarious settlement reached at the Havana conference of Latin American Communist parties in late 1964, under which the other parties pledged support for guerrilla struggles in certain countries, in return for Cuban recognition of their right to decide their own policies and a collective condemnation of factionalist intervention. (The Ecuadorean CP has explained that it was not represented at the OLAS conference because the 1964 agreement banning interference in the affairs of other communist parties had not been respected.)¹⁶

The reaction of the old-guard party leaderships was, indeed, generally cautious, often indirect and, sometimes expressed in a negative manner -- for example, by failure to report or comment on Castro's anti-PCV philippic of March 13. Thus, the Guatemalan CP leadership, itself engaged in a guerrilla struggle, promptly dissociated itself from a pro-Castro, anti-PCV statement made by its representative in Havana following the March 13 speech, on the ground that it had not yet taken a position on the matter -- which meant that it had taken a position, refusing to join the Cubans in condemning the fraternal PCV. Similarly, the Chilean

13) OLAS Statutes, Chapter 2; emphasis added.

14) See RFE background report listed in footnote 11 supra.

15) PCV Politburo statement of March 15, 1967; during his closing speech at the OLAS conference Castro scornfully read out this document in the course of a renewed attack upon the PCV leadership.

16) Ecuadorean CP weekly, El Pueblo, as quoted in an AFP dispatch from Quito, August 5, 1967.

CP made its stand indirectly clear by denouncing the attacks which a Mexican Castroist journalist, Mario Menendez, had made upon the PCV -- without mentioning the Cubans, who had publicized those attacks.

A more significant response to the developing Cuban challenge came in the few months preceding the OLAS conference in the form of a series of bilateral or (in the case of the Central American Communist parties) multilateral inter-party meetings -- each of which was pointedly reported by Tass or Radio Moscow. This round of old-guard consultations began on May 25 with a meeting between Chilean and Uruguayan party delegations. There followed talks between the Argentinians and Brazilians (Radio Moscow, July 13), the Venezuelans and Colombians (Tass, July 13), and the Chileans and Brazilians (Tass, July 19). The discreet selections of the resulting joint communiques published by the Russians offered no criticisms of the Cubans, of course (except, implicitly, in references to the 1964 Havana agreement); but the Brazilian communists, for example, could hardly have failed to discuss the bitter fact that Carlos Marighella, expelled from the party for advocating a guerrilla struggle, was being welcomed in Havana as the only representative of Brazilian communism. The delegations were certainly concerned with the need to reassert their vanguard roles in the face of the Cuban challenge; and this was reflected in the calls for a new conference of Latin American Communist parties. The Uruguayan-Brazilian communique proposed that it be held "at an opportune moment"; the Venezuelan-Colombian statement more insistently urged its "earliest convocation."

But it is hard to see this move as an adequate reply to the threat of Castroism. A conference of Latin American Communist parties without the participation of the only ruling party in the hemisphere would be unthinkable -- Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. But Castro will not submit again to the organizational shackles which he bore, more in principle than in practice -- for a time after the 1964 conference. He will stand by his declaration at the close of the OLAS meeting:

There is a much broader movement on this continent than the movement composed simply of the Communist parties of Latin America. We owe ourselves to this broad movement. We shall judge the conduct of organizations not by what they claim they are but by what they prove to be, what they do.

It remains to be seen, however, to what extent he can substantiate the claim to controlling leadership implicit in this magistral statement. The OLAS organization is still in its infancy; the Jacobin Leftist groups which belong to it do not

have the tradition or organizational discipline which the communist parties have (or had); so far, most of them are militant more in words than in deeds; and, while their permanent representatives in Havana may be safely under Cuban influence or control, this is not true of their domestic detachments.

Much, clearly, will depend on the success or failure of Castro's efforts to promote "more Vietnams" in Latin America -- to create areas of skillfully-waged insurrection which, by provoking United States intervention, will arouse mass feeling in favor of the Castroist guerrillas. The indications are that his reach exceeds his grasp.

