Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America

A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956

Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley

Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America

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IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER

whose eyes would never see this filial dedication

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Preface

THE WORK that follows is a systematic attempt to blend together an empirically driven study of Latin American revolutionary failures and successes with the social-scientific theoretical treatment of revolutions. Latin America has usually remained the "forgotten region" when general theories of revolution are put forth—Eric Wolf's *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* is the major exception—and I wish to address that lacuna. In blending together revolutionary theory and revolutionary accounts, I found that each body of information inevitably affected the way the other body of information was perceived. As Robert Merton so nicely put it forty-odd years ago, empirical research had a bearing on social theory, yet theory also had its own bearing on empirical research. Without that theoretical literature I would have foundered in a sea of information whose "noise" content always threatened to mask the "signals" within. Without paying attention to the empirics of the Latin American revolutionary process, however, I could not have achieved my recasting of certain crucial concepts. To wit, I could not have amended Jeffery Paige's formal theory of revolutionary movements, James Scott's writings on the moral economy, and Theda Skocpol's comparative study of great revolutions in order to produce concepts more appropriate to Latin American realities.

The sheer number of cases has forced me to divide this book into earlier and later periods, here called "waves." This decision not only protects the reader from mentally juggling a dozen cases within each chapter, it also permits a test of the theory I elaborate. The only method of inquiry appropriate to the problem was the comparative method; the only usable sources of information, for the most part, were nonsusceptible to elegant statistical analyses. While qualitative researchers will only sigh in relief and argue that this feature is all to the good, there is a cost: the comparative study of ten to twelve different cases, which are analyzed structurally and historically rather than simply coded statistically, naturally leads to a discursive expansion of the text, rather than to statistical condensation that then produces correlation coefficients, p-values, and other mathematical shorthands. Whereas Jeffery Paige's theory of rural, third-world social movements can be effectively condensed into one table and one correlation matrix, this work lacks such simplifying devices. Throughout the work, therefore, I try to summarize and resummarize so that the reader will not lose the train of thought, whose length may well prove daunting for those waiting patiently to cross the tracks and move on to some other reading.

I have tried to compensate for such lengthiness throughout by making the text lucid and accessible to those who are not social scientists, but rather Latin Americanists or simply interested literary passersby. For my decision to use simple language I make no apologies; social scientists have done enough damage to the mother tongue without my adding to the carnage. In the end, I hope my fellow social scientists will join me in revealing the best-kept secret of our fields: While the obscure and verbose ministers of fat language often get published in fat books and weighty journals, sociologists, like other mortals, really much prefer to read straightforward prose. Where my prose falls apart in this work, I have no one to blame but myself, for not learning the canons of clear sociological discourse from a master thereof: my former teacher and dissertation advisor, Joseph A. Kahl.

Washington, D.C.
February 1991

Acknowledgments

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, the work that follows is the work of an individual rather than a committee, an offering of what Fernand Braudel might have called *sociologie artisanal*, not *sociologie coopérative*. Yet still I have incurred many debts that are probably uncollectable. First thanks go to my thesis committee members at Cornell University, chaired by Joseph A. Kahl and joined by Thomas H. Holloway and Tom E. Davis; also to Professor Raymond Murphy of the University of Rochester for special kindnesses during this project. For conference criticism of these and related materials, I thank John Womack, Jr., Charles Tilly, León Zamosc, and Manuel Antonio Garretón. For reading and commenting on selected chapters, I thank Jeffery Paige, Theda Skocpol, and Charles Ragin, and several anonymous reviewers who read the entire manuscript and made many useful suggestions to improve the finished product. That product, however, has been most improved by the kind words and constructive criticism I have received from Susan Eckstein since 1984. She is the epitome of what we are called to be: cooperative workers in a community of scholars. The conceptual and empirical comparisons comprising this book would have been far less systematic had she not pressed me to clarify my argument throughout, and to dispense with the introduction of ad hoc and gratuitous "variables" that only muddied the theoretical waters. Thanks to Susan, a scholars' scholar.

For assistance in typing the manuscript at various stages, I would like to thank Laurie Moses of Hamilton College, Janet Smith and Cheryl Williams of the University of Rochester, and various undergraduate assistants to the sociology department at Georgetown, who added bits and pieces. Most particularly I would like to thank Janet Redley, for her able work as my one-term research assistant, in transferring most of the tables and bibliography to computer format; and also Deborah Pokorney, for help in re-preparing work lost on an errant computer disk.

All translations from Spanish, French, German, and Italian are my own; resulting infelicities in style are preferable, I hope, to sending nonpolyglots among the readers scurrying to bilingual dictionaries, which surely would have happened had I left the quotations in their original tongues.

Research support for this book was in part provided by a Summer Research Grant from Cornell University that allowed me to spend a summer doing research at the Library of Congress; it was further assisted by a part-time Postdoctoral Fellowship awarded me by the University of Rochester. To both institutions I give my thanks for the precious spare time those grants gave me, which much improved the final product.

I would like to thank E. J. Brill for permission to use materials that appear here as the latter part of chapter 12; also Butterworth Publishers for permission to reprint some passages on El Salvador that now appear as part of chapter 11; and the University of California Press, for permission to reprint some materials that appeared earlier in a summary article on guerrillas, which here are sprinkled throughout text and tabular material; finally, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., for permission to reprint some passages and tabular data that appear in my book of essays, *Exploring Revolution*.

The human suffering I have encountered in researching this work almost led me at times to that hardening of the heart against which the Psalmist warns us. Yet I have not forgotten those losses. I write this work while recalling and honoring those who died fighting in humane causes, and those still living who grieve for and remember them.

Abbreviations

	Country	*Spanish/English/Description*
AD	Venezuela	Acción Democrática/Democratic Action/ party
ANAPO	Colombia	Alianza Nacional Popular/Popular National Alliance/party created by former dictator Rojas
ANR	Cuba	Acción Nacional Revolucionaria/National Revolutionary Action/Anti-Batista group
AP	Peru	Acción Popular/Popular Action/party
APRA	Peru	Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana/ American Popular Revolutionary Alliance/ party
CAEM	Peru	Centro de Altos Estudios Militares/Center for Higher Military Studies/Army war college
CEBs	Latin America, elsewhere	Comunidades Eclesiales de Base/Ecclesiastical Base Communities/Laypeople's religious organizations, often oriented toward liberation theology
COPEI	Venezuela	Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente/Committee for Independent Electoral Organization/Christian Democratic party
CUC	Guatemala	Comité de Unidad Campesina/Committee for Peasant Unity/Peasants'union, 1970s–
DR	Cuba	Directorio Revolucionario/Revolutionary Directorate/Anti-Batista Havana underground, guerrilla group
EGP	Guatemala	Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres/Guerrilla Army of the Poor/Guerrillas, 1970s–
ELN	Peru, Colombia, Bolivia	Ejército de Liberación Nacional/Army of National Liberation/Unrelated guerrilla groups in each country, including Guevara's Bolivian group
EPL	Colombia	Ejército Popular de Liberación/Popular Liberation Army/Guerrillas
ERP	El Salvador	Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo/People's Revolutionary Army/Guerrillas

