

# Strategy of Terrorism

By C. L. Sulzberger

BUENOS AIRES — Although South America is still characterized by political violence, guerrilla and terrorist movements have tended to lose importance over the past few years—except in Argentina. Elsewhere they have been defeated or contained by security forces or expelled to the peripheries of significance.

This is partly because of changes in the political climate, outright oppression as in Chile, failure of terrorist techniques in the field, a waning of Cuban support for such forms of opposition, and proclamation of self-designated "revolutionary" regimes in some lands.

Various leftist groups in Colombia, both rural and urban, are still fostering trouble. However, in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Paraguay uninhibited authoritarian regimes have cracked down hard.

Venezuela seems to have significantly reduced the problem by effective security coupled with a pacification program. Peru has officially co-opted opposition rhetoric, taking wind

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## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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*In Argentina, extreme left and urban terrorist groups still promote social revolution by spreading chaos.*

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out of guerrilla sails. And a hard-boiled countersubversion policy has cracked down successfully on Uruguay's flamboyant Tupamaros.

Only in Argentina has there been a notable change for the worse. Here there is a complex mixture of extreme left guerrilla groups and urban terrorist gangs, promoting their concepts of social revolution by spreading death and chaos. And the left-wing urban terrorists are opposed by murder squads of far right activists.

The army general staff, which is the major element in efforts to dominate the situation, estimates that at most 400 or 500 activists operate at any one time. But the world has learned in places as far apart as Cyprus and Northern Ireland how much damage a handful of determined people can inflict on any society.

Self-proclaimed "Peronist" Montoneros and the Marxist People's Revolutionary Army (E.R.P.) are the main guerrilla groups. They have shown themselves adequately financed and trained as well as highly motivated. The Montoneros (named for an Independence War militia) have dwindled

in numbers since they openly took to the field. Although they don't openly endorse Marxism, they seek to produce a so-called socialist republic.

They appear more nationalist than the E.R.P., which has close links with Havana and revolutionary exiles in Paris. Both groups have kept going despite occasional victories over particular bands by specially trained Government forces.

Each seems to have links with some of the city terrorist gangs that have kidnapped wealthy industrialists and have killed from 650 to 900 victims, often prominent, since Juan Perón's death last year.

Originally, the guerrillas financed their operations by bank robberies. Now they have shifted to kidnapping as a main source of revenue. They also solicit contributions abroad, for example among Spanish-speaking residents of the United States.

Other apparently left-wing Peronist groups include the Peronist Armed Forces (F.A.P.) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (F.A.R.). The Triple A, which sounds like an athletic league but is a rightist terror gang called Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (or A.A.A.), has put its own death squads into the streets to slaughter designated leftists.

It sends out murder notices such as "Russian-Jew-Communist, you are a dead man," often followed up by a carload of gunmen who frequently torture victims before slaughtering them. There have been reports that former policemen and soldiers participate in A.A.A. activities. The general staff says any such action would be regarded as "criminal."

There are also so-called "industrial guerrillas" in which labor union thugs play a role and which seek to frustrate employer-employee relationships for political reasons. This hodgepodge of bloodshed and extortion seriously damages the economy and creates a bad climate for foreign investment.

The economic situation was already weak because of the zooming cost of oil imports and the collapse of Argentina's huge beef export trade because of overproduction by European Common Market farmers.

I have asked those in a position to know whether the rural guerrillas follow the methodology of any well-known theoretician such as Che Guevara or whether the urban terrorists follow the Brazilian, Carlos Marighella. They say not, tending to minimize the deadly accomplishments of those fighting the established order, claiming they seek to exaggerate their deeds by inflated publicity in the press.

Perhaps there is some justice in the assertion and it is certainly a valid terrorist technique. Yet the fact remains that the present weak Government, already hampered by world economic developments beyond its control, is seeing its flabby authority steadily eroded by an underground miniwar of a type that has become all too familiar in this century.