

GUEVARA'S GUERRILLA STRATEGY

BY PETER CAMEJO (1972)

Cuba is a small country, but the worldwide impact of its socialist revolution, led by a non-Stalinist leadership, was far out of proportion to its size. It was the first time since the rise of Stalinism that a workers' state was established that was not headed by a Stalinist party or deformed from its creation by a privileged bureaucracy.

Naturally, the most immediate and profound impact was in Latin America. Cuba was the first semi-colonial country in the Western Hemisphere to free itself from imperialist domination. An entire generation of revolutionists throughout Latin America were politically shaped by this victory. This levy of young revolutionists had the potential to win the leadership of the Latin American left away from the Stalinized Communist parties. The objective opportunity existed to take

a gigantic step in filling the leadership vacuum that remains the greatest single obstacle to the triumph of the socialist revolution throughout the world.

Today, thirteen years after the July 26 Movement overthrew Fulgencio Batista, it is possible for us to make at least some evaluations of the political current associated with the Cuban revolution. Here we are primarily interested in the strategy developed by the Cuban leaders for the Latin American revolution, and for the colonial revolution in general. This is not an attempt to analyze the full range of contributions or the development of the Cuban leadership, either within Cuba itself or on other international matters. Their conduct during the missile crisis of 1962 and their response to the imperialist aggression in Vietnam demonstrate their revolutionary outlook. On the

suspicious, but not afraid of us; rather, with all their experience at this game, which they were accustomed to winning, they played with two decks. On various occasions, emissaries of the State Department, disguised as newspapermen, came to investigate our rustic revolution, but they never found any trace of imminent danger in it." (Ibid., p. 28.)

The fact that American imperialism remained semineutral while the



HAVANA, January 1, 1959. "Batista Flees!"

Cuban ruling class was divided over the development of the July 26 guerrilla forces indicates the fundamental misjudgment made by the oppressors. This was expressed in a *New York Times* editorial on January 2, 1959, endorsing Castro's assumption of power the previous day:

"Another dictator, Gen. Fulgencio Batista of Cuba, has fallen, and good riddance to him. . . .

"The Junta set up when General Batista fled in the early hours of

yesterday was unacceptable to Fidel Castro, his 26th of July Movement, and to all those who fought to bring freedom and dignity to Cuba. Power can only be assumed by these men. . . .

"One other thing must be said and this is an acknowledgement to the extraordinary young man, Fidel Castro, who fought against such heavy odds with such tenacity, bravery and intelligence ever since his pathetically weak band of youths landed in Oriente Province on Dec. 2, 1956. A great burden falls on his shoulders and a task harder in its way than the struggle for liberty that has now ended. The American people will wish him and all Cubans good fortune."

This lack of understanding on the part of the ruling classes no longer exists. Today they are fully aware that an armed struggle for democratic demands that aims at state power can set forces in motion tending toward rapid formation of a workers' state, even when conducted by a non-Marxist "petty-bourgeois" or Stalinist leadership. Although this outcome may not be the most likely one, the imperialists and the national bourgeoisies are no longer taking any chances.

When Che's guerrilla group appeared in Bolivia, the imperialists reacted immediately. They took it dead seriously, holding high level meetings in the Pentagon to plan the annihilation of the guerrillas. Even if Che had announced that all he was seeking was the removal of the dictator Barrientos, a return to bourgeois legality, and a land reform with compensation, the Pentagon would have proceeded as it did.

An even clearer example was the uprising in Santo Domingo in April of 1965. The leader of the uprising, Colonel Francisco Caamaño Deno, was by no stretch of the imagination a socialist. But where the imperialists has stood aside in Cuba, in the Dominican Republic they sent 30,000 marines to crush the rebellion headed by Caamaño. The imperialists and their Latin American supporters are now fully conscious of the danger to their rule posed by any mass mobilization for democratic rights. This is one very important change since 1959 in the international context facing Latin American revolutionists.

Mobilization of the masses

After the seizure of power in Cuba the Fidelista leadership was confronted with the choice of abandoning its democratic promises or carrying out a socialist revolution. The Cuban capitalist class and its imperialist backers opposed the radical reform program of the July 26 Movement even though these reforms did not in-and-of-themselves challenge capitalist private property.