FALN	Venezuela	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional/ Armed Forces of National Liberation/ Guerrillas
FAO	Nicaragua	Frente Amplio Opositor/Broad Opposition Front/Anti-Somoza civic opposition group
FAR	Guatemala	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes/Rebel Armed Forces/Guerrillas, 1960s; revival, 1970s–
FAR	Guatemala	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias/Revolutionary Armed Forces/Guerrillas formed by PGT in 1968 after split with original FAR
FARC	Colombia	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas/Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces/Guerrillas
FARN	El Salvador	Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional/ Armed Forces of National Resistance/ Guerrillas
FDR	El Salvador	Frente Democrático Revolucionario/Revolutionary Democratic Front/Civic, mass revolutionary group of early 1980s, allied with FMLN guerrilas
FECCAS	El Salvador	Federacion Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños/Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants/Peasants'union
FER	Nicaragua	Federación Estudiantil Revolucionaria/Revolutionary Student Federation/University group linked to FSLN
FIR	Peru	Frente de la Izquierda Revolucionaria/Revolutionary Left Front/Trotskyist front group
FLN	Venezuela	Frente de Liberación Nacional/National Liberation Front/Guerrilla front group
FMLN	El Salvador	Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional/Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation/Umbrella-unity organization for guerrilla groups
FPL	El Salvador	Fuerzas Populares de Liberación—Farabundo Martí/Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces/Guerrillas formed in split from Communist party
FSLN	Nicaragua	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional/ Sandinista National Liberation Front/ Guerrillas, 1960–1979; governing party, 1979–1990

FUR	Guatemala	Frente Unido de Resistencia/United Resistence Front/PGT front group for original 1960s FAR guerrillas
INCORA	Colombia	Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria/Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute/Land reform agency
JPN	Nicaragua	Juventud Patriótica Nicaragüense/Nicaraguan Patriotic Youth/Left-wing student group tied to FSLN
JPT	Guatemala	Juventud Patriótica del Trabajo/Patriotic Youth of Labor/Communist youth group
JRN	Nicaragua	Juventud Revolucionaria Nicaragüense/Nicaraguan Revolutionary Youth/Communist (PSN) youth group from which FSLN's founders emerged
M-19	Colombia	Movimiento 19 de Abril/April 19th Movement/Guerrilla group, 1970s–1990
M-26 or M-26-7	Cuba	Movimiento 26 de Julio/26th of July Movement/Castro's revolutionary organization, including guerrillas
MIR	Venezuela, Peru	Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria/Movement of the Revolutionary Left/Unrelated guerrilla groups; formerly left-wing political splinter groups
MNR	Bolivia	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario/Nationalist Revolutionary Movement/Party that led and seized power in 1952 revolution and governed until 1964
MNR	Cuba	Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario/National Revolutionary Movement/Anti-Batista group
MOEC	Colombia	Movimiento Obrero-Estudiantil-Campesino/Worker-Student-Peasant Movement/Castroist movement that later created ELN guerrillas
MPU	Nicaragua	Movimiento Popular Unido/United Popular Movement/Mass opposition movement linked to FSLN, 1978–1979
MR-13	Guatemala	Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre/13th of November Revolutionary Movement/Guerrillas

MRL	Colombia	Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal/Liberal Revolutionary Movement/Liberal Party faction
OLAS	Cuba, etc.	Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad/Organization for Latin American Solidarity/Cuba-based group for the Latin American revolutionary left
ORPA	Guatemala	Organización del Pueblo en Armas/Organization of the People in Arms/Guerrillas, 1970s–
PCB	Bolivia	Partido Comunista Boliviano/Bolivian Communist party
PCC	Colombia	Partido Comunista Colombiano/Colombian Communist party (Soviet line)
PCC-M-L	Colombia	Partido Comunista Colombiano Marxista-Leninista/Marxist-Leninist Colombian Communist party (Chinese line)
PCP	Peru	Partido Comunista Peruano/Peruvian Communist party
PCV	Venezuela	Partido Comunista Venezolano/Venezuelan Communist party
PGT	Guatemala	Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo/Guatemalan Labor party/Communist party
POR	Peru	Partido Obrero Revolucionario/Revolutionary Workers' party/Trotskyist party
PSN	Nicaragua	Partido Socialista Nicaragüense/Nicaraguan Socialist party/Communist party
PSP	Cuba	Partido Socialista Popular/Popular Socialist party/Communist party
UDEL	Nicaragua	Unión Democrática de Liberación/Democratic Liberation Union/Business-backed anti-Somoza group, 1974–1979
UFCO	Guatemala etc.	United Fruit Company
UP	Colombia	Unidad Patriótica/Patriotic Union/Political party formed by (former) FARC guerrillas in 1980s
URD	Venezuela	Unión Repúblicana Democrática/Democratic Republican Union/party
UTC	Venezuela	Unidades Tácticas de Combate/Tactical Combat Units/FALN's "urban guerrilla" wing

PART I

Origins

Let the sociologists make their detailed studies and exhaustive analyses of the causes of the new violence. Confound them, with their interesting theories!

—Evelio Buitrago Salazar, *Zarpazo the Bandit*

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> The men of action and conviction have failed enough of late to warrant reversing a famous apothegm of Marx: philosophers have tried to change the world; now it is time to try to understand it.
>
> —Barrington Moore, Jr.,
> *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery*

THINKING ABOUT GUERRILLA WARFARE

Guerrilla warfare is nothing new, and most certainly not a twentieth-century invention found first in the writings of Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, or Ché Guevara. "Barbarian" leaders of many different peoples, including Tacfarinas of the Numidians, Vercingetorix of the Gauls, and Viriathus of the Iberian peninsula all employed guerrilla warfare against the Roman imperial forces in ancient Europe. Francis Marion ("The Swamp Fox") waged guerrilla-style warfare against the British army in the British-American colonies, as did other American armed forces; later the United States' armed forces would suffer similar tactics in their attempts to conquer the various American Indian peoples in the following century. The occupying forces of Napoleon's army in early nineteenth-century Spain would also find themselves harassed by guerrilla forces.[1]

Guerrilla warfare, in fact, is almost surely the most ancient form of warfare, and is best defined in strictly military terms, not in social or political terms. It usually appears when a nation or people is attacked by forces with superior numbers and/or technology. The almost natural military response is to (re-)invent guerrilla warfare: to avoid direct, massed engagements with the enemy and instead to concentrate on slowly sapping the enemy's strength and morale through ambushes, minor skirmishes, lightning raids and withdrawals, cutting of communications and supply lines, and similar techniques. (Precisely because so-called urban guerrillas almost never directly engage the armed forces and often use indiscriminate forms of assault that harm or kill ordinary citizens, the term is a misleading misnomer; we should reserve it for forces that do confront the military. Northern Ireland could well be an exception here.) The central negative feature of traditional guerrilla warfare is thus the avoidance of decisive pitched battles, which they must surely lose; the key

positive feature is a heavy reliance on "local knowledge" and local support to compensate for inferior numbers and weaponry.

The true innovations of twentieth-century guerrilla warfare are the transfer of this tactic to internal wars, rather than in external wars against foreign occupiers or colonial powers; the latter form has overwhelmingly dominated the past exemplars of the technique. In most cases of modern guerrilla warfare, including all those discussed in this work, the insurgency is, or intends to become, a civil war in which the populace will eventually (be forced to?) side either with the guerrilla forces or with the government in power. Because of this peculiar feature of many twentieth-century guerrilla wars, for the first time in history the support of the populace for the insurgency—a term I shall use interchangeably with guerrilla war—has become problematic. Since the political enemy is no longer a foreign devil, but armed forces composed of one's own countrymen, guerrillas cannot rely on tribalism or nationalism to provide them with guaranteed allies. Therefore a large part of this work will be devoted to uncovering the social conditions under which such support *is* forthcoming, and those in which it is denied.

