

THE LONG MARCH IN LATIN AMERICA

Guerrilla Movements: Theory and Practice

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Latin America: The Long March

The following notes are the outcome of a long period spent in South America, side by side with revolutionary militants of every kind. I have attempted to understand these men and the beliefs which move them, on the spot—where I knew them: in Venezuela in the guerilla front of Falcon and the long vigil of the urban struggle; in Colombia on the eve of the military offensive against the independent territory of Marquetalia; in Ecuador under the military junta; in the streets of Lima, and in the prisons of Peru; in Bolivia in the great tin mine of Siglo Veinte, operated and defended by an army of workers; in Argentina, where a new generation of revolutionaries is emerging at the confluence of traditional Peronism and communism; in Uruguay and Brazil among the political exiles and the militants of the interior. None of the ideas expressed here would have been possible without the assistance of all these comrades, who lives are bound up with each.



As a revolutionary tactic, Fidelism has proved itself irreversibly: its proof is Cuba. Nevertheless, Fidelism, which has over the last 10 years constantly experienced the difficulties of keeping pace with history, is not yet a triumphant model, a written strategy. It does not yet exist except in those towns and mountains where at the present moment thousands of militants are fighting, beleaguered, with no guarantee of the future. Fidelism is in labour, like South America herself, that immense, silent workshop, walled in, where the sun does not always rise at the appointed time—a workshop of ideas, of organizations, of arms and of plans. These notes, by their very nature, are abstract, since they aspire to theoretical knowledge. But they should nonetheless evoke in their course the mute presence of all those anonymous lives and deaths. For anything written on Fidelism which tries to be rigorously complete, is likely to fail, not so much theoretically as, in the last analysis, imaginatively.

R.D.

The Tradition of the Military Coup

In semi-colonial countries, even more than in developed capitalist countries, the State poses the decisive political problem. For it is in these countries that the exploited classes are least able to influence, control or—a *fortiori*—conquer state power; and where—since the State concentrates all the elements of power in its apparatus—the question of State power becomes most intractable. The usual way of resolving the problem in South America is the *coup d'état*, by means of which almost all transfers or overthrows of established power take place, even when they are carried out in the name of the popular classes and against the oligarchy. Fidelism defines itself first of all by its refusal of the *coup d'état*.

This refusal, which may seem elementary, is in fact crucially important in a continent where the importance of power, and the absence of any power other than that of the State, have produced since the dawn of independence the classically Latin American ritual of the *golpe* or putsch. Both Peron and Vargas won power by a putsch, even if each expressed a general crisis—Vargas the 1929 crisis and the ruin of the Sao Paulo coffee economy, and Peron the crisis which followed the Second World War and the rapid industrialization of Argentina in boom conditions. But whatever the forces which initially support it, a government brought to power by a putsch—that is, a lightning action at the top, in which the Army generally plays the principal role as protagonist or as arbiter—necessarily tends to the right. Compelled to obtain immediate successes in order to win the support of the expectant masses, it has to base itself on the institutions which already exist—established economic interests, the bureaucracy, the majority of the army. Since the masses lack political consciousness or organization—things which can only be acquired in a long and difficult revolutionary experience—on whom can the government base itself? How can it ask for the sacrifices which a real policy of national independence would demand, if the peasantry and above all the working-class are not convinced of the need for them?

These populist régimes—the late Vargas and the early Peron¹—therefore bring in social reforms which seem revolutionary to their beneficiaries at the time, but are in fact merely demagogic, since they are not based on any solid economic foundation. Carried to power by the army or thanks to its neutrality, both régimes fell as soon as the armed forces—or their most reactionary sector, the navy—turned against them. Organized violence belongs to the dominant class; the *coup d'état* which manipulates that violence is fated to bear the mark of it. In his Manifesto of May 1930 Prestes refused to support Vargas—who was backed by almost all of the *tenentes*² who had emerged from the left insurrections of 1920, 1922, 1924 and from the Prestes Column itself: the method used by Vargas and his gauchos to take power was a sufficient indication of the reactionary character of the future Estado Novo. Five years later, the same Prestes returned from Moscow, and organized a localized military insurrection, independent of any mass movement, but in connivance with certain high personalities in the established power-structure—such as the Prefect of the Federal District of Rio. The putsch ended in disaster: Prestes went to prison, his wife Olga to a German concentration camp, and the Communist Party was driven underground for ten years. That is how strong the temptation of the coup or military insurrection is, even for the revolutionary left. In Brazil, in Argentina, in Venezuela, and until recently in Peru, the Army in fact recruits its junior officers from the lower middle classes. This has resulted in a theory of the army as a social microcosm, which reflects the contradictions of the national macrocosm. Numerous local military insurrections which have taken place in Latin America, from Rio de Janeiro in 1922 (the famous episode of the 18 heroes of the Copacabana fort) to Puerto Cabello in Venezuela in June 1962, might appear to confirm this view. But in reality, while one must not underestimate the revolutionary or nationalist politicization of some sectors of the army and the aid which they can give to the revolutionary movement, it is an absolute rule that one cannot base a strategy, or even a tactical episode of the struggle, upon the decision of a regiment or a garrison. In Venezuela, the revolts at Carupano and Puerto Cabello³ accelerated the convergence of left nationalists in the army and civilian militants, which produced the FALN, but it achieved no more than that. The precondition for achieving even this is that there is already in existence a civilian organization with its own objectives and resources, into which men leaving the army can be integrated: in Venezuela, a guerilla force already existed in Falcon and Lara, before the rising of the marines at Carupano. The inverse process is very revealing of the value of civilians who participate in a military coup. In October 1945, Betancourt, Leoni and Barrios, and all the main leaders

¹ In Brazil, Vargas held the Presidency twice (1930–45 and 1951–54). He committed suicide before the end of his second mandate. In Argentina, Peron's government (1945–55) seemed to be reconciled at the end with the United States and with the national oligarchy.

² *Tenente* is a lieutenant. Numerous left-nationalists formed the cadres of the first revolutionary insurrections. Prestes, the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party, was a career soldier.

³ Venezuelan naval harbours where two important military risings took place in 1962.

of *Accion Democratica*,⁴ took part in the putsch fomented by Perez Jimenez and the army against President Medina. Three years later, Jimenez, by means of a new coup, rid himself of Gallegos, the elected President of the Republic and leader of *Accion Democratica*. The revolutionary tradition of APRA⁵ in Peru was based on the insurrections at Trujillo (birthplace and fief of Haya de la Torre) in 1930, and Callao in 1948. The lessons were the same. The devotion and sacrifice involved could not alter the fact that it is impossible to destroy the semi-colonial state in a day, with the State's own instruments—whatever their courage and worth. Putschism was also a latent tendency of Peronism, which paid as early as June 9th, 1956 for the unsuccessful rising of the Peronist general Valle, as a result of which 4,000 junior officers lost their commissions. The most recent experience of this kind, in Brazil, is instructive: the sergeants' movement—25,000 as compared with 15,000 commissioned officers in the entire army—had favourable conditions at its disposal to oppose the reactionary putsch of April 1964 in a decisive fashion (acquiescence of the President of the Republic,⁶ support of public opinion, relatively high degree of freedom). But it was incapable of breaking the army's vertical discipline and of taking the initiative. Its failure was the consequence of the absence of any central organization, or political homogeneity among the sergeants, and the lack of any organic link with trade union forces.

Thus Fidelism has truly transformed the traditional conceptions of revolutionary action in Latin America, by rejecting the *comp d'etat* or the military rising—even when they are linked with a civilian organization—as a method of action. For everything seems to favour such methods: the normal political passivity of the masses and the struggle of bourgeois factions for control of the State, with its formidable means of repression. The strength of historical tradition is such that even the best and most resolute of militants do not always perceive the essentially different character of a revolutionary seizure of power—which is the installation for the first time of popular power, based on the awakened majority of the nation.

The Myths of Mass Action

At the opposite extreme from 'revolutionary putschism' (as distinct

⁴ *Accion Democratica* is a Venezuelan party, which was founded in 1941, became the government party in 1958, and is now totally won over to imperialism. Betancourt and Leoni followed each other as Presidents of the Republic. Gonzalo Barrios is in charge of trade union affairs.

⁵ APRA is the Popular Revolutionary Alliance of America. It was set up in 1924 as a kind of Latin American Kuomintang, a united front of anti-imperialist groups and parties with a section in each country. It was transformed into a party by Haya de la Torre in 1929. It was APRA which channelled the revolutionary upsurge of the Peruvian masses at the time of the fall of Leguia in 1930; it was able to maintain control of them until recent years. A seed-bed for the petit-bourgeois left movements of Latin America (Betancourt is a disciple of Haya de la Torre), APRA today provides the same spectacle of complete betrayal as did Chiang Kai Shek's Kuomintang in its time.

⁶ However, by September 1963 Goulart had suppressed the sergeants' revolt in Brasilia, after which numerous units were deprived of their arms; they no longer had access as in the past to arms stores, and were subjected to the persecutions of the commissioned officers.

from Blanquism, which was the isolated action of a civilian rather than a military minority), there are the advocates of 'pure mass action'. Obviously, revolution requires the conscious entry of the masses into the struggle, and hence their ideological awakening and preparation. This is the cautious truism which many communist leaderships now proffer, without saying *how* to awaken the masses in régimes whose repressive character makes legal, trade union, or political activity very difficult, normally confining it to the narrow stratum of the urban intelligentsia. In the Bolivian *altiplano* for example, a revolutionary agitator working among the Indian communities who was hostile to the MNR (the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement in power) had every chance of being physically liquidated by government mercenaries within a month. In the Brazilian North-East, the private police force of the latifundists, the *capanga*, forced Juliao to use wandering guitarists and minstrels, reciting popular ballads full of allusions and double meanings, to penetrate the most remote and dangerous estates. Thus when, Codovilla, and the Argentinian Communist Party at its 12th Congress brandished the slogan 'Towards the conquest of power through the action of the masses', this hardly provided a serious counter-weight to the latent putschism of revolutionary Peronism. Without even stopping to consider what type of mass action the ACP is capable of today—within the CGT (General Workers Confederation) it controls the union of journalists, *gastronomicos* of Buenos Aires, chemists and musicians through the intermediary of the MUCS (Movement for Syndical Unity and Co-ordination)—it needs to be said that a mass action as such has never achieved power anywhere. The two general strikes called by the United Workers Confederation in Chile since 1952, and the crushing of the trade unions by the marine corps during the overthrow of Peron in Argentina in 1955—to take the only two countries in Latin America where one can speak of an organized and concentrated urban working-class—proved that any general strike which does not pave the way for some kind of insurrectionary strike tends to be blunted or broken by violence. But an insurrectionary strike presupposes arms and an organization of militia and of leadership which are not going to rise up from the mass action by a miracle of spontaneity. In Argentina today, where the CGT controls the political direction of Peronism, trade-union leaders (both Framini and Vandor)⁷ find themselves the logical allies of the industrial bourgeoisie; both sides are equally interested in economic expansion, hence in the increase of wages and in the demand for labour. The masses as such do not fight in the streets, nor do they fix on a plan of action, nor are they able to thwart the seven or eight political police forces which Argentina boasts, all tasks which Lenin recommended to apprentice revolutionaries in 1902. In discussion or propaganda, the term 'masses' is bandied about by reformist communist parties like an inverted Sorelian myth, as a cover for inaction. A leader of the Argentinian Communist Party offered the following formulation of the party's policy to me: 'With the masses, everything. Without the masses, nothing.' Questioned as to what would happen in the case of a military coup—an old Argentinian tradition—he was only able to express his fear of agents provocateurs, and to admit that if the masses did

⁷ Framini and Vandor are the Peronist trade-union leaders in Argentina; Framini is nominally more left-wing.

not come out on to the streets, the Party would not be able to organize resistance alone. This reasoning explains why, in Brazil, the streets of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo remained deserted on April 1st and 2nd, 1964, when thousands of men and women were ready to demonstrate, even to fight. But with whom? Behind whom? Under what flag? It is the role of a revolutionary organization to confront such circumstances (in the most appropriate manner which is doubtless not by means of demonstrations or even battles in the streets of urban centres paralyzed by military repression), so that the masses can later enter into action, protected and led by it—even if months may go by before they regain confidence in themselves and see the military power in its true perspective. There is no reason why a docker or a railway worker (the two unions which put up the most resistance in Rio) should risk death on his own in the street, unarmed, and above all without leadership, without any definite objective, while his political representatives have disappeared into the countryside or are negotiating with the government.

To sum up: the entire apparatus of organized violence belongs to the enemy. The violence with which the people can strike back, 'mass action', is easily dismantled by the enemy's organized violence. A military coup can overnight pulverize democratic parties, trade unions, the combativity of the masses and their hope: the Brazilian example is valid for the whole continent. What, then, is to be done?