The bourgeoisie retained important positions of power even after the defeat of Batista's army. The economy and the governmental bureaucracy remained in capitalist hands.

The Cuban bourgeoisie sought to reestablish repressive forces it could rely on. Castro's refusal to move in that direction led to a break with the national bourgeoisie and with imperialism. Had Castro given in on the character of the new army and police, the representatives of

imperialism were prepared to temporarily accept many of his other reforms, biding their time until they could take the offensive and regain lost ground. Capitalism had been saved in Bolivia after the 1952 revolution by just such a strategy.



Castro's break with the bourgeois representatives in the government resulted in the formation of a workers' and peasants' government. This government proceeded to mobilize the working class and peasantry to defend the democratic reforms. The Castro leadership promoted a new army of workers and peasants loyal to the revolution. Once this process was set in motion it could be concluded in only one of two ways: by capitulation to the bourgeoisie and a retreat from the

and pro-Peking CPs urge a bloc with the national bourgeoisie for an "anti-imperialist revolution" that would leave domestic capitalism intact. The socialist revolution is to be postponed to an indefinite later stage.

The Cuban position, as elaborated in the Second Declaration of Havana, represents a break from the two-stage theory of revolution. The Stalinists adopted this theory from the Russian Mensheviks and use it today to justify support to bourgeois regimes in the colonial world that are willing to accept "peaceful coexistence" with Moscow or Peking.

The Cuban leaders, however, have never elaborated the interrelationship between the bourgeois-democratic tasks of the revolution and its socialist character. Not being sectarians, they recognize that sectors of the national bourgeoisie will on occasion support democratic demands. At the same time, they recognize that even the most "progressive" sectors of the national bourgeoisie will oppose the social revolution needed to fully carry through and defend the democratic reforms.

Beyond these correct generalizations the Cuban leaders have failed to develop a program for the day-to-day class struggle in Latin America. This has been evidenced in the confusion displayed by the Castroist tendency in face of conjunctural maneuvers by the various national bourgeoisies. Havana and its supporters have vacillated between occasional sectarian positions—opposing democratic demands and broad action coalitions—and opportunist adaptation through the

advocacy of coalition governments with bourgeois forces.

A crucial distinction must be made between these two kinds of coalitions. It is not a matter of indifference to revolutionists when sectors of the ruling class, for whatever reasons, support or associate themselves with concrete struggles for democratic demands. Even though the national bourgeoisie is only a tiny minority of the population it has great influence over the masses. It controls the communications media, the government, and the opinion-molding institutions of society. The confrontations with Washington over the 200-mile fishing limit in Ecuador, the nationalizations in Chile and Peru, and the demands in Panama for the restoration of sovereignty over the Canal Zone are all examples of efforts by the national bourgeoisie to improve its position vis-à-vis imperialism. Such situations can create openings to mobilize the masses independently of the ruling class, around demands consistent with revolutionary principles.

In such cases it is correct to form an action front on a specific issue. This can involve anyone, including sectors of the national bourgeoisie. A good example of such a combination, which can be built in all Latin American countries, is a defense committee to free political prisoners. In Argentina, for instance, such a defense committee has been built with participation by representatives of some thirty-five groups and political parties, including members of bourgeois parties. Of course, workers' organizations must at all times maintain their

programmatic and organizational independence within such a coalition and seek to draw the masses into action.

A coalition that unites forces around a social program for governing the nation is an entirely different matter. Here a bloc with the national bourgeoisie or any sector of it is unprincipled, because they will accept only their own program, that is, a program against the interest of the working class and for the continuation of capitalism. A single-issue action bloc is based on one part of a program in the interest of the oppressed, not an overall program which must answer which class should rule and under what property forms. All coalitions seeking governmental control—such as the electoral Frente Amplio (Broad Front) in Uruguay or the military Frente Revolucionario Antimperialista (Revolutionary Antimperialist Front) in Bolivia—are by definition coalitions on a common social program.

By failing to make a differentiation between action blocs and programmatic blocs the Cubans and their followers have fallen into various errors, most recently into opportunistic adaptation to the national bourgeoisie.