In the decade of the 1960s popular fascination with modern guerrilla warfare, guerrilla movements, and the guerrillas themselves reached a level perhaps unprecedented in human history. This period produced a large journalistic and military literature on the theory and practice of guerrilla war—so large, indeed, that it would be merely tedious to list the major works here.[2] This period, however, did not produce a social-scientific literature to match. Only in Vietnam was revolutionary guerrilla warfare the subject of intensive social-scientific study, where a number of scholars examined social conditions, especially but not only in the Mekong Delta, which favored the growth of an insurgent movement.[3] Such detailed analysis had rarely been applied to Latin American guerrilla movements—not even in Cuba—until finally a semblance of such a literature began to appear in the last decade; nonetheless, the corpus of such writings remains insignificant compared to the excellent, in-depth literature on Vietnam.

Interest in guerrillas had grown apace with the successes of Fidel Castro in late-1950s Cuba; it later ebbed with the death of Ché Guevara in the Bolivian jungle in 1967, and then waned further still with the fall of Saigon in 1975. The 1979 overthrow of the Somoza government in Nicaragua and the recent revolutionary upsurge in Central America have served to revivify such interests, but certainly not to the levels of the 1960s. The reader may have forgotten the number of posters adorning university walls throughout the world, graced with the quasi-beatific, black-bereted visage of Guevara. "Romantic" interest in Latin American guerrillas was such that Woody Allen saw fit to lampoon them in his own version of a guerrilla diary and in his film *Bananas*, while in *Weekend* Jean-Luc Godard also parodied guerrillas, presenting them

as the cannibalistic members of the "Seine and Oise Liberation Front," who first kidnapped bourgeois picnickers, and then ate them.

The romantic, journalistic, and military treatments of guerrillas do not constitute sociological analyses, and we still lack a strong comparative body of social-scientific literature on Latin American guerrilla movements and revolutions.[4] The present study is an attempt to redress that imbalance, by presenting a comparative analysis of guerrilla movements and revolution in Latin America since 1956. The sequence is a simple, if demanding, one. I shall devote parts 1 and 2 to a systematic comparison of the origins and final fortunes of six national guerrilla movements up to the year 1970, in Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, and finally Bolivia. In part 3 of this work I shall apply similar logics and analyses to the major guerrilla movements of a later period, in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, and (in part) Colombia. My strategy throughout will *not* be simply to collect a series of case studies, for we already have fine examples of that literary genre;[5] instead, the focus of every case discussion in the book will be its bearing upon theoretical issues in the study of revolution.

Since this book is already overlong, I must leave for others the extremely interesting analytical issue of comparing the *outcomes* of successful revolutions, either with other revolutionary successes, or with similar nations that did not experience revolutions. Fortunately, we are not lacking in such studies, including a variegated but excellent trio of essays by Seymour Martin Lipset (on the United States and Canada), Susan Eckstein (on Latin America), and Theda Skocpol (on the Russian and Chinese revolutions).[6]

Do Strong Movements or Weak Regimes Cause Revolutions?

I do not enter the study of revolutions in a theoretical vacuum, but rather in the midst of an intense theoretical debate over the causes of revolutions. Until quite recently, most observers and scholars would have agreed that revolutionary organizations are indeed the "makers" of revolutions, insofar as their movement-led activities—including urban uprisings, general strikes, peasant insurrections, and guerrilla warfare—have been crucial in producing that rapid social and political transition that we call a social revolution. Such a perspective pervades the *Communist Manifesto*, with its prophecy of massive proletarian uprisings under late capitalism. Yet it also underlies the stance of latter-day, orthodox Marxists who seek to overthrow contemporary incumbent regimes through popular mobilization. Among preeminent social scientists, Eric Wolf has put a substantial stress on "peasant wars" in producing social revolutions in Mexico, Russia, China, Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba; Jeffery Paige has combined careful statistical analysis with several case stud-

ies to demonstrate that certain types of peasantries are likely to participate in revolutionary collective action; and historian-sociologist Charles Tilly in *From Mobilization to Revolution* has constructed an analytical model showing how social unrest in the lower classes can develop.[7]

Such happy agreement that "movements make revolutions" received a jolt with the publication of Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*.[8] Her comparative study challenged this perspective in two fundamental ways. First, she rejected the widespread belief that the actions of *revolutionary groups* brought down the old regimes of France (1789), Russia (February 1917), and China (1910–1912); instead she argued that internal structural weaknesses of these regimes plus international pressures led to their collapse. Second, through a series of contrasting case studies of Japan and Prussia, as well as a final contrast with modern, industrial-bureaucratic societies, she was able to argue that *certain types of state or regime are structurally more vulnerable to revolution* than others. In both respects, then, her argument undermined revolutionaries' ambitious claims that they alone were the makers of revolution, and she redirected our analytical noses away from such actions, and toward the social and political *structures* that produce peasant insurrections and weak states.

Despite Skocpol's left-wing credentials and socialist leanings—she acknowledges them in her book—her conclusions have infuriated Marxists, who are probably outraged at the implications of her argument: that revolutionary opposition to certain types of regime is destined to fail. (She further argues that a revolution in a modern industrial society would probably be profoundly different from earlier exemplars and would lack the decisive and dramatic "events" that so enrapture revolutionaries.)[9] Her stance has also been rejected by many students of revolutions who continue to focus on the characteristics of opposition movements, rather than on the characteristics of the states and regimes that those movements confront.

This either/or theoretical debate has been most unfortunate, for Skocpol has directed us to regime characteristics that *must* be faced squarely if we are to understand why some revolutionary movements come to power while others do not. One earlier theoretician neatly transcended this movement versus regime debate, also known as the society-centered versus state-centered debate, even before that debate got started. Walter Goldfrank, in his various writings on the Mexican revolution, has consistently and sociologically analyzed both the characteristics of the rural opposition movements and those of the regime itself.[10] Moreover, Skocpol herself later conceded that revolutionaries' conscious mobilization of a mass opposition—that is, society-centered events—can be added to autonomous insurrection as an alternative path to mass uprisings.[11]

The theoretical deficiencies that arise if we focus only on the strengths of revolutionary movements become immediately apparent when we begin to

study revolutions comparatively, especially in Latin America. As we shall see, there is no good evidence that the Cuban revolutionaries of the 1950s had greater military strength or rural support than their 1960s counterparts in Colombia, Guatemala, or Venezuela. That relation holds a fortiori for the 1970s and beyond: the Sandinistas in Nicaragua never fielded an army that matched the size of the ten to twelve thousand Salvadoran guerrilla fighters, the seven thousand or more Colombian insurgents, or even the five thousand soldiers of Peru's Sendero Luminoso. Yet the Cuban and Nicaraguan insurgents achieved their revolutionary ends, while the other insurgents did not. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions were *not* made by the greater military strength or rural support of the insurgencies.

The Cuban and Nicaraguan regimes were different, and those differences weakened them in the face of revolution. But those differences did not simply exist and operate apart from the insurgencies themselves; here I agree with Robert Dix that such differences served to strengthen the opposition.[12] First, the distinctive traits of the Batista and the Somoza regimes were such as to engender a *cross-class, national* opposition to those regimes, throwing radical revolutionaries into an alliance of convenience with more moderate opponents of the regime. We will not see this pattern in *any* other case analyzed here. Second, those same regime characteristics meant that the ruler and the military were increasingly decoupled from civil society itself, and therefore had no taproots of support among any social classes or social institutions; hence, when confronted with a growing revolutionary movement, these regimes *could not mobilize social support* (even international support) for their own continuity. As we shall see, this sharply contrasts with the experience of other nations that did not fall to revolution. Finally, such regimes are virtually defined by their combination of personal rule and a correspondingly personalized military. Yet such military forces become, ipso facto, virtually incapable of drawing on nationalistic and patriotic imagery to maintain the solidarity and fighting morale of the soldiery; hence there is an inbuilt tendency for such military forces to decay in the face of substantial nationalist challenges. Yet in other nations—both in Latin America and worldwide—the military has been the foremost repository of precisely those national sentiments, which serve to steel it for combat and against internal decay.