The Theory of the Foco

To Lenin's question, Fidelism replies in terms which are similar to those of Lenin in 1902 (precisely in *What is to be done?*). Under an autocratic régime, only a minority organization of professional revolutionaries, theoretically conscious and practically trained in all the skills of their profession, can prepare a successful outcome for the revolutionary struggle of the masses. In Fidelist terms, this is the theory of the *foco* of the insurrectionary centre, whose pre-conditions Che Guevara set out in his *Guerilla Warfare*. 'We consider', he wrote in the preface, 'that the Cuban Revolution has made three fundamental contributions to revolutionary strategy in Latin America: 1. The popular forces can win a war against the army; 2. It is not always necessary to wait until all the conditions for revolution are fulfilled—the insurrectionary centre can create them; 3. In under-developed America the terrain of armed struggle must basically be the countryside'. In 1964, after five years of experience of guerilla war in almost all the countries of Latin America—five years worth a century—what is left of *focismo*? Has it been invalidated by experience, or has it on the contrary been tempered and fortified under trial?

The Failures of the last five years

A first survey establishes almost total failure everywhere since 1959—the year in which Latin America entered an intensive phase of guerilla wars—with the single exception of Venezuela. Leaving aside the thousand-and-one abortive movements, and those which never had any real

importance, the following were the main experiences of insurrectionary centres in the countryside:

1. **Argentina December 1959.** Insurrectionary *foco* of the Uturunko ('tiger-men' in Quechua). Launched in the north-west of Tucuman by a group of revolutionary Peronists, influenced by John William Cooke, Peron's lieutenant during his last years in power, and a consistent partisan of armed struggle. The Uturunko, after some tactical successes, disappeared from sight.

2. **Paraguay November 1959.** The tragic failure of the May 14th movement made up of young militants from the *Juventud Febrerista* and from the Liberal Party. On November 20th, a column of 80 guerilleros penetrated by way of the forest into North Paraguay. A few days later, there only remained some 10 survivors who escaped by a miracle to Argentina.

3. **Santo Domingo Summer 1960.** Failure of the landing carried out by the July 14th movement under the command of Enrique Jimenez Moya. No survivors.

4. **Paraguay Early 1962.** Failure of the guerillas of the FULNA (United Front of National Liberation, which included the Febrerist youth and the Communist Party) installed in the regions of San Pedro, General Aquino and Rosario. This defeat can be attributed both to military difficulties and to a change of leadership in the Communist Party, which abandoned the line of armed struggle for that of a United Front with the national bourgeoisie and the Liberal Party.

5. **Colombia 1961.** Failure of MOEC (Movement of Workers, Students and Peasants). In the State of Cauca, not far from Marquetalia, the leaders of MOEC, a Fidelista organization of the far left which grouped together numerous dissidents from the CP (Antonio Larotta, Federico Arango and others), were killed—some by *bandoleros* (bandits often linked to the army), others, after surrendering, by the army itself. They were attempting to start a political guerilla movement, basing themselves on the old Liberal guerilleros of the civil war, who had degenerated into bandits.

6. **Ecuador March 1962.** Failure of the guerilla of the URJE (Revolutionary Union of Ecuador Youth). Near Santo Domingo de los Colorados, an intermediary zone between the tropical coast and the high Andean plateau, some 40 young revolutionaries were encircled and captured by parachutists. They had only held the mountain for 48 hours.

7. **Venezuela March 1962.** It is not unfair to include the failure of the first badly organized guerilla centres in the State of Merida in the Andes and in the Charal region of Yaracuy State. These local failures were amply made up for later.

8. **Peru At Puerto Maldonado, on the Bolivian frontier, the vanguard of a sizeable column was cut to pieces. The guerilleros did not even have the time to move into action.**

9. **Brazil** One cannot really speak of insurrectionary centres. In the course of 1962 there were installed in certain States of the interior centres of military training, linked to Juliao's movement, which finally foundered for the lack of the support and leadership promised by Francisco Juliao; this failure was to set off a series of scissions in the Peasant Leagues, which died as a national political movement at the end of 1962.

10. **Peru** The movement started by Hugo Blanco in 1961, in the Convencion valley, should logically have debouched on to an insurrectionary *foco*. But without political support, without a well-defined strategy, without cadres or equipment, Blanco could not pass over to armed struggle, and it was the peasants who paid the price under the terrible military repression unleashed in October 1962 against the unionized peasantry of Cuzco. Blanco was captured in May 1963, isolated and ill, after a four-month search.

11. **Argentina** February-March 1964. Failure of the EGP (*Ejercito Guerrillero del Pueblo*). Given the capabilities and size of the organization, this was doubtless one of the most serious failures of a guerilla centre. For more than six months the EGP prepared itself for action in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy, in the north, where the police discovered sizeable training camps and several underground stores of provisions. Young dissidents from the Communist Party and other leftists made up the EGP. The official figures were: a dozen arrested, six dead—some of hunger, others shot. The guerillas had not yet gone into action.

To set against these failures, the following freed territories and zones of combat at present exist with a solid base in South America:

The Gains

1. **Venezuela** The States of Falcon and Lara have for two years constituted what Douglas Bravo (commander of the guerilla) in October 1963 called 'stabilized zones', where despite the adoption of guerilla warfare in depth—that is, establishment of a liberated political and social régime—military engagements have not ceased. Besides these two zones, a new front was created in July 1964 in Bachiller, in the east, and another in the Andes to the West.

2. **Colombia** The zones of peasant self-defence, often called 'independent republics'—Marquetalia, Rio Chiquito, Sumapaz, El Pato—whose creation goes back to the Civil War (1948-58). They were born of a local armed struggle waged by the peasants, who, when the war was brought to an end by the reconciliation of the Conservatives and the Liberals, did not lay down their arms but organized themselves autonomously under peasant leaders (endowed with an exceptional military formation), who were members of the central committee of the Colombian Communist Party. After the elections of March 1964, the region of Marquetalia was the object of a massive and carefully prepared attack by the army and air force, trained and led by American

officers. The commander of the region, Marulandia, refused to engage in a war of position which would have been disastrous, and abandoned control of the inhabited area to the army: this was a town of small importance, in which the army found itself effectively trapped—Marulandia and his peasants subjecting the soldiers to relentless guerilla harassment.

3. **Bolivia** Despite the ambiguity of the struggle, the tropical Bolivian North-East, on the Brazilian frontier, can be included. It is occupied by considerable guerilla forces, who went over to the offensive after August 1964, under the control of the Phalangist party. This party, the traditional representative of the latifundists of the East and of reaction by Whites (*kampas*) against Indians (*kollas* of the altiplano), adopted an anti-American and nationalist position after the failure of the Phalangist insurrections of 1953 and above all of 1959, in which the founder of the Party, Unzaga de la Vega, was killed. This guerilla is characterized by strong regionalist—in some cases almost separatist—demands; these are the result of the rivalry between the economic interests of Santa Cruz and those of the Indian capital, La Paz. Nevertheless, certain guerilla chiefs (Valverde, etc) are known to be authentic revolutionaries.

4. **Bolivia** The Bolivian mines—the entire zone surrounding Oruro, including San José, Huanuni, Siglo Veinte, Catavi—constitute, by virtue of their economic importance (tin is the Bolivian mono-product), social importance (the 26,000 miners enrolled in the FSTMB⁸ form the concentrated base of national production and of the national proletariat) and political importance (level of consciousness and of organization), the most important and solid liberated territory in the Continent. Since the 1952 revolution—the first in Latin America—of which they were the artisans and the true victors, the miners have been organized in each mine into militia; they are badly equipped in conventional arms, but highly trained in the use of dynamite, of which they have made a terrible weapon. The great mines are from 20 to 50 kilometres apart, but the Indian peasants of the intermediary zones are also armed and allied with the unions.

Since the first great massacres of miners in 1942, ordered by Patino, the miners have paid with their lives for every strike, and for each basic demand (such as the eight-hour day). Since their rupture with the MNR and Paz Estenssoro (1960) armed struggle has become the daily reality of the mine and is always on the point of debouching on to a strategic offensive: the march on La Paz. Bolivia is the country where the subjective and objective conditions are best combined. It is the only country in South America where a socialist revolution is on the agenda, despite the reconstitution of an army which was totally destroyed in 1952. It is also the only country where the revolution might take the classical Bolshevik form—witness the proletarian insurrection of 1952, on the basis of 'soviets', which 'exploded' the state apparatus by means of a short and decisive armed struggle.

The theory of the *foco* is thus in Bolivia, for reasons of historical

formation which are unique in America, if not inadequate at any rate secondary. If one excepts Colombia, more industrialized and less colonial than Venezuela and where civil war has given the rural guerilla its 'Vietnamese' character (the peasants are at the same time cultivators of their land and guerilleros), only Venezuela at present provides an example of the *foco* as Guevara conceives it. Contrasted with the impressive list of failures, this is very little. In fact, a rapid analysis of the reasons for these failures shows that they were due to a too hasty imitation of the Cuban model, and did not combine all the necessary conditions for success. This historical experience enables one to set out these conditions much more fully than was possible five years ago. Just as Leninism matured theoretically after the ordeal of 1905, so Fidelism has been strengthened and defined more closely after the ordeal of that immense, scattered '1905' which Latin America has undergone since the victory of the Cuban Revolution.

Fidelism and Blanquism

The most serious mistake would be to see in the *foco* a revival of Blanquism. Although it starts as a tiny group—from 10 to 30 individuals, professional revolutionaries entirely dedicated to the cause and aiming to win power—the *foco* does not by any means attempt to seize power on its own, by one audacious stroke. Nor even does it aim to conquer power by means of war or through a military defeat of the enemy: it only aspires to enable the masses themselves to overthrow the established power. It is a minority, certainly, but one which, unlike the Blanquist minority of activists, aims to win over the masses before and not after the seizure of power, and which makes this the essential condition of the final conquest of power. This minority establishes itself at the most vulnerable zone of the national territory, and then slowly spreads like an oilpatch, propagating itself in concentric ripples through the peasant masses, to the smaller towns, and finally to the capital. The process is of course two-way, since from the towns themselves there comes a movement of mass strikes, demonstrations in defence of public liberties, fund-raising campaigns, and an underground resistance movement galvanized by the exploits of the rural guerilla. This growth of an isolated minority into a minority which is the nucleus of a popular movement, which in turn gathers force in a final tidal wave, is not mechanical, in that the influence of the guerilla centre accelerates by leaps. The first contact with the peasantry in the mountain where the guerilla force must be based for reasons of security and natural cover, is the most difficult to establish and confirm. These isolated peasants, who cultivate small, barren clearings (the *conuqueros* of Falcon in Venezuela, or the share-cropping Indians of Northern Argentina), are also the most closed to any political consciousness, and the most difficult to orient and organize—because of their dispersion, their illiteracy, their initial mistrust towards strangers who only seem to presage bombardment, pillage and repression. But later, when the peasants have been won over and the *foco* has gained provisions, information and recruits, the guerilla centre will encounter the agricultural workers of the plains: the cane workers of Northern Argentina, often migrants from neighbouring Bolivia; the unemployed from the

market towns of Falcon; the wage-labourers from the coast of the Brazilian North-East. These form a social stratum which is far more receptive and better prepared for the struggle, because of its concentration, its chronic unemployment, its subordination to the fluctuations of the capitalist market. Finally, in the neighbouring towns, there will be a convergence with the small groups of politicized workers which already exist in the local transformer industries, without any need for the slow preliminary work which is indispensable in the mountains.

The second characteristic of the *foco* which distinguishes it radically from Blanquism, is that it does not in any way aim at a lightning victory, or even for a rapid outcome of the revolutionary war. The *foco* aspires to conquer power with and through the masses, that is to say with the poor and medium peasants, and with the workers. But these social classes, which have always been isolated from political life, require a long practical experience in order to gain consciousness of their exploited condition, and to organize and move into action. Besides, the chosen terrain of Blanquism was the working-class aristocracy of the 19th-century craft industries, with its high cultural level. This hardly has any equivalent in contemporary Latin America, apart from the anarcho-syndicalist sectors of Buenos Aires and above all of Montevideo (where there exists an important anarchist trade union federation)—products of the first wave of Italian and Spanish immigration: their importance cannot be decisive.