In addition to projecting the socialist character of the coming revolutions in Latin America, Castro and Guevara also concluded that the major obstacle to further victories lay in the subjective forces, the organization of revolutionists, not in the objective conditions.

In a general sense this is true not only for Latin America but for the entire world. This second con-

clusion was also a rejection of the position of the Communist parties, which have long held that the social conditions necessary for successful revolutions are lacking.

The Cubans, however, have never explained *why* the Communist parties hold such a view. To do so would require a deep-going critique of the Soviet bureaucracy, which Castro has never made—in part, undoubtedly, because of the dependence of the Cuban revolution on aid from the Soviet Union. The fact remains that the Cuban leaders have never recognized that the conservative policies of the Communist parties reflect the needs of a privileged, bureaucratic strata in the workers' states that survives in power only by trading off the needs of the world revolution for diplomatic and commercial concessions from imperialism. This has led to illusions that the Communist parties can be reformed. The Cuban criticism of the CPs has been *tactical*, not *programmatic*: essentially the Cubans charge the CPs with failure to carry out "armed struggle." Che Guevara summarized the following strategic conclusions from the Cuban experience:

"(1) Popular forces can win a war against the army.

"(2) It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them.

"(3) In underdeveloped America the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting." (*Guerrilla Warfare* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961], p. 15.)

revolutionists to lead the mass movement from one level to the other when that becomes possible.

The guerrilla "invincible" force

A concept that remained popular for a long period despite a whole series of empirical proofs of its falaciousness was the "invincibility" of rural guerrillas. In fact, the illusion of invincibility became one of the arguments for rural guerrilla warfare. Technique alone, starting with Che's three rules—"constant mobility, constant vigilance, constant wariness"—supposedly conferred on the guerrilla fighters immunity from the bourgeois army. Che wrote:

"There, in places beyond the reach of the repressive forces, the inhabitants can be supported by the armed guerrillas." (Guerrilla Warfare, p. 16. Emphasis added.) Unfortunately, such a place does not exist.

Régis Debray, who in his book *Revolution in the Revolution* tried to codify the views of Castro and Guevara, assured us that experienced guerrilla leaders could not be caught if they remained in their rural sanctuaries:

"What about trapping or liquidating them in the mountains? If they are experienced, this is virtually impossible." (*Revolution in the Revolution* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967], p. 69.)

But the "virtually impossible" has occurred much too often, leaving a long list of revolutionary martyrs.

Che suggested that the invincibility of the guerrilla group was due

not only to geography but to mass support. He was certain that in Latin America this would be forthcoming. In answer to those who questioned whether the guerrillas might not isolate themselves from the masses, Che replied:

"In the course of polemics those who advocate guerrilla warfare are often accused of forgetting mass struggle, almost as if guerrilla warfare and mass struggle were opposed to each other. We reject this implication. Guerrilla warfare is a people's war, a mass struggle. To try to carry out this type of war without the support of the population is to court inevitable disaster. The guerrillas are the fighting vanguard of the people, stationed in a specified place in a certain area, armed and prepared to carry out a series of warlike actions for the one possible strategic end—the seizure of power. They have the support of the worker and peasant masses of the region and of the whole territory in which they operate. Without these prerequisites no guerrilla warfare is possible." (*Che Guevara Speaks*, p. 75.)

All too easily a small guerrilla band can find itself to be the "fighting vanguard of the people" only in the sense of defending their historical interests. The "support of the worker and peasant masses" in the absence of genuine mass organizations is revealed to be purely moral support. Che's oversimplistic theory regarding the links that bind the vanguard to the mass led to momentous practical misjudgments.

Che also believed that the guerrilla leadership could "spark the revolutionary spirit of the masses from its rural stronghold." (*Che*

Guevara Speaks, p. 84.) Che's insistence on the need for mass support is reduced in practice to the assumption that it will automatically follow the initiation of guerrilla warfare. He saw all of Latin America as objectively ready for this step. The one prerequisite, an openly repressive regime, could be induced—if it was not already at hand—by initiating armed combat. The support of the masses would be sparked by that action.