While all these issues and propositions await their detailed treatment in the chapters to follow, we can now return to our question: Did revolutionary movements or weak regimes lead to social revolutions in Latin America? The answer will soon be clear. Powerful revolutionary movements did indeed "make" revolutions in Cuba and Nicaragua, but only because they faced regimes that exhibited structural weaknesses in the face of an increasingly national opposition. Indeed, it was the nature of the regimes themselves that increased the likelihood that the opposition would unite across classes and

despite ideological differences; hence the regime itself served to strengthen the opposition, despite the bloodiness of government repression (especially in Nicaragua).

The Shape of Arguments to Come

Why do these guerrilla movements require comparative sociological analyses, rather than simply a sequence of case studies? While I will give my detailed justifications below, we can observe simply that guerrillas arise in particular countries, appear at particular points in time, and are drawn disproportionately from particular social groups. Thus, in their origins, guerrilla movements demand a comparative sociological treatment to understand such variations, and I provide such analyses in chapters 2 and 3 (for cases up to 1970), and in chapter 9 (for cases after 1970). We can apply similar questions to the later histories of the various insurgencies: Why do some guerrilla movements gain extensive support from regional peasantries, while other guerrilla movements get no such support, and other peasantries are less willing to embrace revolution? How important is the military strength of the insurgency to its success, and how are its chances for success affected by external military aid—to itself or to its governmental adversaries? Finally, the central question of this work concerns the social revolutionary outcome itself. Since both deep peasant support and substantial military strength are found widely among Latin American guerrilla movements, what *other* features can account for the fact that guerrilla-led revolutionaries have seized power only in Cuba and Nicaragua, while failing to do so in Guatemala and Colombia (at least twice in each case), Venezuela, Peru and, most notably, El Salvador?

By far the most interesting issue to most readers, as well as to myself, is precisely that accurate retrodiction of revolution itself. What sociopolitical features of Cuban and Nicaraguan societies led to revolution there, but have stifled such successes in other nations? Three central causes lie behind revolutions in Latin America, which I will simply pose as hypotheses in this introduction:

1. Peasant support is a crucial contributor to revolution, and no revolutionary guerrilla movement—in the Latin American context—is likely to seize power without such support.
2. Guerrilla movements must have enough military power to endure and outlast military repression, and finally to confront the military, or they will be militarily unable to achieve the revolutionary transfer of power. (Such military power is clearly in part dependent upon peasant support.)
3. A militarily strong and peasant-supported guerrilla movement is not thereby guaranteed victory; in this minimal sense, then, "popular support" is not enough to effect a revolution. It is not just (peasant) hearts and minds accompanied by

guns and bullets. Only under specific sociopolitical conditions will such a revolution ensue: when a certain weak type of political regime, confronted with a guerrilla challenge, engenders in the society a cross-class opposition, leading to the appearance of dual power in the political order, and finally a revolutionary overthrow of the old regime. The crucial theoretical linkage here is between a peculiarly weak "old regime" and its tendency to press the elements of the opposition toward an alliance, rather than to aggravate their internal divisions and conflicts.

When those three features converge in a society, the likely outcome is social revolution. Absent any one of those features, revolution will not be the likely outcome. (For example, I disagree with Robert Dix's contention that the peculiar traits of the Cuban and Nicaraguan regimes were sufficient to generate the "negative revolutionary coalitions" that [I agree] caused their downfalls;[13] similar regimes under Duvalier in Haiti, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, and Stroessner in Paraguay did not lead to revolution.) I will systematically support that pair of contentions in the final chapter of this work. In between, however, we must first address more preliminary issues, the causes of the causes, as it were.

1. What are the social conditions underlying peasant support for revolutionaries in the countryside? Under what social conditions do peasants *not* provide such social support? I address those issues systematically in chapters 6 and 7 for the first wave of revolutions up to 1970, and in chapter 10 for the second wave of revolutions since 1970. For both periods I uncover four different, recurring correlates of peasant support for insurgency.
2. What elements contribute to militarily strong guerrilla movements *or* government armed forces? I will address the issues of internal resources, internal solidarity, and external resources for the first wave in chapter 5. I will not repeat such an analysis for the second wave of guerrilla movements, since each of them clearly fielded strong military challenges to the governments of their respective nations. However, I will consider in chapters 11 and 12 high or low levels of U.S. military assistance to governments, and its relevance to the outcome of insurgencies in Central America since 1970.
3. We must also inquire into the historical origins of those weak political regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua, and further discuss why those regimes were likely to elicit a cross-class opposition from civil society, leading eventually to the creation of dual power and an incipient counter-state (in the guerrilla organizations themselves). The regimes that fell to revolutionaries in Cuba and then Nicaragua were of a peculiar type, which Alain Rouquié has termed the *patrimonial praetorian regime*, which I have termed *mafiacracy*, and which is further clearly suggested by Loveman and Davies's discussions of *Caribbean-style dictatorships*.[14] In chapters 8 and 11 of this work I look into the origins of such regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua, and systematically compare them to contrasting regimes in nonrevolutionary nations of the region. Having traced the origins of those

regimes, I delve into the formation of cross-class oppositions against Batista and Somoza, and finally to the creation of dual power. In contrast, the other, nonrevolutionary nations typically leaned toward two other types of polity: mass-based electoral democracy, or collective military rule with the support of the upper class. (Since these concepts are "ideal types," not concrete social realities, actual political regimes only more or less closely approximate each of three types; they do not replicate them.) In those societies, a cross-class opposition to the regime generally failed even to appear, and the creation of bastions of "dual power" was limited, at best, to certain oases of armed rebellion in the countryside.

The analysis that follows will therefore locate the proximate causes of revolution (the first three items listed above), but those causes themselves cannot be simply assumed. The bulk of the work thus consists of an inquiry into the sources of peasant support, guerrilla military strength, and weak incumbent political regimes.

Methods

Multiple Levels of Analysis

Revolutions happen to entire nations. That commonplace is a domain assumption in virtually every study of revolution ever written. Because analysts inevitably make that domain assumption, their ensuing analyses are deeply colored thereby. When they begin to analyze the events of revolutions, the analytical tools are often pitched at the level of the nation as well. Thus "classes" act or are acted upon in revolutionary moments, whether we speak of a national aristocracy, bourgeoisie, proletariat, or peasantry. Nationwide political institutions—the state and government—are assumed to be the primary foci of revolutionary activity. National social institutions are thought to be weakened, and institutions by definition pervade the entire territory of a given nation.

It is hardly my intent to refute that assumption here; rather I wish to expand it. That revolutions ultimately happen to entire nations is hardly questionable; that revolutions take place ultimately only because of events at the national level is questionable. There are two ways in which we may expand our levels of analysis to deal with that second, dubious assumption. First, we may expand our analysis *beyond* the boundaries of the nation-state and examine how a nation-state's participation in a world system of nation-states might affect the likelihood of revolution within that society. This is the tack that Skocpol chose to take in *States and Social Revolutions*, where she locates the joint causes of revolution in the *international* system of competing nation-states and in the *national* political system where landed upper classes confronted state ministers and bureaucrats over fiscal reforms.[15] The great strength of

this approach was to escape the narrow confines of national analysis in a truly innovative way, by introducing the international context of states competing both politically and economically during the worldwide spread of capitalism. Skocpol's work remains weaker, although not fatally flawed, in its lack of attentiveness to *regional variations* in the peasant insurrections so central to her theory.[16] Such regional variations are the second way out of the "national" constriction: one can instead move *within* the nation-state, and begin to pay attention to the different ways in which regionally situated actors or events affect the chances that a social revolution will occur.