The Brazilian communist insurrection of 1935 was 'Blanquist' in several respects. It was organized by Prestes, who had secretly returned to Rio from Moscow, where he had been a member of the Foreign Bureau of the Third International. Influenced by inaccurate information and almost certainly by agents provocateurs who had infiltrated the party (among them the party's secretary-general himself), Prestes believed the moment opportune for a concerted military uprising in several key garrisons of the country. No contact was made with the National Liberation Alliance, a powerful mass organization of the Popular Front type of which communists were the backbone; no preparatory agitation took place. The conspiracy exploded one fine November morning when the 3rd Rio regiment rose; but it was not followed by the other regiments involved in the plot, which instead began fratricidal fighting among themselves. Other uprisings did take place, at Natal and Recife, but they were unsynchronized, quickly isolated and broken. The popular masses were bewildered and did not launch any strike of support or protest against the repressive measures immediately taken by Vargas, who was only too happy to be presented with this pretext. The preparations for this coup, which in practice installed fascism in Brazil for 10 years, bear comparison with thriller fiction; and it is a matter of astonishment that the Third International at the height of the Anti-fascist Popular Front, should have gambled on the success of the insurrection, dispatching its best technicians and political cadres secretly to Brazil, men like Harry Berger, Jules Vallée, Rodolfo Ghioldi (today second in charge of the Argentinian Communist Party) and others.

under the name of the 'Caracas Plan' was radically different, although only the insurrections of Carupano and Puerto Caballo actually materialized. This was related to a more advanced phase of struggle (a series of mass demonstrations were successfully organized—a transport strike, protests against the vote of the Venezuelan delegation at Punta del Este, etc, resulting in 25 deaths in three days, for the police had orders to 'shoot first, ask later'); and to a spontaneous movement within the younger officers and NCO's, not one directed from without as in the Brazilian case. But it is most significant that the simultaneous rising of various nationalist garrisons throughout the country was to serve as a signal for the launching of mass actions in Caracas and in other main towns. The plan was uncovered by the government security services, and the dangerous officers and regiments were either transferred or imprisoned just before the projected date. If Carupano and Puerto Caballo did revolt in May and June 1962, it was really simply out of despair and to uphold (military) honour; for many had no desire to go and rot in prison for uprisings which had not taken place.

The Venezuelan revolutionaries seem to have drawn from this setback the lesson that one cannot confer on the army, even on its most determined and politically conscious elements, too large a role in the revolution because of the resistances to be overcome in many officers and NCO's still dominated by their military formation: for example, their reluctance to keep secrets (military comradeship or caste solidarity often preponderating over political disagreements) or to abandon notions of military honour—in short to acquire revolutionary humility. Thus, the rebels of Carupano refused to retreat to the oil fields bordering the Tigre—where they would have been saved from bombardments—and to dissolve themselves in order to conserve cadres for the future people's army (the FALN were formed shortly after Puerto Caballo), because this would have been to yield before governmental troops.

Today Fidelistas are perfectly aware that one cannot adopt a sectarian attitude towards the army. But they do not on the other hand entertain any illusions about the role which can be played by its advanced elements so long as they remain inside the military structure and so long as they are not integrated into the 'other' army in process of formation, as in Venezuela. Enemy propaganda plays on the theme that the 'Castro-communist' revolution will liquidate the army as such, without of course specifying what 'liquidate' means. In Venezuela, this propaganda succeeded in alienating some career soldiers, younger officers of popular origins, who were sympathetic to the revolution. The FALN was accordingly obliged to insist in its clandestine press on the fact that a democratic Venezuela would need its own army, one of a different type, in which anyone of goodwill would find a place. They explained that there was no question of liquidating physically, one by one, all career officers nor even of one day retiring them from their posts, but only of destroying the army as a repressive instrument in the service of the ruling class.

Countryside and Campus

The theory of the *foco* can be best situated among current political

concepts, by relating it to the Leninist theory of the weakest link, which it merely re-interprets in different conditions. The *centre* is installed as a *detonator* at the least guarded position, and *at the moment* most favourable to the explosion. In itself, the *foco* will not overthrow a given social situation nor even, through its own struggles, reverse a given political situation. It can have no active function unless it finds a point of insertion within maturing contradictions. Geographically, this must be where class contradictions are at their most violent—though the least manifest on the political plane, the most fitful or repressed, i.e. in the zones of agrarian feudalism outside the framework of the repressive machinery concentrated in the towns—e.g. Cuzco in Peru, Salta in Argentina, Falcon and Lara in Venezuela, the Sierra Maestra in Cuba. Chronologically the problem is more difficult. It is clear that a guerilla centre cannot be born in the trough of the wave, but must be the culmination of a political crisis. It is equally clear that one cannot just wait for 'the moment' before taking to the hills, since a *foco* is not improvised in the space of a month. For the prairie to catch fire, it is necessary that the spark should be there, present, waiting. The very lengthy work of building up a *foco* can only be done on the spot, and only a centre that is politically rooted in an agrarian zone can seize the offensive at the appropriate moment. This was the difficult situation of the Argentinian militants of the *Ejercito Guerrillero del Pueblo*, and helps to explain their failure—whose immediate cause was police penetration of the organization. For it seems that the EGP was still at the stage of establishing its underground organization, without revealing itself or passing into action; it was merely confining itself to military training and to making contact with the peasant population (assisting cultivators in sowing and clearing new land, caring for the sick, perhaps teaching some peasants to read). This work lasted for almost a year until the organization was exposed and destroyed by the sudden attack of the gendarmerie. Apparently the EGP had been preparing to move on to the offensive at the time of the sugar harvest in the summer of 1964, a short while after it was dissolved. The peasants would then have experienced their class contradictions with the landlord in their most intense form, especially since many of them had, with the help of the EGP, sowed on uncultivated lands belonging to the big latifundists who would naturally have claimed their 50 per cent or more of the harvest; the peasants would then have refused but on this occasion they would have been defended by the guerilla fighters. (Exactly the same conflict, centring around the 50 per cent, took place this year in Peru following the occupation of new lands taken over in the Cuzco in 1963.) It can be seen from this example that new objective conditions are not created overnight, but require the length of an agricultural cycle for their full maturation. And during this time the insurrectional centre is at the mercy of delation or imprudence. These cases of invasions of unoccupied lands (as in Brazil and Peru) provide a perfect example of a moment at which a military action can rest on a sharp social conflict which is easily 'politicizable'. On a national level, it is clear that a rural guerilla zone, created on Peron's return to Argentina or after his eventual arrest, could set the psychological conditions for a mass insurrection in Buenos Aires or, in any case, for a massive movement of solidarity. In Argentina, where Buenos Aires, Rosario and Cordoba already group more than half of the total population (20 millions), the

importance of the rural proletariat is minimal, in terms of their numbers, dispersion or weight in the economic life of the country. A rural *foco* can only have a subordinate role in relation to urban struggle, in Buenos Aires, where the industrial proletariat is the prime force. Nothing can be achieved without the active participation of urban workers. The EGP, however, lacked organized contact with the working-class movement or political liaison with its parties and unions. This is why the guerilla actions aroused little more than a neutral interest among the Buenos Aires workers 'for whom everything that isn't Peronist is as far away as Mars'. On the other hand, the failure of the EGP did stimulate searching discussions among middle political and trade union cadres and the younger left-wing Peronists on the whole problem of armed struggle and the forms it could assume in Argentinian conditions. Even if this were all, the record of guerilla action in Argentina could still be regarded as positive.

While 'the terrain of armed struggle in under-developed America must be primarily the countryside' (Che Guevarra), this does not exclude the development of secondary centres in the towns: the universities. These can act as nuclei of theoretical discussion, forums of political agitation or as reserve armies. It would take too long to analyze here why the students are in the vanguard of the revolution in Latin America and why they are always the first to bear the brunt of repression, as recent events in Venezuela, Panama, Santo Domingo and elsewhere have shown. One may simply mention the rupture between the generations, the demographic pressure⁹, the special importance of the factor of 'consciousness' in under-developed countries lacking an organized mass working class, and the university reforms of Cordoba (1918). These last were applied to practically the whole of the Continent, conferring autonomy on all the major universities, and thus sheltering them constitutionally in the name of bourgeois liberalism, from state intervention (though this legal protection is somewhat theoretical, of course, in the light of the military attacks on the University of Caracas and its recent occupation). In any case, the facts are inescapable. Caracas, Bogota, Quito, San Marcos at Lima, the philosophy faculty at Buenos Aires, the University of Montevideo (where 300 students who demonstrated against the breaking of relations with Cuba in September 1964 withstood a siege by the police), Sao Paulo, the philosophy faculty at Rio (scene of the only shots fired during the April *coup d'état* in Brazil) are all key points for registering the latent political temperature of the country—not its present average temperature, certainly—but that of the crisis to come. A university election (where fraud cannot intervene), which is essentially political, is not only an advance report on which political tendencies predominate within the Revolution but also on the inner evolution of the political life of the country itself. When the marxist left captured control of the university of San Marcos at Lima from APRA in 1959, this marked the end of a historical phase in Peru and indeed in the Continent. It indicated the irreversible decline not only of APRA but of the whole bourgeois ex-progressive ideology,

⁹ South America has a population growth of almost 3 per cent per annum, higher than that of Asia and Africa. Brazil, for instance, will double its population in 20 years: 1960, 60 million; 1980, 120 million.

and the irreversible advance of a new generation of men and of ideas definitely linked to marxism-leninism and to the Cuban revolution.

If the university *foco* is a political rather than military centre, it still runs the risks of the *foco*. First, the concentration of political agitation in the University, this precinct reserved for liberty, can also prove a trap: the abscess is fixed where everybody expects it and is insulated from the 'healthy' social body. The *foco* turns in on itself and simmers in isolation. This seems further proof that the countryside is the terrain for an effective struggle, for in the capital the autonomous university constitutes the only free or potentially free area; which in an already advanced phase of struggle is rather a Pyrrhic victory. In Caracas, for example, the vanguard role of the Central University—the only place where it is possible to post up bills, to hold a public meeting, to demonstrate, to publicly distribute revolutionary literature—has perhaps proved a snare at certain moments: however, the simultaneous presence of an active rural front and of an urban guerilla in the working-class quarters has prevented this trap from being fully sprung. But, above all, like the insurrectional *foco* in its early stages, it is necessary at a certain point for the student vanguard to withdraw itself from the masses: separation both in the tempo and in the level of the forms of struggle. In one of the countries of the 'Southern Cone' (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay), a typical evening meeting of the university union saw argument raging to and fro among communists, ex-communists, themselves split into several groups, trotskyites, independents, etc, who confronted one another in polemics (and not only in polemics for there were many armed students in the hall) of an intensity unknown in Europe. Yet the union assembly numbered only 300 persons out of a faculty of 2,000. A young sociologist explained their dilemma to me: 'If we lower the tone or the level of discussion, we may establish closer links with the masses, but it will become necessary to dim the flame, our theoretical and practical preparedness will decline, perhaps we will become reformist, and will lose sight of the final objective. If on the other hand the pure flame is sustained, doubtless we will lose contact initially and for the immediate future with the majority of first-year students, as yet only slightly politicized. But two years from now they will be able to rejoin us on our positions and throw themselves into the revolutionary struggle. For a general crisis is imminent in the country: we must be prepared for it, we must not be taken by surprise by any of the forms of struggle which the situation may demand relatively soon; it will be necessary to fuse with the workers' trade unions which tolerate their present reformist leaderships without enthusiasm, and they will be justified in asking from us, revolutionary intellectuals, a level of readiness which it is our duty to prepare. So, we keep the flame burning high.' And he added, smiling, perhaps bitterly: 'We are the vestals of the Revolution . . .' Those surprised by this language should re-read the Second Declaration of Havana to see the place occupied there by 'the revolutionary intellectuals', always cited alongside the workers as the leading force of the peasant Revolution. The dilemma outlined here, though, is not general throughout Latin America. Elsewhere, the radical and political character of union struggle within the universities involves the majority of students. At the University of Caracas, the extreme left has annually advanced its

platform of struggle since 1960 . . . and annually increased its number of votes.¹⁰

The Lessons of the Long March

All the *focos* we have mentioned have had to be dissolved: it is already clear that armed struggle is not in itself a panacea. What were the reasons? Without going into details, one can sum up: almost all were destroyed by means of informers or the infiltration of police spies into the organization. And here it is worthwhile recalling the degree to which the war of infiltration and espionage has expanded since 1959, thanks to the North Americans: the 'publicity coup' of Fidel's sister is only one example of the talents or the financial resources at the disposal of the CIA. While this aspect should certainly not be under-estimated, it does not explain everything. The guerilla group is always initially as small as possible precisely to minimize the risks in case of failure, for a single infiltration can easily jeopardize the whole organization. But there are deeper political conditions which explain why infiltration can occur in the first place and why it can each time shatter the whole movement. First, the absence or deficiency of political education of members of the organization. Again, there is the lack of adequate political preparation on the actual terrain where the guerilla group operates: in this case, a void at once forms around the revolutionary centre, which will then be starved of information and foodstuffs and will lack even a rudimentary knowledge of the geography of the combat zone. The examples of the MOEC in Colombia and of the URJE in Ecuador come to mind. (The Venezuelan experience offers in this respect a model of prudence and political preparation in the zone of operations, achieved thanks to active co-operation from the inhabitants. The district of Bachiller, in the state of Miranda, one hour on the road from Caracas, had been the object of clandestine action (installation of a social, economic and political infrastructure on the basis of existing conditions) long in advance of the launching of the guerilla centre properly speaking. Further, this guerilla action did not break out haphazardly but at the exact moment (July 1964) when the Leoni régime had demonstrated by its actions that 'the broadly based government' was betraying its promises and that repression was acquiring a new lease of life in the country. Finally, there is the lack of a political apparatus to co-ordinate with the organized urban workers, the only force capable of coming to the assistance of the *foco* through mass action in the towns, legally where possible, and of providing necessary political support: amplifying through propaganda the echoes of the struggle on the rural front, diffusing a programme of action and basic demands in the cities, providing financial aid and the minimum provisioning in arms, ammunition and foodstuffs from other parts of the country, etc. The

¹⁰ At the last university elections, held on June 7th, 1964, the revolutionary parties regained two faculties regarded as former bastions of the right: medicine and veterinary studies. The results were: *Acción Democrática* (governmental party) = 993 votes. COPEI (the Christian Democratic party = the right + the apolitical) = 3,083 votes. PCV-MIR (political infrastructure of the FALN) = 5,426 votes: i.e. an absolute majority favours the principle of armed struggle for the conquest of political power.

cases of the Argentinian, Paraguayan and Peruvian guerilla struggles all illustrate this problem.