Che was convinced that American imperialism would not be caught napping again as it was in Cuba. But he did not conclude from this that a broader social and political form of revolutionary struggle was required. The threat of direct U. S. military intervention to him meant that the guerrilla struggle would be more protracted than in Cuba and that it would be necessary to spread it to more than one Latin American nation simultaneously.

This brings us back to the question of what constitutes a prerevolutionary situation. Che correctly saw the objective impossibility of capitalism and imperialism solving the problems of the Latin American masses, but he confused this with the stage of political consciousness and organization of the masses in any given country at a specific time.

In a very broad sense the objective conditions for socialist revolution exist in every capitalist country. The revolutionary Marxist movement has held this to be true since World War I. The main problem on a world scale is the subjective factor, the absence of an adequate revolutionary leadership. One obvious example is France,

which in 1936, 1945, and 1968 experienced revolutionary upsurges that failed to overthrow capitalism only because of the lack of a mass revolutionary party.

In Latin America the *socio-economic* situation is so profoundly unstable that we can speak in a general sense of a prerevolutionary situation on the whole continent. But this does not mean that each country is permanently in a state of revolutionary crisis. The class struggle is a continuous process of changing relationships of forces between oppressor and oppressed. The ruling class is continuously seeking to broaden its base of support among the masses. It seeks to repress the development of independent formations of the oppressed. It oscillates between concessions and repression, sometimes emphasizing one or the other or combining them. In this continuous struggle there are moments when the working class is on the offensive and others when it is in retreat. At crucial turning points the working class reaches a peak of militancy while the ruling class is divided, demoralized, and disoriented. At such moments a country can enter a *politically prerevolutionary* situation.

Concretely, at this moment in the fall of 1972, what countries in Latin America can be said to be in a prerevolutionary situation? Even given the benefit of the doubt we can only list Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. That means that Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil, the Guianas, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Costa Rica, San Salvador, Mexico, Honduras, and the Carib-

toward the Kerensky government in 1917. He called on the working class to arm itself to defend Kerensky against the attempted coup by the rightist general Kornilov. At the same time, Lenin declared the Bolsheviks' hostility toward Kerensky and their intention of overthrowing his government at the first possible opportunity, which is what happened.

Terrorism

Some Guevaraist groups have evolved toward terrorism. It is important to recall that the Cubans never supported terrorism. They opposed kidnappings for ransom, assassinations, or random bombings, because they believed such acts to be self-defeating. The Cubans never even expropriated banks, but instead financed themselves strictly from the donations of their supporters.

Terrorism can be very destructive to the workers' movement because it helps the ruling class to mobilize mass opinion against the revolutionists and disorients the working class as to how it should fight. It also provides a pretext for repression against the workers' movement in general and against its vanguard in particular.

In the course of a civil war where massive class forces are mobilized on both sides the use of terrorism cannot be ruled out in principle. In Vietnam, for example, the liberation fighters have assassinated particularly hated officials who side with the imperialists and have been responsible for the death of Viet-

namese patriots. In that context such actions can help to demoralize the proimperialist enemy.

But not every armed struggle is a civil war. Che's strategy for initiating a civil war by committing a small armed group to action can easily be interpreted in an even more mechanical way. Some groups believe that once they take up arms a civil war exists. It is in the interests of the ruling class to promote such a fallacy in order to justify extreme measures of repression. The Uruguayan ruling class in particular likes to periodically announce that the country is in a state of civil war. Unfortunately, some guerrillas begin to think it is true and that the dynamic of their actions is similar to that of the Vietnamese.

The use of terrorist tactics by opposition groups in Latin America is not new. The Peronists carried out large-scale bombings in the late 1950s. What is new is that this is done in the name of the socialist movement.

At first kidnappings were carried out to win publicity. More recently they have been used to gain freedom for political prisoners, reforms for the working class, or funds for the revolutionary organizations. Police and military officials in charge of antiguerrilla operations have occasionally been assassinated.

Why should we call such actions terrorist? Isn't terrorism the concept that you can change society through individual violent actions? And isn't it true that the Tupamaros and other such groups frequently

declare their belief that only the masses can change society?

It is true that some terrorists in the nineteenth century believed that by their actions alone they could effect social change. However, the terrorist current, at least in Russia where it became most famous, developed a more sophisticated position at the turn of the century. They explained that their actions would help inspire the masses, show them the vulnerability of the ruling class and its repressive forces, and that their actions would only be carried out in connection with the mass movement, which they believed was the social force that could change society.