Jeffery Paige's theoretical approach in *Agrarian Revolution* manages to address both of these lacunae simultaneously, but only at a price. He places his export crop areas firmly in the context of a worldwide system of market capitalism, in which dependent cultivators produce for foreign markets crops ranging from rice to tea to sugar to rubber. Hence the international market system is firmly implanted in this theory, in his domain assumption that he is only discussing "export agriculture" in the Third World, not agriculture in general. Further, Paige's work clearly compensates for a weakness in Skocpol's book, for his units of analysis throughout the book are *not* nations but agricultural regions, which are coded for the type of crops they export, the types of rural class structures that prevail therein, and the types of lower-class collective action that appeared there. However, while clearly and persuasively addressing the *international* and *regional* aspects of revolution, Paige pays a price: the loss of the national context for "revolution" throughout his book. That context only appears in the case studies of Angola and Vietnam. The result is a work—still the best ever written on revolutionary movements and rural class structures—which is a theory of revolutionary movements, not a theory of revolution. Paige's work therefore is an excellent guide to predicting where socialist and nationalist revolutionary movements will occur; yet since such movements proliferate in the Third World, while social revolution itself does not, his book ultimately does not resolve the *national* question: Which nations will experience social revolutions, and which will not?

The three variables I outlined briefly above seem to span and address those issues well (as do Goldfrank's earlier writings on Mexico).[17] Peasant support for guerrilla warfare, as we shall see, depends fundamentally on the *regional* social contexts that peasants inhabit, moreso than on national or international forces. Yet, as we shall see, one of the sources of the disruption of the peasants' moral economy in the countryside has been the spread of export agriculture there (echoes of Paige), which certainly gives it an international dimension as well. In addition, one source of peasant support discussed in chapters 7 and 10 is not really a regional characteristic, but instead a characteristic of peasant *communities*: the presence or absence in those communities of preexisting organizational bonds linking them to the guerrilla movement prior to

the initiation of hostilities. The military power of the government armed forces seems to depend simultaneously on strictly *national* phenomena, such as the state's ability to finance military expansion; on international military aid; and on the military's ability to maintain its solidarity as an organization, perhaps as a "community" of soldiers. There is no reason why we could not apply an analogous line of reasoning to the guerrilla forces as well.

Finally, my focus on regime weaknesses clearly speaks directly to the *national* level of analysis, in inquiring into the structural characteristics that lead to a weakening of the state and incumbent governments. However, one final contributor to the fall of the Batista and Somoza regimes was the withdrawal of *international* support by the United States, even if those withdrawals heavily depended on the peculiar regimes they were, and on the respectable and constitutional oppositions that opposed them.

If I am correct in arguing that those three conditions, when combined, are likely to produce a social revolution, then I have implicitly addressed the analytical issue of levels, which is bypassed by certain earlier treatments. In addressing myself to those three influences upon revolutionary outcomes I have, perhaps only serendipitously, also looked into the international, national, regional, and community influences upon social revolution. If revolutions are indeed things that happen to entire societies, then perhaps it is time we started paying attention to entire societies in our analyses of revolutions, and not just to phenomena that only address the national level of analysis.

What Do We Mean by Comparative Analysis?

Many undergraduate students come eventually to joke about, and a few to dread, those exam essay questions that instruct them to compare different societies with respect to some characteristic, or all. A few thoughtfully inquire into the rationale for such intellectual exercises: What is the purpose? It is not at all clear to me that the professors themselves know the point of such comparison. The object of this work is not simply to compare for the sake of comparison itself, that is, simply to describe the similarities and differences among various societies (cases). Our comparisons instead should have some analytical "bite" to them, to instruct us theoretically concerning the varying outcomes that intrigue us.

Fortunately we now have a clear and insightful guide to the different ways in which social scientists go about doing historical comparisons in "macrosocial inquiry." Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers have isolated for us three main ways of going about comparative inquiry into historical materials, which they found in the work of macrohistorical sociologists (and other social scientists, too).[18] Although the authors, I think, favor the third such mode, they clearly and with great insight discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each type of comparative analysis.[19] Happily, I can also wed my treatment of

this methodological issue to a brief review of the comparative literature on guerrillas in Latin America.

First, comparative history may be approached using the technique of *parallel demonstration of theory*. In this form, a succession of cases is discussed, all of which are intended to provide support for a theoretical position advanced by the researcher. The sheer number of such cases is eventually thought to tell in its favor. To add my own coda to their observations, this particular approach seems to be the one that a sociologist interested in testing a theory would bring to historical subject matters. One can find this approach in S.N. Eisenstadt's *The Political Systems of Empires*,[20] and in a similar form in Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*.[21] A different variant is encountered in Paige's *Agrarian Revolution*. We can also encounter a variant of this in studies of Latin American revolutions, particularly treatments of Central America since 1970. The clearest case is Robert G. Williams's *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America*, where he tries to demonstrate, for all five Central American nations, that growing world markets for export crops have increased the physical and economic dislocation of the peasantry; this in turn has resulted in sharpened peasant discontent which, in the most extreme cases, has funneled itself through mass revolutionary movements in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador (the last only briefly treated).[22]

A second, and very different, approach is that of comparative history written as a *contrast of contexts*. Here the emphasis is not on the similarities of the cases, but rather on their differences; moreover, such theoretical approaches typically pull back from making causal assertions about the impact of conceptually isolated and hypothetically important "variables" on specifically defined outcomes. Once again I would add my own coda to the Skocpol-Somers discussion: In such work, it is not at all clear just what such works are trying to *explain*, or which analytically separate aspects of history could account for the modern "outcome." This issue clearly arises in two excellent works, Clifford Geertz's *Islam Observed* and James Lang's *Conquest and Commerce: Spain and England in the Americas*, where each examines a pair of contrasting cases. In each study, the author comes close to arguing that the totality of what these societies historically were accounts for the totality of what they later became.

This particular form of argument comes very close to narrative history, rather than sociology. Indeed, I would argue that, if the practitioners of "parallel demonstration of theory" are likely to commit the "sociologists' fallacy"—by trying to force all cases into a single model—the practitioners of "contrast of contexts" are instead likely to commit the "historians' fallacy," by stressing the utter uniqueness of each historical case.[23]

The case-study approach used to analyze virtually all Latin American guerrilla movements can be used with a stress on either of these approaches: to stress the specifics of each case (contrast of contexts), or to demonstrate how

they share a strong similarity in their structures and outcomes (parallel demonstration of theory). James Dunkerley, in *Power in the Isthmus*, is one of the more gifted scholars to have written about Central American politics and revolutionary movements to date, and his in-depth research into the twentieth-century history of all five nations has well equipped him to draw theoretical conclusions about the causes of (non-)revolution. Ultimately, though, he chooses to draw back from making firm theoretical statements about precisely that central issue and focuses instead on the "totality" and uniqueness of each individual case. For example, he writes, "[t]he course of events in El Salvador cannot properly be explained through comparison with Nicaragua since it corresponds above all else to a national history with its own logic and only limited relevance to any successful 'model' established by the FSLN [Sandinistas]."[24] No advocate of contrast-oriented analysis could have said it more clearly. Make no mistake about it: throughout his work Dunkerley makes countless sharp and insightful comparative comments about the various national cases; it is perhaps the best work on Central American revolutionary processes, despite the absence of "revolution" from the title. Yet he ultimately shies away from developing a truly comparative and clearly stated *theory* of revolution.