All these negative experiences have been studied by the Latin American revolutionaries who appear to have drawn the following conclusions from them:

1. The recruitment, military training and political education of the first group of combatants must be much stricter than in the past.

The homogeneity of the group is of the highest importance, all the more so since its limited size (from 10 to 60 members at most) allows for rigorous selection, thus eliminating the No. 1 danger, infiltration. This is not the place to discuss the technical aspects of preparation. One may merely note in passing the prime importance of keeping military secrets, and of simple physical as well as specifically military training. Guerilla warfare is above all an endurance test of forced marches in difficult terrain rather than a series of military engagements, which in fact should be avoided rather than sought. In this perspective, romanticism is swiftly dissolved. A student from the lower middle class, accustomed to the minimum comforts of the town, could not survive the routine of guerilla war for more than a week unless gifted with quite exceptional physical stamina. Instead of leaving matters to the workings of natural selection, it would be better to apply a deliberate selection before the launching of guerilla operations: in Venezuela, for instance, there were very few students who, after volunteering with enthusiasm in the early stages, did not have to be sent down into the valley again after a few weeks, diseased and exhausted. The majority of the combatants in Falcon are now made up primarily of peasants then workers, and only lastly to make up the numbers, a few intellectuals of petit-bourgeois origin (doctors, students, etc) who have proved exceptionally tough, both morally and physically. Finally, closer contacts between the organizations of different countries seem necessary now, so that their various experiences can be pooled and so that organizational errors need not be repeated. At the very least, and failing anything more ambitious, the lack of a sort of continental information bureau grouping all anti-imperialist organizations and not merely the communist parties is having deleterious effects on the day-to-day conduct of the struggle.

2. But armed struggle understood as an art—in the dual sense of technique and invention—is meaningless except in the framework of a politics understood as a science.

The solidity and seriousness of a military preparation and the organization of a *foco* is essentially a political question: it is determined by an overall strategy and by an understanding of the interests of the exploited. Only a reformist party without any theoretical foundation would regard the creation of an armed force as a separate problem, something secondary and local; as a simple internal police measure. The development of armed struggle in Venezuela, for example, has forced the communist party to articulate an overall strategy, based on a

theoretical analysis of 'double power' (formal and real) within a semi-colonial state and of the dominant and secondary class contradictions existing within a society suddenly and grotesquely transformed by the exploitation of petrol since 1920. It was not a matter of justifying a given practice after the event, for this strategy and theoretical analysis had been laid down at the Third Party Congress held in 1961 before the opening of the rural fronts, but rather of providing an objective and a specific context for the struggle. Today, the Colombian communist party faces the same alternative: whether to regard the guerilla *foco* in Marquetalia, initiated and led by the peasant Marulandia, as strictly regional and 'accidental'—that is, to deny it any future, to refuse it any place or meaning within a general strategy of revolution, and thus in effect to kill it politically and physically; or to revise its dogmatic theses on the peaceful transition, the alliance with the MRL (Liberal Revolutionary Movement, the left section of the Liberal party, topped by a bourgeois leadership), the defence of democratic liberties, etc, and to re-interpret the whole strategy of the Colombian revolution.

Armed struggle absolutely cannot be brandished in Latin America as a categorical imperative or a remedy in itself: armed struggle conducted by whom, one may ask, when, where, with what programme, what alliances? These are concrete problems which no-one in the world can resolve abstractly—only the national vanguards which alone carry the weight of these political responsibilities. In other words, the *foco* cannot constitute a strategy in itself without condemning itself to failure: it is a moment of struggle whose place can only be defined within an overall integrating strategy.

The military activities of the *foco* continually involve political criteria: in the choice of local alliances—with or against rich peasants; in the objectives or basic principle of certain attacks—for example whether to ambush a column made up of conscripts or to melt away before it without forcing a combat so as not to alienate potential natural allies (in this situation the Venezuelan revolutionaries do not attack but make their presence felt through notices posted at the forks of the forest footpaths). But, more than this, the detonation of a *foco* involves a political precondition: selection of time and place presuppose reference to the totality of the given political situation, and to a dialectical analysis of its revolutionary possibilities. The place to be occupied by the rural front within the whole national revolutionary struggle will vary from country to country. The political importance and military tactics of a *foco* established in North Tucuman (Argentina), that is in a country with a highly developed industrial proletariat concentrated in the capital, cannot be the same as those of an Andean centre in Peru, where 70 per cent of the population lives on the land.

In the recent past, Latin America has experienced two types of armed struggle which offered their own political strategy. The first, and most terrible, was the civil war in Colombia sparked off by the assassination of the Liberal leader, Jorge Eleazer Gaitan, whose contemporary legacy is the chronic violence and *bandolerismo* which has claimed 200,000 deaths in 10 years according to official estimates, and 300,000 according to the Liberal party—a more likely figure. What has emerged

from this vast cataclysm which reached depths of cruelty unexperienced in any other war? A few stabilized zones of peasant self-defence, the only areas which managed to set up some sort of organization and political leadership (and hence proper military discipline) during the course of the war. With the exception of the areas of Galilea, El Pato, Sumapaz and the guerilla front south of Tolima, where the communist party succeeded in establishing a unified command of the peasant militias and in creating an institutional order, the whole country has been prey to continual anarchic violence, with no meaning; each party simply matching the excesses of the adversary (whether Liberal or Conservative) with excesses of its own, without coherence or leadership. Neither the communists nor the advanced wing of the Liberals has yet posed the question of power. A national conference of guerilla fighters held at Boyaca in 1952 achieved nothing, and the 13 commandos existing in the territory were never able to fuse or to co-ordinate their action. Yet if there was ever a truly 'popular' violence, erupting from 'below', from the countryside without any intervention by 'petit bourgeois intellectuals' from the towns (without 'artificial stimulation from outside the peasant milieu' to cite the phraseology current in describing the Venezuelan revolution), then it was without doubt the wave of desperate jacqueries experienced in Colombia up to 1958. The problem of political power was only confronted in 1964 by the peasant guerilla of Marquetalia, which articulated a serious organization, objectives, and a phased programme, in short a meaning for itself. This critique of spontaneity has been achieved only at the cost of many lives; but even so it is certain that if the peasant combatants of Marquetalia, who lack a national political leadership, fail to combine with a mass movement in other regions, they will be unable to bear the whole weight of repression alone.

Another recent form of mass violence—and one which proves that terrorism is not just the 'spontaneity of the intellectual'—was the terrorist wave which rocked Argentina in 1959 and at the beginning of 1960. This terrorist outbreak erupted from the base, from the Peronist unions and youth organization, in protest against Frondizi's betrayals, against the signing of the petrol agreements, to obtain the return of the CGR to the workers (the CGR had been taken over by the military in 1955 and subsequently dissolved altogether) and for the return of Peron, etc.

Between 1958 and 1960 there were at least 5,000 terrorist incidents. The movement was of considerable importance, but it was only the work of isolated groups or even individual terrorists, without any common programme or leadership.

The movement first appeared in the form of support for strike actions, at the time illegal. Militants would plant a bomb against an industrial establishment (for instance, in a bakers' strike the flour-mill or the bakery itself would be sabotaged, and similarly such state enterprises as the telephone or electricity services were also targets) to force it to close down or as a reprisal. This spread rapidly and became almost a daily occurrence, without any very clear point: bombs in the road, underneath vehicles, against the front of buildings, more or less any-

where. Towards the end, some groups of young workers managed to introduce some direction into this wave of spontaneous protests, and bombs were placed at the various agencies representing imperialist interests, the British Council and the usis for example. But the police had little difficulty in picking up the terrorists who had no underground organization. A trade union group captured the CGT which had been reconstituted in 1961; and the movement was broken by the adoption of the 'Conintes Plan' (a sort of siege launched by Frondizi); the terrorists were arrested and sentenced by emergency trials. Such terrorism obviously has nothing in common with the Venezuelan 'terrorism', systematically directed against the imperialist economic infrastructure (pipe-lines, oil-wells, large warehouses, banks, the American military mission and so on.) This confirms once again the justice of Lenin's theses on the subject of terrorism: that it can never be employed as a permanent and regular form of political action, but only at the moment of the 'final assault'; that in conditions of illegality or repression it is not in itself contradictory to mass struggle but that it may easily become so unless it is firmly and fully subordinated by political factors (for there is no terrorist or armed action exempt from injustices and errors which can only be corrected in the practice). In Argentina, terrorism led to a decline after 1960 in working-class militancy and a marked falling off in revolutionary combativity.

This negative historical record in no way contradicts the necessity of armed struggle understood as the highest form of political struggle. Quite the contrary, for it confirms anew:

—that the appearance of a rural guerilla centre is to be subordinated to a rigorous political analysis of the situation: the selection of the moment at which to launch the action and of the right place for it presumes a searching analysis of national contradictions, understood in class terms;

—that the *foco* does not by definition exclude the conducting of other peaceful forms of mass action through the trade unions, in the national assembly, in the press, and so on even though the Venezuelan experience demonstrates that peaceful means of struggle, essentially precarious, may not last long after the inception of an armed struggle.

In other words, more advanced forms of popular struggle, far from dispensing with the need for 'normal' political organization and action, must precisely be accompanied by an improvement in political consciousness and organization. The frank hostility to armed struggle revealed by the leaderships of several Latin American communist parties (Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Brazil) may well derive not so much from any lack of courage or from deficiencies in material preparation as from a low degree of theoretical and political consciousness. These leaders are well aware that if a 'people's war' (as the Cubans call a guerilla war) were to break out they would have to yield to a new generation of leaders formed in and by the struggle, as has happened today in Venezuela.

3. The presence of a vanguard party is not, however an indispensable precondition for the launching of an armed struggle.

Here the Cuban Revolution has established that *in the insurreccional phase of the revolution*, while it is indispensable to have some sort of organization and a firm political leadership (July 26th movement), it is possible to do without a vanguard Marxist-Leninist party of the working-class. It should be emphasized that this applies only to the preparatory stage of the seizure of power, for the creation of such a party becomes indispensable in the construction of a socialist society. An anti-imperialist national liberation struggle in a colonial or semi-colonial territory cannot be conducted under the banner of Marxism-Leninism or the leadership of the working class for obvious reasons: *de facto* 'aristocratization' of the relatively small working class, the nationalist character of the anti-imperialist struggle. As for the party, this will be formed and its cadres will be selected through the natural processes of the liberation struggle, as happened in Cuba. In other words, the idea of a vanguard party counterposed to that of the *foco*—a party whose creation must precede any guerilla or military initiatives—does not seem to correspond to the facts. This is evident in Argentina where all the organizations, little groups and parties of the revolutionary left (with the exception of the Portantiero group) aspire to transform themselves into the vanguard party of the working class at present 'mesmerized' by Peronist ideology and overwhelmingly hostile to the Communist party on account of the latter's sectarian anti-Peronism (which on more than one occasion led it to ally with reactionary forces against Peronism and even to mobilize the unions alongside the military after the 'Revolucion Libertadora' of 1955 in which Peron was deposed). But ideology without the masses and masses without ideology do not constitute a dialectical opposition; and the Argentinian left withheld even moral support from the EGP because it was devoting itself entirely to the evangelical work of penetrating the factories by distributing Marxist pamphlets at the gates.