The present-day terrorism that has appeared in Latin America echoes the Russian terrorists in terms of their political justifications. But it does not change the essential character of these acts as a form of single combat between isolated revolutionists and the bourgeois regime.

Terrorism can be defined as violent acts against individual members or representatives of the ruling class carried out by individuals or small isolated groups. For instance, when such a group kidnaps a bourgeois figure and demands better conditions for the working class, it provides a perfect example of terrorist politics.

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The recent evolution of the groups influenced by the Cuban revolution has not been all negative. Leaving aside for a moment the Trotskyist movement, which has grown from

this current, there are other essentially positive developments.

In assessing the many guerrilla defeats a number of Fidelista groups have begun to reconsider the importance of mass work and of a vanguard party. Although most of them see this, at least at first, only as a means to strengthen preparations for guerrilla warfare, involvement in mass work and contact with the working masses tend to transform these groups.

One example is the Chilean MIR (Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left). The process is still uneven. The MIR suffers from ultra-left formulations and lack of clarity on the nature of the Allende government. Its organizational structure remains super-centralist and without internal democracy, which is typical of the Guevaraist groups. But the MIR has begun to enter the trade unions, to form trade-union caucuses broader than its own ranks. It has organized peasants and led land occupations. Other groups in Latin America have done likewise, but with less success.

Leninist conception of a vanguard party.

Che never considered or advocated the building of a party along the lines projected by Lenin. Others, however, have tried to justify Che's views as being within the context of Leninism. They are compelled to do this because socialists, since the Russian Revolution, have viewed Lenin's conception of a vanguard

in countries with bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary regimes, the working class faces repression in many forms, including violence on the part of the ruling class. The history of the working class in all countries is filled with accounts of imprisonment and murder.

It is wrong to think that the "democratic" bourgeois regimes will resort to violence only when the workers are on the verge of taking state power. In the United States there may have been more dead, wounded, and imprisoned during the 1960s than in most countries of Latin America. In 1967, the year Che died, a partial list showed 74 killed, 1,185 wounded, and 13,012 imprisoned in the class struggle in the United States, primarily among the oppressed nationalities.

Second, in the capitalist countries that do not have bourgeois-democratic forms of rule, such as various Latin American regimes, the degrees of repression vary greatly, from country to country, and within each country from year to year and even district to district.

The degree to which a ruling class engages in violent repression depends on the relationship of class forces, divisions within the ruling class, and even the international conjuncture. Thus, some military dictatorships—Bolivia under Torres—may permit more democratic rights for the working class than any bourgeois democracy. Some bourgeois regimes with a populist, reformist image may permit certain democratic rights while at the same time brutally repressing workers' strikes. Such a contradictory position can be taken by a parliamen-

tary regime (Chile under Frei) or by a military dictatorship (Peru under Velasco). Some governments may carry out severe repression of the left, but tread more carefully where mass organizations are concerned (Uruguay, or, to some extent, Bolivia under Banzer).

The Leninist concept of party building must take into account what forms of activity are most appropriate at each moment in each country. One general rule, however, is to try to use the most legal forms possible in order to do mass work. That is, to find the opening that makes easiest the organization of the workers.

Lenin's own party was built through mass work under illegal conditions that were *more repressive* than those in most Latin American countries today. That simple fact is usually overlooked by those using the repression argument against building a Leninist party through mass work.

Is it a mistake or a betrayal to call the masses into the streets under a repressive regime? There is no way the working class can liberate itself without struggle and therefore casualties. Revolutionists must at all times attempt to minimize the casualties on the side of the working class. They must oppose adventurism in all its forms, including premature demonstrations limited to the vanguard or armed demonstrations when the masses as a whole are not ready for the implications. The Bolsheviks, in July 1917, opposed a mass demonstration because it was

armed. Each situation must be judged in its concrete context.

But mobilization of the masses, around defensive formulations, in confrontation with the repressive forces is a necessary process in the preparation of the masses for revolution.