The bulk of the other comparative case studies that appeared since the Cuban revolution have implicitly, more than explicitly, attempted something resembling a parallel demonstration of theory. The focus has almost inevitably been on the failures of the post-1960 revolutionary movements, which are usually explained by the left (and sometimes the right) as due to the U.S. advocacy and support of counterinsurgency in the region after 1960. This focus is implicit in the amount of narrative space devoted to the U.S. role during the period of insurgency.[25] Those works that lie more to the right or the center of the political spectrum are likely to have a longer implicit list of the causes of failure, among which are the ideological extremism, hopeless dilettantism, elitist intellectualism, and/or internecine political divisions of the left.[26] Some critical works are more attentive to the peculiarities of the regimes that the guerrillas faced in the 1960s.[27] Almost all these works, regardless of their political leanings, share the fatal flaw that each one's theory of revolution—if any is to be found—is hopelessly embedded in the narrative, and not to be extracted without the use of deconstructionist theoretical dynamite.

Skocpol and Somers term the third and final "ideal type" of comparison *macro-causal analysis*. Despite her modesty about her contribution,[28] Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* is one of the best such analyses ever attempted, and I would group with it Robert Brenner's "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe."[29] In macro-causal analysis, theorists clearly have an outcome that they wish to account for in a

causal fashion (unlike contrast of contexts). Moreover, they systematically attempt to address *both* cases with *and* those without the outcome in question, so as to isolate the "true" causes of the outcome. In doing so, they implicitly tend to resort both to the "method of agreement"—similar outcomes probably have a similar cause—and to the "method of difference"—dissimilar outcomes must have at least one dissimilar condition to account for that difference.[30] That is, macro-causal analyses also systematically address cases that do *not* have the outcome (unlike the parallel demonstration of theory).[31]

I would plant the main lines of my argument firmly in the last school of thought: it is intended as an "exercise" in the macro-causal analysis of revolutionary outcomes in Latin America. Moreover, when I analyze the sources of peasant support for guerrillas in chapters 6, 7, and 10, I always compare regions with high levels of such support to other areas of no support, weak support, or simply no guerrillas; therefore that analysis also stands firmly in the realm of macro-causal analysis.

Nonetheless, Skocpol and Somers also alert us to works of comparative sociology that mix these three different methods of comparative research, and this work is no exception. For example, my detailed and repetitive treatments of the sources of peasant support later in this work only lead to a strong sense that a parallel demonstration of theory is being attempted. Moreover, in the opening section of chapter 11, the case of Nicaragua is recounted, but only along with systematically repeated parallels drawn to the Cuban revolution, which are finally summarized in table 11–1. Those elements of this book therefore pull it out of the realm of pure macrocausal analysis in the direction of "parallel demonstration of theory."

Yet the contrast of contexts is not ignored either. While I do not resort simply to asserting the uniqueness of the Cuban and Nicaraguan cases—and thus opt out of theory building altogether—I do provide detailed discussions of six cases in chapter 8 (Cuba versus the 1960s guerrillas) and five cases in chapter 11 (Nicaragua versus failed revolutionaries in four other nations). Anyone reading those chapters will note the dense discursive quality therein and the strong tendency to emphasize the contrasts between Cuban and Nicaraguan societies, on the one hand, and their failed contemporaries, on the other. Those joint characteristics, careful description of case studies wedded to an analysis that emphasizes contrasts instead of parallels, are precisely those of the "contrast of contexts."

In the end, then, this work does not remain a pure example of macro-causal analysis, although that was my initial intent. Skocpol and Somers metaphorically place the three comparative methods on the three corners of a "Triangle of Comparative History." Works that blend *two* such methods, therefore, we may place on one of the sides of said triangle.[32] By mixing *three* such methods, as this work clearly does, we can only say that it has been pulled into the

center of their "Triangle of Comparative History." Let us hope that in the application of those three different methods in this work I shall partake more of their strengths than of the weaknesses of each.

A Brief Historical Overview of the First Wave

Before I begin the analyses that constitute the theory building of this work, I must first render a situation-setting service to those who know naught of or remember only vaguely the political events leading up to guerrilla warfare in the first wave of insurgency (to 1970). Further, I briefly describe the political situation those insurgents confronted, as well as the final (?) disposition of such attempts to effect social revolution in Latin America.

Following the success and socialist transformation of the Cuban revolution, guerrilla movements appeared throughout Latin America in the 1960s, but most died an early death. A few nations have seen a strong resurgence of such activity since roughly 1975: Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador, and Peru; the first three cases are linked to and revivals of earlier movements. Although virtually every nation in the region experienced a 1960s movement, the existing literature threw light on few of them, with Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and Bolivia the most closely scrutinized. Bolivia is the prototype for guerrilla failure, yet we know much about it largely because of Ché Guevara and his famous diary. Other failures left but traces on the written record, too few for the close analysis required here. Since the losers are underrepresented here, my sample is nonrandom, yet the comparative nature of my argument can still contribute to our understanding of the variety of outcomes of such revolutionary action.

In Cuba, Fulgencio Batista seized power in a gradual shadow coup in the years 1933–1934 and dominated Cuban politics off and on for the next twenty-five years. In 1952 he seized power in a coup to stave off probable electoral defeat. In response, one of the disappointed candidates, Fidel Castro, who had stood for a congressional seat, organized a 1953 attack on the Moncada military barracks. Imprisoned but later pardoned, Castro went into exile in Mexico, where he organized an invasion of Cuba. Routed in his December 1956 landing, Castro withdrew into the hills of eastern Cuba, where he built a guerrilla movement. The 26th of July Movement (M-26), as it was known, spread and grew to several hundred rural fighters plus other urban supporters by early 1958, as Batista's troops proved ineffectual in counterinsurgency. Following a failed army campaign, Castro's guerrillas began a summer offensive in 1958, eventually forcing the dictator to flee the country at year's end. Castro assumed and consolidated power, instituted reforms, and declared Cuba socialist in 1961 following a confrontation with the United States over the nationalization of sugar lands.

Venezuela's first experiment with direct electoral democracy began in 1945, following a civil-military coup, but ended in 1948, the victim of another coup. The later military government of Marcos Pérez Jiménez ruled in an increasingly bloody fashion toward the end of the 1950s but, after a period of widespread social unrest and opposition, especially by Communists and left-wing youth, a civilian-military coup ousted the dictator in 1958. Caracas remained in revolutionary euphoria, while the interim government sought to mitigate economic problems with massive welfare spending and subsidies. Returning from exile, Rómulo Betancourt won the presidency in late 1958, brought to power on the strength of his Acción Democrática's ties to the peasant voters, which went back to the 1930s. Over the next three to four years, opposition by students and Caracas residents grew in the face of Betancourt's austerity program, and a dialectic of government and opposition violence ensued. Guerrilla bands appeared in 1962, followed a year later by more systematic guerrilla organization with party backing: the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), sponsored by the Communists, and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), organized by a splinter group from the president's own party. From 1963 on, the guerrillas' fortunes declined as agrarian reforms, competitive elections, public distaste, efficient repression, an improving economy, and amnesties gradually took the wind from their sails. Internal splits hastened the decline. By the late 1960s, the guerrillas had all but petered out of existence.

In Guatemala, a decade of reformist government ended with the 1954 CIA-orchestrated overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz, who had carried out a major land reform. A series of dictators followed, generally coming to power under greatly restricted electoral façades. A left-leaning military revolt on 13 November 1960 was suppressed, but two young officers escaped capture, later forming the MR-13 guerrilla movement (Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre), and later still the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR). The guerrillas, despite periodic fission and refusion, gained substantial ground in northeastern Guatemala by 1965 but succumbed to an intense U.S.-backed counterinsurgency campaign in 1966–1967. The movement then lapsed into a period of dormancy and urban terrorism, before its revival in the mid-1970s.