4. Politico-military organization cannot be postponed. The work of setting it up cannot be left merely to the momentum of the struggle itself.

Post-Cuban conditions—for guerilla fighters are now less able to count on surprise effect, and the enemy is better prepared politically and militarily—do not allow the same degree of empiricism as was possible for Cuba. As a general rule, a guerilla centre cannot survive without an organized means of liaison between town and countryside. This is not merely to assure political contacts but also to guarantee a supply of arms, funds, fresh recruits drawn from the capital or other regions of the country, foodstuffs (for the idea that the guerilla centre is completely self-sufficient is a myth, especially in the early phases of its action) and so on. The centre additionally must have a local organization, however primitive, established among the thin and dispersed mountain population and in the zones of contact with the exterior, the 'lowlands' which are crucial for the lines of supply and information. And at the apex of the pyramid: the kernel of the future people's army—a handful of hunted men, always on the move so as to multiply contacts with the population and so as not to be located by the enemy or even by the peasants of nearby villages who might, through indiscretions, give them away. This mobility also has the advantage of

making them appear more numerous than they really are. Certainly this pyramid will not appear in *advance* of the installation of the *foco*, or one would wait two thousand years to begin the revolution. The pyramidal formation is created from its two extremities, the base and the summit, and will never be anything other than the dialectical process of its destruction and reconstruction on a wider base. The network of contacts between mountain and town, town and mountain (relay houses, vehicles to carry volunteers and equipment along roads or highways which are closely patrolled, radio transmitters, etc.) is clearly the most vulnerable sector because it is compelled to work 'in enemy territory', in provincial towns and villages which are not densely inhabited and are hence easily controlled. This was where the greatest risks were taken and where in Cuba as in Venezuela, repression took its greatest toll. This is just one more reason for the greatest care in preparing and setting up the pyramidal structure. Operations should only commence and the combatants should move up into the mountains only when the organization has been properly initiated. In this way the risks of hasty improvisation will at least be minimized if not, of course, entirely eliminated: the room available for manoeuvre, improvisation or recovery during the active process of establishment has been considerably lessened since Cuba.

5. In under-developed and predominantly rural Latin America, a revolutionary ideology can be permanently propagated among the masses only on the basis of an insurrectionary 'foco'.

The idea that peasant masses must first be politically educated, before anything else is done, is often opposed to that of guerrilla tactics. It is never said how this is to be done, only that it must be done as the *pre-condition of armed action*. In reality, it seems that the two tasks condition each other and can only be undertaken together: there can be no *foco* which does not have as its immediate objective the political formation of the surrounding peasantry, no organized oppositional peasant movements which are not supported by armed struggle if they are to avoid being wiped out by the forces of repression.

This was borne out in Peru, where Hugo Blanco did more in a few years' work by forming unions of 'arrendires' (farmers who hold the usufruct of land which belongs to the latifundist who is paid his rent in labour) in the Valle de la Convencion than all the left-wing parties together in the last 30 years. In two years, 30,000 Indian peasants were enrolled for the first time in their lives in defence unions at the instigation of Blanco and a handful of cadres. But when, during the summer of 1961, the agrarian proletariat and farmers decided not to pay rent to the latifundists, the latter immediately secured state intervention, in the form of the army, and troops were dispatched to Cuzco. The neighbouring areas were prepared to join in action against the latifundists, as long as the peasants of Convencion could hold out. But the latter had no means of resistance; a few anarchic actions on their part gave the army the pretext for carrying out massive reprisals on the peasants themselves. Hugo Blanco, alone and without a fixed abode in the area, escaped. The peasants felt themselves betrayed; nobody could defend them against the army. Between staying alive and the

union they chose the former: rent was again paid to the latifundists. Blanco was left to his fate by his own union members who felt abandoned by him. He was unable to pass to the stage of insurrection through lack of arms, money, cadres, and especially the support of national political organizations, all of which dropped him. In May, 1963, alone and ill, Blanco was captured by the army in a mountain hut. In a cell in Arequipa he awaits a trial which the government has postponed for fear of renewed publicity about the 'Blanco affair'. For all that, the work of unionizing the Cuzco area was not swept away by the repression. New unions were formed, this time with the full support of the revolutionary parties, unworked land was taken over, and the peasants again refused to pay rent for land they had occupied to owners who never dreamt of working it. But it is quite clear from the Blanco experience that every political and union struggle carried out in an area of agrarian feudalism, in the present conditions of brutal physical repression, brings with it a regression of the struggle at least temporarily. It discourages the peasants and, in their eyes, compromises the idea of liberation and social emancipation, for they are left to face the consequences of the struggle which the instigators do not face with and for them.

Much the same phenomenon was apparent in North-East Brazil where, from their creation by Francisco Juliao in 1954¹¹, the peasant leagues carried on an irreplaceable work of agitation. This led to important improvements, such as the stoppage of rent payments in certain places, and the extension of union laws to sugar-cane workers along the coast, who won an obligatory minimum salary (35 cruceros a month)—although this increase was also due to the increase in sugar prices on the international market after the blockade of Cuban exports. Juliao, in fact, was never much concerned about agricultural wages. But after the military coup, what happened in the North-East? The latifundists returned in force, league members were thrown off the land or out of the owner's sugar mill, and prohibited from working any land at all; the league organizers were assassinated and tortured. The minimum salary of sugar cane workers has not been reduced, but it appears that this is only a question of time. In other words, white terror. Without any means of defence, the peasants are again being oppressed. After the great wave of hope, the extent of their discouragement can be imagined.

At worst, it is an irresponsible and criminal act to lead a mass of peasants—dispersed, illiterate, fixed to their land, without the possibility of flight (whereas the political agitator from outside can flee)—into a social or political struggle which will certainly lead to repression. Only a *foco*, trained and prepared, can resist such repression. In the face

¹¹ Francisco Juliao's peasant leagues, although they were turned into profitable myths for export, never had the political importance which was attributed to them in Europe. Absence of organization and discipline, Juliao's inability to provide a coherent strategy, and over-estimation of the peasant's revolutionary role, all prevented the leagues from becoming a properly political movement. Towards the end, in 1961, Juliao attempted to form such a movement—which was a failure. Juliao seems to have understood his limitations better than his colleagues, from whom he could not always defend himself. 'The only title I wish for myself', he wrote at the end, 'is—if I deserve it—that of a simple social agitator.'

of troops, guerillas will certainly also have to retreat, but they can always keep account of the crimes committed on the peasant population, avenge these by lightning raids and liquidate officers judged responsible by peasant tribunals. Even the distant presence of guerillas gives hope to peasants and makes them feel themselves defended, 'covered'.

Illiterate peasants, without newspapers and radios, suffocated by centuries of 'social peace' under a feudal régime, assassinated by the latifundists' private police at the first sign of revolt, cannot be awakened or acquire political consciousness by a process of thought, reflection and reading. They will reach this stage only by daily contact with men who share their work, their living conditions and who solve their material problems. Thrown into a revolutionary war, they acquire practical experience of resistance to repression and also of a limited agrarian reform in a liberated zone: the conquest from the enemy of a small area of fertile land belonging to the latifundist is better propaganda for agrarian reform than a hundred illustrated pamphlets on Ukrainian *sovkoses*. The objective conditions of life of the peasant masses in the majority of Latin American countries allows only one type of propaganda and political formation: propaganda by facts, by the practical experience of the peasants themselves.

This is even truer of the Indian communities, shut in on themselves since colonization, and periodically persecuted by the whites. From the south of Colombia to the north of the Argentine, the Indian peasants bear the chief brunt of feudal exploitation. The majority of the population in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia is Indian; in general it does not speak Spanish but Aymara or Quechua. What contact can there be between the political elite of Lima or Guayaquil, where the political cadres of the country are grouped, and the communities of the high plateau, totally dominated by a feudal priest (who in certain regions of Ecuador still enjoys the *droit de seigneur* on the first night of an Indian woman's marriage)? Any person who comes to cause trouble in the community is killed by the rural police (or sometimes by fanatic Indians themselves) with the blessing of the priest who is also the political boss. Access to the Indian communities must be won from the repressive forces which traditionally control them: 'peasant leaders' representing the government party and central power; detachments of police and army; ecclesiastical authorities; bailiffs or latifundists themselves. The whole forms a solid, thick crust which, moreover, is reinforced by the difference of language.

It is worth noting that the Bolivian miners were successful in penetrating the Indian populations which surround the mines of Potosi, and the government was no longer able to trick them for a loaf of bread or a bottle of 'chicha'. They were armed, elected their own village leaders and taught themselves with the aid of broadcasts in Quechua from the miners' radio stations. The Miners' Federation had 13 such stations, administered by a local union commission, in each of the largest mines. This exceptional possibility of work on a mass scale within the Indian peasantry was only possible because the balance of power favoured the miners. Nonetheless, they had to pay with their lives, in constant

armed struggle against the government mercenaries for the right to have the radio stations which were heard all over Bolivia. On April 28th, 1964, five miners were killed defending the radio station of Huanuni, near Oruro, against a massive attack led by government forces. The attack was repulsed only after a night counter-offensive with dynamite and rifles by all the fit men of Huanuni.

6. The necessary subordination of armed struggle to central political leadership must not be the cause of a division between the political and military movement.

This abstract conclusion can be drawn from the many experiences of divisions which have arisen between internal resistance and a political leadership in exile, or in that place of asylum and exile which the political capital of a country can be. The concrete conditions of the struggle have often seemed to make a division of labour between leaders and executants necessary. The leader or *caudillo* sends a group of followers devoted to his cause into the mountains and directs them from a distance—in this way he can disavow them in case of failure and so save his legality. This is a traditional attitude in Latin America—with which Fidelism has completely broken. Betancourt, head of *Accion Democratica*, remained in exile in Puerto Rico while the leaders of the internal resistance, Luis Pineda and Alberto Carnevali, were assassinated by Perez Jimenez after the failure of the planned insurrection in 1951. By contrast, all Fidelist leaders, following Castro's example, have personally led guerilla operations.

The Venezuelan experience is revealing, as long as its particular characteristics are taken into account. The FALN was the result of the fusion into a single Front of parties that were already constituted: the Communist Party and the MTR (Revolutionary Left Movement) as well as independents or people who came from other organizations, including the military from the Carupano and Puerto Caballo risings. This, combined with the dispersal of the struggle in different points of the country, explains why there could not be a national leader, a 'Venezuelan Castro'. The leaders of the Venezuelan Communist Party, Gustavo Machado, Jesus Farias, and Pompeyo Marquez, are exceptional in that they enjoy a popular prestige which is not accorded to other communist leaders in neighbouring countries. Not only have they had long experience, but they are also so closely in touch with national reality that they have sometimes been suspected of 'nationalism'. During Perez Jimenez's 10 years of police dictatorship, Pompeyo Marquez continued without break as party secretary inside the country where he personally organized resistance. The political leadership, in this case, bears little resemblance to that in other countries.

Taking this into account, the dialectic of politico-military relations in the Venezuelan revolution is very instructive. This dialectic can be broken down into the following moments:

I At the start, a separation of the burgeoning movement for armed struggle and the political leadership. 1960-61: separation of the Communist Party and the self-defence groups. 1962-63: an organic separa-

tion of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the organization of the political leadership, and the armed forces for national liberation, the 'military arm of the FLN.'

The first separation in 1960, when a spontaneous decision was made to resist the growing repression, did not come from the party leaders' incompetence or political reluctance, even if it is true that the Communist Party did strongly combat the armed groups which had formed anarchistically around it. The essential reason must be looked for in three factors:

a *A political decision* to pursue parliamentary and legal action to the end, to safeguard party press and the public premises, to maintain trade union action on class lines until the last moment in spite of the repression. That is, until, in October 1963, the Betancourt government destroyed the last democratic liberties, suspended parliamentary immunity for Communist and MIR deputies and senators, and outlawed both parties completely. The deputies were taken straight from Congress to prison.

b *The necessity of making the Communist party's vertical structure as flexible as possible.* Its former structure was necessary in peacetime, but fatal in an underground struggle. Moreover, the urgent situation created by the acceleration of events, the necessity for any clandestine operation to keep contacts to the minimum, the fragmentation of political leadership due to the repression, made the former structure impossible. 'If we had to consult the Central Committee each time to find out if we should blow up a bridge when troops are on the move, we would as likely as not blow up the bridge a week after the troops had passed,' the leader of a detachment explained.

c *The elementary imperative of security.* Because a rural guerilla movement requires a high degree of revolutionary maturity before it can become effective, self-defence has first to be organized in the large towns. It is there that repression strikes first: mass demonstrations are dispersed by shooting, party offices sacked, militants arrested and liquidated, etc. The old Communist militants, especially in Caracas where the party had won second place in the 1958 elections, had no reason to hide themselves in the general democratic exultation which followed Perez Jimenez's overthrow; the police had dossiers on the majority and they were easily watched. A state apparatus controlled by an unchanged ruling class does not allow itself to be swept up in a transitory euphoria, and is always preparing for war. From this sprang the need to find legal jobs for these militants and to create a parallel organization of self-defence, made up of people unknown or politically unsuspect. The organization was thus less immediately vulnerable to repression.