Apart from the small-scale, sporadic outbursts that have from time to time erupted in various countries in Central America and elsewhere -- and have been quickly suppressed -- serious guerrilla campaigns have developed in Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia and Bolivia. Peru has been a great disappointment to Castro: the guerrilla struggle launched in 1965 by Luis de la Puente of the Castroist Revolutionary Leftist Movement (MIR) was virtually crushed within six months by the reformist regime of President Belaunde. In three of the other four countries campaigns which the Cubans hailed with a fanfare of extravagant predictions have made no headway or have been reduced to marginal proportions. This is particularly true of Venezuela, where the remaining guerrilla bands of dissident communists and members of the Venezuelan MIR are now more of a nuisance than a serious threat to the Democratic Action regime. But it applies also to Colombia, where the two separate guerrilla operations maintained by the Castroist National Liberation Army and the Communist Revolutionary Armed Forces have been greatly reduced in scope and vigor;¹⁷ and to Guatemala, where of late the main result of the diminished campaigns of the communist-controlled Rebel Armed Forces and the rival November 13 Movement (MR-13) has been to

17) In Colombia a Communist Party Central Committee member, Manuel Maralanda Velez (alias Tiro Fijo -- "Dead Shot") commands the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in the south-central region (the separate guerrilla operation of the National Liberation Army in northern Colombia is dominated by the Castroist Movement of Workers, Students and Peasants--MOEC). However, the Colombian CP still holds that a revolutionary situation does not yet exist in the country, and that guerrilla action is not the principal form of struggle; see the interview with Secretary-General Gilberto Vieira in L'Humanite of June 3, 1966, and the article by Secretariat member Ramon Lopez in World Marxist Review of February 1967. There have been indications that the party no longer controls its guerrilla wing.

provoke a deplorable wave of right-wing counter-terrorism.¹⁸

The guerrilla struggle which suddenly erupted in south-east Bolivia in late March is in a different class. Launched after careful preparation (troops in vain pursuit have uncovered a camp equipped with kitchen, dormitories and field hospital), the campaign inflicted a series of humiliating defeats on inept and badly-trained Army detachments in the first months. The guerrillas are disciplined, well-armed and are making impressive use of psychological warfare.¹⁹ Their campaign has two features of special significance. First, available evidence suggests that the force is unusually international in composition (a Bolivian Army communique of June 11 claimed that it was known to include at least seventeen Cubans, four Argentines, fourteen Brazilians and three Peruvians). Secondly, although communist, Castroist and Trotskyist parties in Bolivia have hailed the guerrilla struggle, none of them has been able to claim leadership or even partial control of it.²⁰ One recalls the Castroist dictum of Regis Debray in Revolution Within the Revolution?:

Under certain conditions... [the] vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerrilla foco itself. The guerrilla force is the party in embryo.

This is the staggering novelty introduced by the Cuban revolution.

Taking into account the existing economic political and social

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- 18) The Guatemalan struggle-within-a-struggle deserves a footnote because of the light it throws on Castro's continental ambitions. During 1964-65 the MR-13 movement led by Yon Sosa came increasingly under the influence of Trotskyist advisers -- adherents of the "International Secretariat of the Fourth International," led by the Argentine ideologue Jorge Posadas. The posadistas (who during this period were criticizing the "bureaucratic" Cuban regime) tried to build up MR-13 into a Trotskyist-influenced "model" of the revolutionary struggle. The programmatic "First Declaration of the Sierra de las Minas", which MR-13 issued early in 1965, called for a conference of guerrilla representatives from Venezuela, Colombia and Guatemala, to plan "the extension of guerrilla and revolutionary warfare to new countries in Central and South America (see the report by Daniel James in Latin American Times, New York, July 26, 1965). Castro met this challenge to his regional leadership in his closing speech to the Tri-continental Conference with a bitter attack on MR-13 and the Trotskyists, praising the Communist FAR for having rescued the revolutionary flag of Guatemala from "the dirty hands of mercenaries in the service of Yankee imperialism." In April 1966 Sosa broke with the Trotskyists, charging that they had misappropriated "taxes" collected from peasants.
- 19) In one exploit guerrillas disguised as women gained admission to an Army post, disarmed the garrison and then contemptuously freed them all before leaving with their booty.
- 20) Noting the fact, a Castroist journalist suggests that "a new form of struggle" has begun in Bolivia (Carlos Maria Gutierrez, "Bolivia: Otra forma de la guerrilla," Politica, Mexico City, May 15-31, 1967).