In Colombia, a particularly intense period of interparty political violence accelerated with the 1948 assassination of populist Liberal Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. *La Violencia* claimed over 200,000 lives in the next fifteen to twenty years, mostly in rural areas. In response to the violence and to the ensuing dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953–1957), Liberals and Conservatives agreed to forego their internecine rivalry and to form a pact, known as the National Front, in which they alternated in the presidency and shared ministries from 1958 to 1974. Government and military soon took notice of the "peasant republics" that had formed during *La Violencia* as quasi-inde-

pendent zones for self-defense and self-administration in agrarian matters. A military campaign retook those areas in 1964 and 1965. The Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), allied to the Colombian Communists (PCC), rose out of the ashes of those "republics." In 1965, proto-guerrillas returning from a trip to Cuba formed the Fidelista Army of National Liberation (ELN) in Santander, while a few years later Chinese-line Communists formed *their* own guerrilla group, the Popular Army of Liberation (EPL), based in Córdoba and Antioquia. The fortunes and the activities of the various groups waned toward 1970, but would later wax anew in the 1970s.

In Peru, two groups formed parallel Andean *focos* in 1965 and both failed to get off the ground. Héctor Béjar led the Army of National Liberation (ELN), which split from the Communists, and Luis de la Puente led the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), which left the APRA party (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance). Both unleashed guerrilla movements in the Sierra in mid-year: the ELN in La Mar Province, Ayacucho; the MIR in three sites in Cuzco, Junín, and Piura Departments. Within six months all four had been shattered, although the fronts in Ayacucho and Junín had enjoyed limited success in obtaining peasant support.

Working in the wake of Bolivia's 1952 worker- and peasant-backed revolution and subsequent land reforms, Ernesto "Ché" Guevara organized a Cuban-led *foco* in late 1966 in eastern Bolivia, superseding the objections of the Bolivian Communists. Forced into premature activity and completely lacking peasant support, Guevara's guerrillas split into two groups and never reunited. The army harried each band, and peasants informed on them; they were ultimately destroyed by October 1967, and Guevara himself was killed following his capture. In addition, an even more minor, student-dominated *foco* effort at Teoponte a few years later was rapidly destroyed, and many of the participants died of hunger and exposure.

CHAPTER 2

Who Are the Guerrillas?

> The mandarin character of revolutionaries began with Marx and Engels themselves. . . . Who could have been more bourgeois than Marx . . . and who more mandarin. . .?
>
> —Alvin Gouldner,
> *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*

> The intellectuals as such can do little politically unless they attach themselves to a massive form of discontent. . . . It is a particularly misleading trick to deny that a revolution stems from peasant grievances because its leaders happen to be professional men or intellectuals.
>
> —Barrington Moore, Jr.,
> *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*

A SOUND methodological guideline, often ignored by those given to intemperate theorizing, is that facts should be firmly established before attempts are made to theorize about the facts. The necessary process of answering the question posed by this chapter may prove trivial to persons familiar with the study of revolutionaries, yet in this case accurate description must precede explanation, lest we find ourselves engaged in explaining pseudo-facts, a practice against which Robert Merton has cautioned us.[1]

My task here is the relatively straightforward one of establishing the types of persons who became involved in guerrilla movements and demonstrating that they were not randomly drawn from all sectors of the populace. In relatively brief compass I will consider the age and sex distribution of the guerrillas; the class origins and class locations of the guerrilla leadership, and then of the rank and file; and the fragmentary data on race and ethnic distribution.

Appendix A displays data on the sex (inferred from names), age, and class backgrounds of the guerrilla leadership that I have gathered from a wide range of sources. Also included are data on the educational attainment of the principals and their occupations, as well as their political party affiliations. Lacunae as well as data fill the table, yet it is adequate for these modest purposes.

AGE

War has ever been the office of relatively young men (and occasionally young women), and this is true of contemporary guerrilla warfare as well. I have

TABLE 2-1
Average Age of Guerrilla Leadership at the Peak of the Struggle

Country	*Year*	*Average Age*	*Number of cases*
Cuba	1958	28	7
Venezuela	1963	30	15
Guatemala	1966	25–26	4
Colombia	1965	40	6
Peru	1965	32	9
Bolivia	1967	34	8

Source: Appendix A. Frank País's age for the Cuban data is 23, due to his death in 1957. Peruvian data exclude Hugo Blanco and Javier Héraud.

gathered the tabular information on date of birth in order to calculate the average age of the guerrilla leadership during the struggle, shown in table 2-1.

Guerrilla leaders tended to be young men—far younger than national political leaders usually were, as we can see from table 2-1. The Colombian and Bolivian guerrilla leaderships are older than average because each group contained many "war veterans"—the Colombians from *La Violencia*, the Bolivian *foco* those Cubans who were veterans of the Sierra Maestra. In Guatemala, the youthfulness stems from the movement's origin in a revolution of junior officers in 1960. In each case the age is taken at the peak of the guerrilla struggle rather than at time of entry, thereby, if anything, biasing the age distribution upward. In addition, the leadership is almost certainly older than the rank and file—given the age stratification virtually universal to human society—which again biases upward an age estimate for the guerrillas as a whole.

Further evidence of this last point abounds. At a trial of Venezuelan guerrillas in 1962, the "vast majority" were aged eighteen to twenty-eight. Likewise in 1964, a *guerrillera* there noted that the oldest member of her squad was but twenty-five. In Guatemala, the average age was twenty to twenty-two, and the oldest fighter was forty or forty-seven. Bolivia's youngest, by contrast, was twenty-two years of age. Extreme youth is also encountered at times, with documented Peruvian recruitment of young teenagers, and suggestions of similar events elsewhere. One not-too-reliable writer has also described ten Colombian EPL squads composed solely of boys eleven to fifteen years of age.[2]

The high prevalence of youth was not restricted to the urban and highly educated. Four Peruvian peasants tried for MIR guerrilla activity were aged

twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-five, and thirty years. Those Guatemalan guerrillas of average age twenty to twenty-two were composed largely of peasants. In Cuba, Ché Guevara noted the youth and strength of the Sierra Maestra peasant recruits, a situation apparently repeated in Venezuela as well.[3] None of this should surprise, for youth have also predominated elsewhere as well: in the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions; among rural bandit groups; and among urban terrorists.[4]

Gender

War since time immemorial has been primarily a male endeavor, and again the guerrilla evidence for the 1960s bears out our expectations. (In the 1970s and 1980s, however, women came to compose one-fourth to one-third of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran guerrilla combatants, according to some reports.)[5] For the 1960s there was considerable scope in female participation, ranging from zero to 20 percent of the guerrilla leaders. In no case was there female predominance in either numbers or power within a movement, nor did I encounter a single case of a female peasant joining as an arms-bearing guerrilla regular.