II An urban military apparatus was thus created which tried, as far as it could, to give blow for blow and to organize itself little by little in actual practice. Self-defence and, later, counter-offensives, intensified the repression. The latter increasingly encroached on the revolutionary parties' political apparatus which became more exposed, and better known to the police, because of its semi-legal activities. Party organiza-

tion thus became weaker, its offices were closed, its printing presses destroyed, its newspapers censored, and vacillating members tended to abandon the struggle.

During this period (1962) a branch of the urban organization, with a long-term strategic vision, organized and started the *focos* of the rural guerilla movement. It seems that the idea was to develop several *focos* at once, with the aim of dividing the enemy forces, because in 1962 guerilla centres sprang up in six different states (Merida, Zulia, Miranda, Lara, Trujillo, Falcon). The obverse of this tactic was immediately apparent: it was impossible to supply the arms and other equipment necessary to the guerillas in such widely separated zones; moreover the centres frequently had no political or military link between them. Many of these attempts, in which students participated almost exclusively, ended tragically through lack of experience, lack of serious military preparation, ignorance of the terrain, and failure to keep military secrets. Later, learning the lessons of these experiences in a responsible way, groups of workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals who knew the terrain took to the mountains. In the spring of 1962 the fronts of the Charal and 'Leonardo Chirinos' in Falcon were set up under the leadership of Juan Vicente Cabezas, an engineer, and Douglas Bravo, a former law student and factory worker.

III Because of the difficult material and moral conditions in which the urban guerilla movement had to operate, it began to tire and commit tactical mistakes, such as the attack on the Encanto train in October 1963. The government profited by such errors to carry out maximum repressive measures, aided in this by us money and services which were pouring into Caracas. The urban apparatus was disoriented by the succession of arrests of its political leaders, who had remained in the capital to ensure a permanent political leadership despite their increasingly precarious situation. These culminated in imprisonment of Domingo Alberto Rangel, secretary of the MIR, and shortly afterwards of Pompeyo Marquez, secretary of the Communist Party. It then became evident that the urban guerilla movement was unable to break through the repressive apparatus of the Police, National Guard, and Army against which it had been engaged in an almost frontal war during the summer and autumn of 1963, and that it was wasting human lives for results quite disproportionate to the effort. It could not thus achieve the strategic importance which certain 'insurrectionalist' sections (especially among the MIR youth) had hoped to give it.

During this time, and alongside the main front of urban struggle, the rural *focos* were silently growing stronger. Leaders and fighters rapidly gained political and military experience. Then came the first surprise. The periodic dismantling of the contact organizations between Caracas and the guerilla front, such as the arrest of couriers, the prevention of radio contact and of the supply of arms, did not at all cause the collapse of the *focos* whose capability, support and recruitment were reinforced on the spot among the peasants. This showed that the bridges between the FLN and the rural detachments of the FALN could be cut without the latter ceasing to grow and become self-sufficient. The guerilla leaders who, according to the press, had been killed a hundred

times over, remained uncaptured and kept reappearing—which tended to turn them into figures of popular myth which in turn served to mobilize the towns. Finally, the rural guerilla movement appeared as the sole permanent and solid apparatus which was continually growing and out of range of repressive action.

IV Both those political prisoners who by their courage and ingenuity managed to escape from prison and the militants and leaders in Caracas and the other towns who were caught in a clandestine existence that every day was becoming more dangerous, had only one way out: to find their way to the zones which had been stabilized or liberated by the guerillas. The fusion of political leadership and military action was now made possible on the basis of the *focos*. A new guerilla zone sprang up to the east of Caracas, in the state of Miranda, in July 1964. A heavy military offensive, accompanied by raids from B.25s, was launched against all the guerilla zones, after which the government felt able, once again, to announce the liquidation of 'bands of armed civilians'. But, in fact, the fronts not only held out but became stronger and more numerous.

Meanwhile, the urban guerilla needed to play only a secondary, tactical role with hold-ups and harassing actions. In its place, political action, campaigning for the freeing of prisoners and the creation of new organizations on the left, can try to develop.

7. The political framework of the armed action can only be created in the countryside. An urban guerilla movement cannot be a permanent form.

Here again, the Venezuelan experience is indicative. Guevara's irrefutable arguments on this subject are well known: a guerilla centre must attack the weakest links and must therefore keep away from urban zones—the strongest links—where the State's administrative and repressive forces are concentrated. Social contradictions are also not as explosive in the cities because even the least favoured strata are integrated into modern society. For all that, the rural exodus does create explosive social contradictions in the city, contradictions which increase yearly and are less capable of being solved by the ruling class. In Caracas, the *ranchos* are overflowing with unemployed migrants from the country; in Lima, 600,000 inhabitants live in the *barriadas*, earth huts built on the banks of the Rimac; in Buenos Aires there are the *villas miseria*. The *ranchos* of Caracas house a third of the city's population—350,000 people piled into a belt of inter-connecting narrow streets, squares, alleyways on hills around the city; ordinarily the police, let alone the bourgeois, hesitate even to venture into this maze. Each year 70,000 Venezuelans migrate to Caracas and a good half on these come to live in the *ranchos*. It is this socio-economic fact which explains why, for the first time in Latin America, an extraordinary form of guerilla warfare could develop in Venezuela: the urban guerilla movement. The *rancho* was its base of operations and its source of recruitment. Doubtless, too much was made abroad of the spectacular raids by tactical combat units—the capture of enemy soldiers, the seizure of money, arms and documents, and the sabotage of imperialist installations.

Precisely because such operations required very few participants, using their arms as little as possible, these actions were usually staged in daylight. The composition of these commandos was primarily student and petit-bourgeois (the Cuban July 26th movement had the same social make-up, and it would be ridiculous to attach the implicit European value judgement to the term 'petit-bourgeois'). But there was another aspect of the urban guerilla which was more important in terms of the number of people involved in the war in the *ranchos*. The recruitment was different: workers, unemployed, young men without jobs, sons of large and poor families—all these make up the politico-military organization of the guerilla in each neighbourhood. Relations with the underworld were often tense, but this did not lead to warfare, and there are often local understandings, non-aggression pacts and even collaboration and regeneration of criminals such as happened in the Algiers Casbah during the war of independence. In the spring and summer of 1963, during the fiercest phase of the urban struggle, not a day went by without simultaneous armed engagements in different *ranchos*. At nightfall the shooting began, to die away only with the dawn. The operations included harassing the forces of repression, ambushes, full-scale battles against the army, and even complete occupation of a neighbourhood which became for a few hours a liberated territory until the concentration of armed groups in a small area became untenable and they evaporated. The aim was to pin down the military in Caracas, to wear them out, to divide them in order to hasten demoralization and desertion—of which there were numerous cases in the police. Another aim was often to create diversions for other operations, such as individual or collective escapes from detention centres. But, a few months later, silence returned to the *ranchos* and this form of urban guerilla movement had disappeared. It should not be thought that the armed groups in the *ranchos* had all been liquidated and militarily conquered; if needed, this type of action could have continued a long time. It was rather a decision of the FALN which put an end to these operations. Why?

Operating in a fixed and naturally limited area, the urban guerilla movement is easily pinned down. In effect, it has neither the choice of time nor of place. The guerilla is forced to operate at night (the *ranchos* have very weak street lighting), to ensure the safety of the combatants by allowing them to escape identification—although this can be met by switching the groups of neighbouring areas in order to avoid the threat of informers; and to ensure the safety of the inhabitants. Streets deliberately deserted cause less innocent victims, although there are always some, since bullets pierce the cardboard or wood walls of the houses. Darkness allows the popular forces to make the most of their advantages such as knowledge of the terrain, mobility, and the enemy's difficulty in using heavy weapons. On the other hand, daylight allows houses to be searched, and cordons to be thrown around whole areas and massive reprisals to be staged. As far as choice of terrain is concerned, it is almost impossible for armed groups to move in the city, where the large avenues are closely controlled, in order to take a garrison or military detachment by surprise. Such an operation entails too many risks, because the lines of retreat are too easily cut off. The guerilla has therefore to make the forces of repression fight in the hills outside their natural terrain. After a certain time the latter understand

the trap and refuse to move, preferring to abandon the *ranchos* to the control of the guerillas by night rather than lose a dozen men for each raid. All sorts of stratagems may be used to try to attract detachments of police and army into the *ranchos*, among them false alarms: a large bomb explodes right at the top of the *rancho* where there had been apparent calm; when the column of soldiers arrives to investigate they are caught in an ambush. But the essential factor is that the guerilla is pinned down in the *ranchos*, and the government's tactic is obvious: to station the army and police in such large numbers in the *ranchos* that it is not worthwhile attacking them. It is true that in the first stage of the struggle all police posts had to be evacuated from the working-class quarters—the enormous apartment blocks of Urdaneta, Simon Rodriguez and January 23rd—as well as the *ranchos*. But the army and national guard soon established nests of heavy machine guns at key-points on roofs, crossroads and on high ground, and this practically put an end to urban fighting. The life of a militant is too precious to waste in useless sacrifice, and happily the revolutionaries have no false sense of honour: the Venezuelans did not attack.

On the military level, an urban guerilla movement cannot be transformed into a flexible operation and even less into a war of fixed positions. It remains limited to harassment and sabotage in which it has to spend forces disproportionate to the objectives achieved. 'Strike and flee', the rural guerilla's motto, is impossible for the urban armed group which has no fixed base and thus no sure position to which to withdraw. It is always exposed to the threat of annihilation by encirclement, informing or imprudence. Just as important, the absence of a fixed base also means the lack of a solid social and economic base: unless power is won at one blow by a general rising, there are no partial reforms that can be carried out in liberated territory. What can a 'social reforming' guerilla achieve in a city? What benefits can be brought which can convert an ever growing mass of people? The small groups in which an urban guerilla must be organized—usually four to six people—can never therefore succeed in becoming a *permanent* core which is localized, *concentrated, disciplined*, with fire-power at its command and trained in conventional war and the use of heavy arms. In short, an urban guerilla capable of harassing actions can never become a guerilla army, and even less a regular popular army, capable of finally confronting the repressive army—the ultimate aim of every *foco*.

The consequent atomization of urban combattants left to themselves had great importance in Venezuela. It carried with it the risk of serious depoliticization of the UTC and in consequence the outbreak of anarchic and disorderly actions contrary to the general policy of the FLN. In theory, the plans for any important action were supposed to be worked out by the UTC or the detachment which was to carry it out, to be transmitted to the political leadership and to be returned with approval or non-approval. But in reality things did not always work this way. Contacts might fail, a leader be suddenly arrested, or a real case for urgency arise. In addition the main source of recruitment was from certain Venezuelan youth, which in a semi-colonial country does not have the same cultural formation as in a developed country where

primary education is obligatory; nor does it have the same sense of prudence. Half the population of Venezuela is under 21. Political formation cannot be acquired overnight and without trial and error, and it was for this reason that certain mistakes were made by some UTC—mistakes which were always condemned and corrected by the national leadership. A young rural combattant becomes politically formed much quicker than his urban counterpart. For the latter everything can be reduced to a succession of 'heroic' operations isolated from their context, before and after which he has more or less to return to the normal atmosphere of urban life, with all the 'facilities' to which this life has accustomed him. The rural guerilla fighter on the other hand is plunged into a quite different atmosphere in which he has permanent and direct contact with the external world, with the peasant and with nature, and in which military operations are only a detail or a moment. Put another way, urban action is discontinuous; for the urban fighter each operation is sufficient to itself. If he is a permanent member of the organization, and at the same time unemployed, his safety demands that, after each action, he returns as far as possible to normal life (goes to the cinema, to the cafe, walks in the streets) until the next action. If he has a regular job he will have to return the following morning to his factory or office life, reintegrating himself by day into the capitalist world against which he has fought by night.