difficulties of Bolivia, the popular frustrations that have built up since the revolution of 1952, the impressive performance of the guerrilla force compared with the poor showing of the Army, and the strategic location of the guerrilla area -- near the borders of Argentina and Paraguay, not far from the tin-mining centers with their own traditions of proletarian rebellion-- given these factors, among others, it seems probable that (whether or not the legendary Che Guevara is leading them, as Bolivian President Barrientos and others believe) the Bolivian guerrillas will continue to cause trouble.

But can they, in the long run, do much more than that? Can they really make Bolivia "another Vietnam" (not to speak of making it into "another Cuba")? It seems extremely unlikely that they can come anywhere near that ambitious goal.

The exceptional combination of circumstances which led to Castro's own victory will certainly not be repeated elsewhere in Latin America. As one of the most perceptive observers of the Castroist phenomenon has put it:

In no other Latin American country do we find the combination of a dictator backed by a corrupt and inefficient army and, at the same time, hated by a majority of the population, a revolutionary caudillo pretending to be nothing more than a radical democrat and counting on widespread sympathies inside the whole population, including the upper classes, together with the absence of organized social forces opposed to a socialist transformation of the democratic revolution. In most countries of Latin America the state apparatus, the armies and the Church are stronger than they were in Cuba, and many have learned a lesson from the Cuban experience.²¹

Moreover, while the fact that Cuba is an island has helped Castro to maintain his regime (since the Soviet-U.S. settlement of the 1964 crisis), it is also the main obstacle to the fulfillment of his grandiose continental dreams. The flood of angry young men to Cuba for "training" in the early 'sixties has diminished to an unimpressive stream. Visitors now have trouble in taking even the indirect routes remaining open through Mexico and Spain (the Venezuelan guerrilla leader, Americo Martin, was recently arrested in Ecuador as he was about to embark for Spain on his way to the OLAS conference in Havana). As a further consequence of this isolation, the aid that Castro can give to foreign revolutionary movements must mainly take the form of inspiration, advice and propaganda (the three-ton cache of Cuban weapons found on the Venezuelan coast in 1963 is still the only verified case of Cuban arms being shipped to foreign guerrillas).

What the Castroist offensive has done is to heighten Latin American governments' distrust of Cuba and vigilance against subversion. One would hope that, by drawing attention to the explosive

21) Boris Goldenberg, The Cuban Revolution and Latin America, New York, 1965, p. 353.

socio-political problems of the continent, it will also provoke more significant, co-ordinated efforts to cope with the real Latin American revolution -- the "revolution of rising expectations." It is not for nothing that Castro is especially vehement in his denunciation of democratic-reformist regimes like those of Frei in Chile, Belaunde in Peru and Lioni in Venezuela.

One disillusioned Cuban exile, describing Latin American fidelismo as "a paper tiger," recently wrote of Castro: "History has not absolved him, nor has it condemned him; it is leaving him behind."²² This is going too far. Castro can exploit with characteristic bravura some important trends in Latin American life. But other, more powerful currents of contemporary reality are against him; and the river of continental history does not appear to be flowing in his direction. His vision of the day when the Cordillera of the Andes would be the Sierra Maestra of a continent aflame with revolutionary zeal still smacks more of rhetoric than of reality.

So far, indeed, the Castroist offensive has done much more harm to the Latin American Communist movement than to the established governments of the continent. In fact, by organizing his new, loose alliance of fidelista groupings in OLAS, and by declaring that the only communist regime in the hemisphere will recognize as true vanguard forces those movements prepared to wage armed struggle, communist or not, he has dealt a root-blow to the ideological raison d'etre of the old-guard communist parties.²³

Kevin Devlin

22) Fausto Maso, "Cuba: La revolucion sin ideologia," Politica, Caracas, May 1967.

23) Of course, this assault on the Leninist myth of the party is of more than regional significance. The next paper in this series will consider the disruptive impact of Castroism and an international communist movement already undergoing the travail of post-Stalinist fragmentation when it encountered the phenomenon of fidelismo.