Within the Cuban revolution, a special women's battalion was formed in the summer of 1958, whose total casualties were one wounded. Perhaps one in twenty Cuban guerrillas was female at that time. For Venezuela, the 148 guerrilla biographies compiled by Valsalice included but 10 women. Two isolated actions involved three women (of twenty participants) and five (of twenty-five). Reporters visiting the Guatemalan Sierra de la Minas encountered three women in one guerrilla squad, while in another one of twelve was female. If bias exists in these reports, it is likely to be toward overestimation of women's combat participation, since their high newsworthiness increases the likelihood of their gender being noted.[6]

Perhaps more typical of women's participation in the 1960s movements are quite different cases. Of 116 Venezuelans on 1962 trial for guerrilla activity, only 1 was female. A Mexican reporter visiting the Colombian ELN's base camp noted nary a woman among the 60 or so guerrillas present. Only 1 woman—the famous/infamous "Tania," or Tamara Bunke-Bider—took part in the Bolivian *foco*, and I have encountered no evidence of female participation in the 1965 Peruvian guerrillas, despite a substantial series of accounts. The Colombian FARC also lacks evidence of 1960s female participation (there is some later), but there the historiography is much weaker. The Colombian ELN, in contrast, gained a reputation for "feminism" when a woman named "Mariela" took part in the Simacota raid of 7 January 1965. In fact, she is the only *guerrillera* mentioned in ELN narratives until 1974, and she was "seduced and abandoned" by ELN leader Fabio Vásquez, who later forced her expulsion from the group after a period of public humiliation.[7]

Women in guerrilla movements apparently were relegated to typical "support" roles rather than active combat, whether by personal preference or imposition. In this respect their roles resemble those of women in other radical movements of the period, in which men often left them the job of "making the coffee."[8] Among the most famous female revolutionaries were the Cubans Vilma Espín, Celia Sánchez, and Haydée Santamaría. Espín worked as a contact to Frank País's urban support group, while Sánchez worked at Castro's command headquarters in the Sierra Maestra. Santamaría may have worked in both areas. No wonder that women were not more active in combat, when a Marxist female writer on the Cuban revolution wrote only of women who "distributed literature, nursed the wounded, helped fugitives reach embassy asylum, and smuggled arms." Although she adds that women were tortured and killed for such activity, the idea of a more expanded role for women did not seem to be culturally "available" at that time, even for Marxists.[9]

Since, as Weber noted, war conditions tend to impose a "military communism" upon the combatants, and since Marxism often entails radical egalitarianism as well, we might well expect to find outcroppings of feminism within guerrilla movements, in protest against the "coffee-maker" role. And so we do. In Venezuela, Juanita Villavicencio (pseudonym?) commanded a guerrilla unit in Falcón, as did Angela Zago in a hamlet in Lara, while Maria Rangel ("Petra María") may have led the attack on Villanueva, Lara, in December 1964. In Guatemala, "Rose Marie" (Rosa María?) demonstrated that women could even assume the casual attitude toward killing often displayed in war, as the *guerrillera* informed a visiting reporter that she had already executed three villagers suspected of aiding the government.

Fragmentary evidence suggests that women had to fight to maintain equal footing with men in guerrilla movements. Jacinta, a Venezuelan *guerrillera* visiting Zago's Lara camp in 1964, said to her *compañera* that "Women have a very important role in the revolutionary process . . . [and that] in I-don't-know-which front they wish to lower all the women [and that] we should show them what we can do." Zago, for her part, resisted the attempts of male guerrillas to impose standard military drills and discipline within the guerrilla band, insisting in her memoirs that carrying out the revolution and playing soldier were quite distinct activities. The aforementioned Rose Marie gave a talk as well to Guatemalan peasants in 1966, arguing that women could carry guns in the struggle as she did, or learn to be nurses to help the revolution. To learn about one woman's perspective on guerrilla life, one should above all read the memoirs of that thoughtful *guerrillera*, Angela Zago.[10]

I have not intended to imply that repression within the left is the direct cause of lesser female participation therein. To commit oneself to a guerrilla struggle with gun in hand is to adopt an extremely aggressive stance vis-à-vis the "system." Such a stance is too radically aggressive for the vast majority

of males or females. Yet men, on the average, are more aggressive than women in human societies.[11] So universal is this phenomenon that scholars suspect, and some research suggests, a biological basis. Given the statistical differences between men and women in aggression, one would expect greater male participation in guerrilla movements on those grounds alone. The Latin American cultural context—less gender egalitarian than northwest European cultures—might be expected to accentuate these differences. Finally, given that guerrillas are heavily recruited from the urban intelligentsia, and given women's underrepresentation in higher education during this period, again we would expect less female participation. Still, heavy female participation in the extreme-left Baader-Meinhof group in Germany (the Red Army Faction) suggests such differences can be transcended.

Social Class

Leadership

While the casual onlooker observing massive (generally rural) revolutionary movements in places as diverse as Russia, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Latin America might be prompted to think immediately in terms of peasant revolts, especially originating among the most impoverished and downtrodden peasantry, such portraits of revolutionary movements are now known to be half-truths at best. Alvin Gouldner accumulated in brief compass much of the information concerning the revolutionary leadership in many worldwide revolutions, and he consistently turned up highly educated intellectuals at the center of such organizations and movements.[12]

A mythical interpretation of the rise, in particular, of modern rural guerrilla movements is that they "spring up"—perhaps in some social analogue of spontaneous generation—from the exploitative conditions of rural life in Latin America, as peasants awake to organize and shake off their centuries-old chains and go into battle against their oppressors.[13] In truth, autonomous peasant insurrections can and do occur, but such was not the case in our six nations here.[14] That aforementioned scenario of peasant awakening has more to do with revolutionary poetry than with the realities of the first stage of contemporary Latin American guerrilla movements, which takes place typically in urban areas in the milieus of universities and party politics. Instead, such a portrait only resembles guerrilla movements in their second stage, when urban-educated organizers "go to the countryside."

If we once again examine Appendix A, we can clearly see that the leadership of guerrilla movements was, with few exceptions, drawn from the urban middle and upper classes and from rural elites. In all these groups the university-educated predominated. Of particular interest are the sons and relatives of *hacendados* and plantation owners among the proponents of agrarian revo-

lution, among them Fidel and Raúl Castro of Cuba; Douglas Bravo, Hipólito Acosta, Domingo Urbina, and Argimiro Gabaldón of Venezuela; and Luis de la Puente Uceda of Peru.

The free professions—doctors, lawyers, architects, and engineers—were also overrepresented in the guerrilla leadership, as were students, teachers, and university professors. Given the class selectivity of Latin American universities, it is fairly safe to assume that student status was usually indicative of middle- to upper-class background, even when data on parental class are absent.[15] Students have been a gold mine of cadres for guerrilla movements throughout Latin America, and nowhere more so than in Venezuela where, in the first few months of guerrilla activity, four of every five guerrillas the army captured were students.[16]

Young military officers also played an important role in the guerrilla struggle in Guatemala and Venezuela, because in each country left-wing barracks revolts against the government failed, and the escaped rebels went on to form or join guerrilla movements. Most commonly we find lieutenants or captains in these insurrectionary roles, but at least two lieutenant colonels participated in the Guatemalan *focos* as well. In a unique case, all the Cuban participants in the Bolivian *foco* held officer rank in the Cuban army.

Using the biographical data in Appendix A, we may construct a table indicating the distribution of the guerrilla leaders by socioeconomic status (SES). Where information allows, I place them according to their own education or occupation; where such information is absent, the father's status dictates the placement. I have eliminated Bolivia since all nineteen of the Cuban participants were Cuban army officers. Four of the five for whom we know more were doctors, and the fifth was of peasant stock. Of the thirty-six Bolivian participants, we have SES data on eleven more, distributed as follows: three miners, two doctors, four students, one engineer, and one mining union leader. The two Peruvian participants were a law student and a radio operator.[17] The data in table 2-2 statistically support the claim that guerrilla leaders in Latin America issued from relatively privileged social groups.

Despite the objective evidence of social and economic privilege, some guerrilla leaders tried—in what can only be described an act of reverse snobbery—to identify themselves with the lower classes through an act of sheer will.[18] Most common in this regard was the self-identification of the guerrillas as "popular movements," "forces of the people," and the like, a penchant shared by the movements' uncritical chroniclers. While a self-portrait as a "popular movement" is certainly accurate for the broad-based Cuban opposition to Batista, elsewhere that picture is far more suspect.

Thus Douglas Bravo could refer to his declining FALN guerrillas in 1964 as the "forces of the people," despite a shattering defeat for the FALN at the polls in the December 1963 elections. At that time, the "forces of the people" threatened to shoot anyone who went to the polls—and 90 percent of the