It is the distinguishing characteristic of a rural guerilla movement to have constantly to create and to recreate its conditions of existence. In the first and longest stage of the struggle, its essential activity is not the military conflict—which, on the contrary, it should avoid—but sowing, hunting, picking, harvesting, in short *surviving* . . . which in the American jungle is an exhausting and heroic task in itself. The *foco*, at the beginning, can only survive to the extent to which it obtains the support of the peasantry: the centre is welded to the milieu, congenitally. For the Columbian *bandoleros* of Tolima, the problem does not arise: as they do not reproduce their material conditions of existence, the support of the population is irrelevant and pillage, theft and forced taxes are sufficient. The rural centre however is in direct and unmediated contact both with the inhabitants of the zone of operations and with the material conditions of existence: by clearing a corner of the forest so as to be able to grow crops, by the collective working of the soil, by hunting, etc. These material conditions force the guerilla to *proletarianize itself* morally and to proletarianize its ideology. Whether its members are peasants or petit-bourgeois, the *foco* can only become an army of proletarians. It is in this way that guerilla warfare always produces a profound transformation of men and of their ideology (the latter evidently not aware of itself as such). It explains why, for example, there was in Cuba such a great political disparity between the leaders of the rebel army on the one hand and the leaders of the urban organizations—like Fauré Chaumon for the Directorate of 'March 13th' or even the leaders of the Popular Socialist Party—on the other hand, who could not imagine the revolution moving so rapidly towards socialism. And, at the beginning however, the social and political experience of the urban leaders of the 'March 13th' and of the 'July 26th movement' was identical: 'petit-bourgeois revolutionary intellectuals'. Similarly in Venezuela, anyone who passes from the urban struggle to the rural

struggle feels a change of human atmosphere, of quality of organization and even of political analysis: in the mountain, short-term analysis does not count. All the guerilla-fighters know *that the war will be long and must be long*, given the present relations of forces, because 'we are not trying to seize power, by a suicidal attack, only to lose it after 24 hours. We will not be precipitate, but neither will we compromise on our objectives'.

The rapid proletarianization of the rural centre thus gives to the guerillas both confidence and modesty. Paradoxically, it is almost impossible that a *foco*, the embryo of a popular army, should develop a militarist tendency; the tendency to believe that everything can be reduced to *echar balas*, to 'firing off', and that only military success is important. Similarly, romanticism too finds a hostile milieu. The rural fighter is educated and educates himself day and night by his contact with the external world. The fighter of the urban guerilla, by contrast, tends to live in an *abstract milieu*, since he must abstract himself from his natural milieu (the town, regular work, friends, women, etc) for his own security and that of the organization.

For the rural guerilla, the immediate external world—the field of maize, the banana plantation belonging to a neighbouring family of peasants the pool of water, the hamlet two hours march away—is a source of life or rather the only possible means of survival. But for the urban guerilla the external world is always to be fought as the fundamental danger, as the door always ajar through which may burst arrest or death. It is vital to distrust people (and areas, and flats, and telephones, and the crowd on the pavement which may conceal a policeman) outside of the organization, for it is they who generate the risk of infiltration, of denunciation of imprudence, of moral slackening, of indiscretions. The necessary solitude, fleeting human relations, oppressive silence, confinement, all this is symbolized by the night, the optimum moment for urban action. The distinction of night and day is to a large extent foreign to his rural counterpart, who lives 24 hours out of 24, neither in the day nor in the night but in the half-light of the enervating, humid, protecting sunless forest where the column remains invisible night and day both to planes in the sky and from the neighbouring path. The rural guerilla-fighter will never use, for example, the paths and roads already in existence in the mountains: he cuts through the jungle, making his own way and using invisible landmarks. An enemy column, even a patrol, will be obliged to follow the path, too ignorant of the terrain and too heavily equipped to be able to thrust into the unknown, thus exposing itself to ambush and surveillance of its movements. Defensive prudence (bootmarks on the ground permit anyone to date and to evaluate a troop movement since the peasants go barefoot or in sandals) and offensive velocity (rapidity of attack and of withdrawal) are both on the side of the rural guerilla. But, however labyrinthine the streets of a *ranchito* are, it is still necessary to pass through them, to take a particular crossroad or cross a particular square, where it is not difficult for a military patrol, firmly installed and on the alert, to be waiting. The same situation is transformed. An encirclement in the jungle, in the mountains, is never unbreakable because it is never complete: the Venezuelan jungle of Falcon has its crevasses, its rocks, its giant trees

and its caves. Whereas to close off a *ranchito*, very often all that is necessary for the Army is to cordon three exits.

In short, the material conditions of action of an urban guerilla (isolation of militants meeting 24 hours before an operation of whose nature they may be unaware until the last moment; use of pseudonyms even inside the UTC; impossibility of developing relations of friendship; obligatory reciprocal ignorance; anonymity even of the leader who gives the orders etc) contribute to form a certain kind of conduct and morale which can lead to voluntarism and subjectivism. The technical and material conditions of an urban guerilla cannot be separated from the political content of its action but have direct repercussions on it.

The extreme dispersion of the armed groups renders co-ordination and control of actions difficult. The tactical initiative belongs to the militants. Because they are clandestine, they are only accountable to their leaders, and not directly, as in a rural *foco*, to the peasants and to their own families. But if urban forms of action are the most clandestine, it is also in the town that the content of each action has the most external repercussion and runs the greatest risks of distortion by the all-powerful enemy propaganda, since the radio and press will strive to mislead public opinion. The Venezuelan commandos had orders not to use their arms except in extreme cases of legitimate defence. But by their numbers and their methods, the forces of repression in the towns impose much greater risks of physical elimination on the guerillas than in the mountains. To take the simplest case: to disarm a policeman in the street in order to capture his revolver or his rifle has unpredictable effects if the policeman resists; should the revolutionary militant let himself be killed or use his weapon? This dilemma was an everyday one, for the FALN never had other arms than those captured from the enemy, and these arms had to be captured in the towns, where they were most numerous and easy to capture—the task of the urban militants. But each action of self-defence of this type was called assassination by the radio and press, and the underground press could never succeed in counteracting this propaganda. For in the towns the enemy is at home and makes the law—which he cannot do in the mountains with peasants who know the realities of the local situation. Of course, when a group of sharpshooters seized a meat-lorry belonging to Sear's Supermarket (Rockefeller chain)—a typical action—and distributed the contents in a starving *ranchito*, the television, press and radio never made any mention of the fact.

These remarks in no way describe a general statistical condition of urban guerilla warfare; they describe a tendency inherent in its immediate situation, which explains why the urban guerilla cannot move to a higher and more permanent level of action. But in Venezuela there has been a genuine urban *guerilla*, that is to say, military operations which correspond to an objective state of war created by imperialism and the semi-colonial State, and which are linked to an organization and a political programme expressing popular aspirations. There has never been any individual attack on the life of a political enemy, even of Betancourt, though such an attack would not have posed any insurmountable problems. The principal target has been the army and the

imperialist economic potential. If by terrorism is meant individual action unrelated to the development and objectives of a revolutionary movement, indifferent to the historical and subjective aspirations of the masses, then nothing was less terrorist than the urban action of the FALN and nothing was more terrorist than the governmental repression.

8. The present controversy over the revolutionary programme—bourgeois-democratic revolution or socialist revolution—poses a false problem and in fact inhibits engagement in the concrete struggle of a united anti-imperialist front.

One of the major controversies dividing revolutionary organizations in Latin America concerns the nature of the revolution. To the sectarian thesis—influenced by Trotskyism—of the immediate socialist revolution without preliminary stages is counterposed the traditional thesis of certain communist parties, of the anti-feudal agrarian revolution carried out with the national bourgeoisie (and in reality under their direction). Between these two poles, many militants think that the revolution is an indefinite process, without 'separable phases', which if it cannot start from socialist demands, inevitably leads to them: this seemed to be the lesson of the Cuban Revolution. But the Cuban experience also suggests that *the nub of the problem lies not in the initial programme of the revolution but in its ability to resolve in practice the problem of State power before the bourgeois-democratic stage, and not after*. Cuba could only become a socialist State because at the moment of realizing its democratic national reforms, political power was already in the hands of the people. Even a cursory analysis of Latin-American capitalism reveals that it is organically bound to feudal relations in the countryside. To take countries which have a national capitalist sector: in Colombia, industrial profits tend to be reinvested in land, and the industrial families are also the great agrarian families; in Brazil, the sugar industry of the North-East and the coffee-trade of Sao Paulo are linked to agrarian latifundism. This is why, of course, no national bourgeoisie has been able to put through a real agrarian reform—even though this should be in its interests, since it would greatly expand the internal market. In short, it seems evident that *in South America the bourgeois-democratic stage presupposes the destruction of the bourgeois State apparatus*: if this is not done the habitual succession of military putsches is destined to repeat itself indefinitely, just as the revolutionary surge of the masses will repeat itself, without any firm base, in a constitutional agitation for democratic reforms (agrarian reform, vote for the illiterates, diplomatic and commercial relations with all countries, trade union laws, etc). This is what happened in Brazil after Kubitschek, in Bolivia after 1952, in the Dominican Republic with Bosch. In effect, the present polemics over the nature of the revolution serve only to divide the revolutionary movement and to conceal the problem which conditions all others, the conquest of power and the elimination of the Army—that sword of Damocles which will always attempt to break any movement of the masses.

If it is much more difficult, *after Cuba*, to integrate any sizeable fraction of the national bourgeoisie in an anti-imperialist front, this latter can and must still be the prime objective. But such a front cannot be constituted

except in the practice of a revolutionary struggle, and, far from contradicting the existence of a *foco* armed and resolved to advance, it requires an active *avant-garde* which can in no circumstances wait for the front to be fully constituted between the various leaders before launching its action. This is perhaps the greatest paradox of Fidelism: it is by nature both radical (aimed at the capture of power) and anti-sectarian (no party and no man can pretend to monopolize the Revolution). Of course, this ceases to be a paradox once revolutionary practice is taken as the criterion and referent of 'truth'. There is, in fact, a long-established connection in Latin America between the reformism of certain Communist Parties and their isolation: constantly calling for the creation of a national front, they are incapable of undertaking a real alliance since they lack a political line and a strong organization of their own. A speech by Castro to Latin-American visitors in 1961 suggested that two ideas determine his conception of the Liberation Front: that of the 'beginning'—of a realistic initiative modifying the level of political struggle and launching military struggle (in Cuba, the Moncada attack); and that of the 'selective practice' of alliances and of compromises necessary as the struggle develops. In other words, the revolution can give itself from the beginning a minimum anti-imperialist programme, based on concrete demands related to peasant, worker or petit-bourgeois conditions, analogous to the Moncada programme which was the banner of July 26th. When all the possibilities of legal struggle have been exhausted, the revolutionary war should be inaugurated on the largest possible base 'where the sincere Catholic must occupy the same place as the old Marxist militant'. The very practice of the struggle, which can never be determined in advance but only in action (consequently, no endless theoretical discussions on the modalities of the future agrarian reform, discussions which serve only to divide and to delay the arrival of the concrete conditions for the application of any agrarian reform, etc) can be relied on to transform the system of social and political alliances, rupturing some and creating others. In other words, the concrete questions posed to revolutionaries by practical necessity will produce new responses on their part: each phase of the struggle has its own system of questions and answers, born of the way in which the questions of the preceding phase have been resolved, and it is useless to try to overtake the practice of a united front by dividing it on questions which perhaps will not be relevant when the time comes. No gesture, no heightening of the struggle for power or the struggle after the seizure of power (that is to say, no heightening of the objectives of government action)—none of these can be effective if they do not fulfil a historical requirement, a lack consciously felt by the masses. It is self-evident that this entire conception would become opportunist if it did not have as its foundation the existence of a united vanguard, honest, intransigent, unsectarian, without any preconceived model, ready to take the most unconventional paths to arrive at its ends, selected and steered by the struggle: a vanguard which only the practice of the *foco* guarantees.

Nationalism and Socialism

This confidence placed in the radical value of the practice of the

joco which creates the leaders and the cadres of the future Party and its own theoretical field, can be seen as the unconscious homage of Fidelism to its own history, transcended but never denied; Castro's self-criticism perhaps serves only to ratify once again the creative and unfinished character of every revolutionary practice. Historically, Fidelism is an empirical and consequent revolutionary action which encountered Marxism on its way as its own truth. The inverse is also true: for an honest Fidelista (a revolutionary who was with Castro in the Sierra Maestra, or fought in the urban underground) Marxism is a theory of history justified and verified by his own experience. This encounter is not new. Thirty-five years ago, in 1930, another great American revolutionary hero, Luis Carlos Prestes, carried to the pinnacle of fame by the long march of the Prestes Column (30,000 km covered in three years in the Brazilian interior, by a thousand men who overcame all the armies of repression sent against them), also met scientific socialism as his truth. Prestes, with something like the same impact as that of Castro, lent his legend as the 'Knight of Hope' to Marxism—but he in the way he did so destroyed all dialectical value in the legend. His 1930 Manifesto, issued to the Brazilian people from his exile in Buenos Aires, denied his past, his friends, his myth and his nationalism, and proposed the immediate installation of workers' soviets in Sao Paulo. Prestes' adoption of Marxism, at a time when socialism had not yet won its self-confidence in the world, also marked the divorce of Prestes and of the Brazilian Communist Party from Brazilian reality (a divorce which has perhaps still not been surmounted, despite the Communist Party's great postwar electoral victories). At the same moment, Prestes left for Moscow and was absorbed into the administrative machinery of the International. Such a contact with Marxism is an electrocution, not a transcendence. The great strength of the Cuban Revolution is the absence of any divorce between that which it is, socialism, and that which it was, nationalism. The same is true of Fidelism: its contact with its historic American roots ensures its place within Marxism and beside Leninism. Fidel Castro has never denied his origins, nor his past actions; he has reinterpreted his past career as a non-Marxist revolutionary by prolonging and transforming it from within. That July 26th remains the festival of the Cuban Revolution suggests the distinguishing mark of Fidelism. On that day, visitors who disembark at Havana to celebrate the victory of socialism are, in fact, commemorating an 'adventurist' surprise attack, the assault on Moncada by a handful of activists, which made all the good Marxists in the Continent shudder with indignation. Each year the Cuban Revolution pays homage, as if to its absolute beginning, as if to the summit of its socialist genealogy, to that theoretical and historical scandal—the assault on Moncada.

It is this which makes the history of the Cuban Revolution and its continuous development so instructive. Refusing to let itself be divided into two distinct epochs of 'national-democracy' and 'socialism', the Cuban Revolution helps in return to clarify and encourage throughout Latin America 'bourgeois-democratic' nationalist demands, and forms of action which are 'impure' from a sectarian point of view. Fidelism, far from condemning these as 'provocations' or scorning them as 'petit-bourgeois', gives them all its support; for if their

protagonists are sincere and determined they will end by confronting American imperialism, and by developing into socialism. The lesson of Fidelism is that a genuine nationalism in Latin America implies the final overthrow of the semi-colonial State, the destruction of its Army, and the installation of socialism.

There is a further reason why Fidelism lays a greater stress on revolutionary practice, when it is honest and sincere, than on ideological labels: this is the belief that, in the special conditions of South America, the dynamism of nationalist struggles brings them to a conscious adoption of Marxism. Unlike the anti-colonialist wars of Asia and Africa, the American national liberation struggles have been preceded by a certain experience of political independence. The struggle against imperialism thus does not take the form of a front against foreign forces of occupation, but proceeds by means of a revolutionary civil war: the social base is therefore narrower, and the ideology consequently better defined and less mixed with bourgeois influence—at least, that is the historical tendency. While in Africa and in Asia, the class struggle and national struggle may be blurred by the tactical implications of the national front, or delayed until after liberation, in South America class struggle and national struggle must, in the final analysis, go together. The path of independence passes by way of the military and political destruction of the dominant class, organically linked to the United States by the co-management of its interests. Therefore, it is clearly impossible to classify the American wars of national liberation under the same rubric as those of Asia and Africa. The ancestral possession of political power by an indigenous group means that nationalist demands must be much more advanced. The political struggle between the various groups of the dominant class (the exporting agrarian group, the protectionist industrial group, etc) seems to be the principal battleground, masking or distorting the fundamental contradiction between the Nation and Imperialism, to the great advantage of the USA and of the dominant class. The masses will therefore enter the political arena much less readily, since they do not seem to be directly involved. The US, with a century-old cunning, uses the national government as a screen which attracts the bulk of popular discontent, and receives the most violent attacks. One must, therefore, always specify at what level opposition is situated: anti-governmental or anti-imperialist. To take the example of a popular opposition with a big majority, in Bolivia: only the miners, the teachers, and the greater part of the students, have irreducibly anti-imperialist positions. The advanced sectors of the Indian peasantry, the discontented petit-bourgeoisie, the displaced latifundists, and most of the factory-workers of La Paz, merely opposed the MNR and Paz Estenssoro. The same is true in Brazil: the military in power do not have the support of 5 per cent of the population, abandoned as they are by the bulk of the middle classes, but of the remaining 95 per cent how many want anything more than a change of government?

Flag, army, school, national language, street names—everything suggests that the nation exists, and the vague feeling of frustration or of humiliation, generated by the fact that this 'nation' really belongs only to an infinitesimal minority, finds no immediate target: there is no

foreign occupation. It is difficult to locate the oppression: it is more 'natural'. The birth of the armed struggle will therefore be less 'natural', less spontaneous than in Asia or in Africa. It will require a more advanced level of class consciousness. The armed struggle, or *foco*, will thus tend to go from the town to the country, the peasants being even more mesmerized by the natural social order. In the countryside these characteristics of semi-colonial countries are reinforced by the natural hypnosis of the feudal world. The class enemy becomes a part of nature, exists like the stones of the field, since it has all the appearances of fixity—while political discontent is displaced by religious protest on to nature. It is nature which attracts the attention and the wrath of the peasant, not the latifundist. The *meioro* of Pernambuco in Brazil invariably gives one half of the harvest to the latifundist, whether it rains or whether it blows, while drought in the *sertao* comes in unpredictable waves and changes from year to year. The sky, the clouds, God, are thus held responsible for famine or for the death of a wife or child—not the latifundist. The religious fanaticism of the Brazilian North-East (which produced the Great War of Canudos at the end of the last century), of the Colombian countryside, of certain Indian communities of Ecuador and elsewhere, is notorious. In short, the subjective factor—moral and political consciousness and initiative, expressed in social terms by the capital role of the students—will have a very special importance in South America, notably as a result of the semi-colonial, and not directly colonial, structures of economic exploitation. For the same reasons, nationalism there tends to become radicalized, to define itself more quickly and with less ambiguity, than in a colonial country.

The revolutionary nationalism, or Fidelism, of the new organizations or fronts of action created in Latin America since Cuba cannot constitute a special ideology, nor pretend to do so. It is this that distinguishes Fidelism from the mystifying nationalisms which preceded it. The exposure of the class realities which underlie nationalist aspirations and which are revealed during the process of the liberation war puts an end to 'nationalism' as the sole object of speeches and as a political myth. What in fact is the relationship of Fidelism with the ideological nationalisms? One can start by taking the case of bourgeois nationalism, which demands industrial development and the construction of the national State by means of heavy industry and commercial protectionism—the classical programme of 'nationalist' bourgeois spokesmen like Frigerio in Argentina, Jaraguiba in Brazil, Zavaleta in Bolivia. What is its relationship to Fidelism? The same as that between capitalism and socialism, even though Cuba is admired by these ideologues as the only country which has succeeded in liquidating feudalism—which they too dream of being able to attack. Revolutionary nationalism also distinguishes itself from the 'nationalist and democratic government' demanded by most of the Communist Party programmes: for it is organically linked to a socialist programme and it aims at the transformation of State power by means of its conquest and the destruction of its bourgeois form. Fidelist nationalism, unlike that normally put forward by the Communist Parties, is not defensive but radical. It thus considers as illusory and ineffectual the partial demands, the transactions or the conciliations of an eventual 'national government' which works

for a revolution which would advance in such small steps that 'nobody will see it coming'. Fidelist methods of action will therefore be different they will not be confined to electoral propaganda, the posting of notices, and summit meetings with the existing political parties, but will also prepare the conditions for a direct armed offensive of the masses. What is the relationship of Communist to Fidelist strategy? The same, more or less, as between the Second and the Third Internationals, *mutatis mutandis*. Fidelism, initially a minority tendency, is now winning over the most active sections of these Communist Parties—above all the youth, the most valuable element for the future.

There is a far closer relationship between Fidelism and the two most historically important forms of South American nationalism, which can today be called Bonapartist nationalism: Peronism in Argentina and the populism of Vargas in Brazil. These two ideologies have by now definitely entered into decline, leaving a vacuum which Fidelism is little by little, occupying. Here too Fidelism is mounting from the youth organizations upwards. These two movements became fully majoritarian in their countries, trying—for a moment successfully—to ally the proletariat and the bourgeoisie under the leadership of the latter. The anti-Yankeeism (tinged with fascist sympathies) of Vargas and of Peron did not prevent them from trying to conciliate the United States and from finally capitulating to it. This is an attitude symmetrical but contrary, to that of Fidelism, which also attempts to unite the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie but this time under the direction of the former, and which will therefore not be in a position to come to an 'understanding' with us imperialism. Bonapartist nationalism, on the other hand, pretends to realize structural reforms from above, with an unchanged State power, without involving a conscious movement of the masses. Nevertheless, in its time, just after the Second World War this Bonapartism was understood and felt to be revolutionary by the Argentinian and Brazilian workers who made it their own: thus these two régimes created irreversible subjective conditions from which history must progress.

Bonapartist nationalism has delayed the advent of a revolutionary nationalism of the Fidelist type by mystifying the proletariat, but has not made it impossible. For, once the bourgeois-proletarian united Front is divided, the proletariat begins to radicalize its ideologies and its demands, slowly abandoning the political and union leaderships inherited from the past and which today are bankrupt. Peron saved himself as a political myth unifying the masses, thanks to his abandonment of power in 1955, for he would otherwise have been forced to choose between a truly proletarian régime and the public betrayal of his promises, an option which could no longer be evaded at the moment of his overthrow by the Army. The class definition of Peronism has in consequence been delayed, but has nonetheless finally emerged despite Peron. For the industrial bourgeoisie wants to see no more of him, while the Argentinian proletariat continues to hope for his return. But because of the default of the union bureaucracy of the CGT, the principal operational force of Peronism, the idea of insurrection carries more and more weight at the base, in the unions and particularly among the Peronist working youth, which has lived through its own political

experience without Peron after 1955, with Cuba as a point of reference and comparison. It is evident that revolutionary nationalism has slowly taken the place of traditional Peronism, while preserving the name and the traditional ambience of Peron's movement. It already has its leaders, Cooke, Villalon and Valotta, and above all hundreds of young middle cadres formed in the union struggle. It now has its own physiognomy—that of an essentially urban working-class movement in which the images of Lenin, of Evita Peron and of Fidel mingle in a still unstable synthesis.

The same elements recur in Brazil. Nothing symbolizes them better than the personal evolution of a *caudillo* like Lionel Brizola, the popular revolutionary leader in Brazil, rooted like Vargas in his gaucho country, but whose prestige spread throughout Brazil after the 1961 crisis. He derives this dominance among the masses (which only Miguel Arrais from the North-East can today dispute with him) to the memory of Vargas, of whom he is the second heir, after Goulart. He has not ceased to radicalize his anti-imperialism and his evolution, as he says himself, is not yet finished. What better example exists of dynamic revolutionary nationalism than 'Brizolism'? With all its limits and its dangers: the domination of an irreplaceable chief in charismatic contact with the masses, his undisciplined, stormy nationalism, his inability to 'depersonalize', to provide a political programme and a party structure or to come to understandings with other political organizations, and (a particular problem in the case of Brizola) the influence of a past as an official politician (governor of Rio Grande do Sul for five years and brother-in-law of Goulart) in contact with the governing spheres. But there is also his unconquerable force: his passion, his large popular following, his courage, his realism, his profound and reasoned hatred of imperialism, his honesty. It is not impossible that Brizola could incarnate a Brazilian variety of Fidelism.

A separate study would be necessary to establish the specific ways in which each Latin American nation can transcend its old forms of nationalism and revolutionary action. In each case, it must examine its class structure and the possibilities of revolutionary solidarity both with its neighbours and with the socialist world. Each national variant of Fidelism will draw a revolutionary inspiration from its own tradition of national independence struggles: this can be a strength but may also be a weakness if unmodified by later thought and experience. Fidel read Marti before reading Lenin; a Venezuelan revolutionary nationalist will have read the correspondence of Bolivar before *The State and Revolution*, a Colombian the constitutional projects of Nariño, an Ecuadorian Montalvo, and a Peruvian will have read Mariategui and reflected upon Tupac-Aram. We should not overlook the debt of revolutionary nationalism to the action and propaganda of Communist Parties, which were the pioneers of reasoned anti-imperialism after 1920 and whose general failure, apparent since the end of the Second World War, is doubtless to be explained by their inability to assimilate these national traditions, to find concrete historical roots, to situate themselves in a continental continuity. A summary dialectic would thus make of Fidelism an *a posteriori* synthesis of two currents, national and international, nationalist and communist. But such an interpretation

risks giving Fidelism the consistency of a distinct ideology, which it does not have and does not want. Because it is not an ideology, Fidelism is not a special qualification, a constituted vanguard, a party of a band of conspirators linked to Cuba. Fidelism is only the concrete process of the regeneration of Marxism and Leninism in Latin American conditions and according to the historic traditions of each country. It will never be the same from one country to the next; it can only conquer through originality. Let us hope that even the word disappears. For Fidelism, Leninism rediscovered and integrated with the historical conditions of a continent of which Lenin was ignorant, is proving itself in the reality of revolutionary struggle.