The advocates of guerrilla warfare oppose the mobilizing of the unarmed masses for fear of confrontations with the army. Instead, they advocate the formation of small armed groups. They stage sensational actions, such as kidnappings, assassinations, bank expropriations, etc., hoping to stimulate the masses to follow their example of small-group guerrilla warfare.

When mass demonstrations of unarmed workers took place in czarist Russia and were fired on by the army, the ultralefts of Lenin's day, the Socialist Revolutionaries, reacted in the same spirit as our present-day Guevaraists. After one such demonstration in 1902 in which six workers were killed Lenin defended the participation by his party in such demonstrations and rejected the alternative of exemplary armed actions. He wrote:

"We, however, are of the opinion that it is only such mass movements, in which mounting political consciousness and revolutionary activity are openly manifested to all by the working class, that deserve to be called *genuinely revolutionary* acts and are capable of really encouraging everyone who is fighting for the Russian revolution. What we see here is not the much-vaunted 'individual resistance,' whose only connection with the masses consists of verbal dec-

larations. . . . What we see is genuine resistance on the part of the crowd; and the lack of organization, unpreparedness and spontaneity of this resistance remind us how unwise it is to exaggerate our revolutionary forces and how criminal it is to neglect the task of steadily improving the organization and preparedness of this crowd, which is waging an actual struggle before our very eyes. The only task worthy of a revolutionary is to learn to elaborate, utilise and make our own the material which Russian life furnishes in only too great sufficiency, rather than fire a few shots in order to create pretexts for stimulating the masses, and material for agitation and for political reflection. . . . It is nothing to them [Socialist Revolutionaries] . . . to stage a political *sensation* as a substitute (or, at least, as a supplement) for the political education of the proletariat. We, however, consider that the *only* events that can have a real and serious 'agitational' (stimulating), and not only stimulating but also (and this is far more important) educational, effect are events in which the masses themselves are the actors, events which are born of the sentiments of the masses and not staged 'for a special purpose' by one organisation or another." ("New Events and Old Questions," December 1, 1902, in Lenin's *Collected Works* [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961], Vol. 6, pp. 279-80. Emphasis in original.)

"We believe," Lenin continued, "that the government is truly disorganized when, and only when, the broad masses, genuinely organized by the struggle itself, plunge

may be spontaneous, the final insurrection is impossible without the intervention of a conscious and organized vanguard party with a mass base. The Guevaraists have dogmatically refused to recognize such an eventuality much less to prepare a strong revolutionary organization to lead the masses and assure success. As Lenin put it:

"Precisely because a step like the transition to armed street fighting is a 'tough' one and because it is 'inevitable, sooner or later' it



LIMA, PERU, May 19, 1972. 30,000 demonstrate against the Vietnam war.

can and should be taken only by a strong revolutionary organization which *directly* leads the movement." ("Concerning Demonstrations," October 1902, in Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 262. Emphasis in original.)

If Argentina today offers the best objective situation in Latin America for building a Leninist party through mass work, op-

portunities are not lacking elsewhere. There are many promising openings in Uruguay. Chile cannot possibly be included in the repressive camp since the working class has had broad democratic rights for the last two years.

What about the military dictatorship in Peru? There, strikes are taking place regularly in the major cities. Revolutionists, including members of the Trotskyist FIR (Frente de Izquierda Revolucionario — Revolutionary Left Front), are participating and in some cases leading these strikes. The peasant unions that Hugo Blanco helped to found twelve years ago still exist and are led by revolutionary-minded peasants. There have been mass demonstrations of workers, students, and peasants. On May 19, 30,000 people demonstrated in Lima against the war in Vietnam.

Can revolutionists build a Leninist party in Peru through mass work? Or should they turn again to guerrilla actions? The FIR is successfully carrying out mass work at the present level of consciousness of the masses. To engage in guerrilla operations today in Peru means political suicide, as one group that split from Vanguardia Revolucionaria recently discovered.

What about the parliamentary regimes in Colombia and Venezuela? In Colombia there is more repression than in Venezuela, but Colombian revolutionists working with peasants have carried out land occupations, they are working in some trade unions, and have had limited mass demonstrations. In Venezuela there is a great deal of

room for open political activity.

The once substantial Venezuelan guerrilla organizations no longer function. This is true of every country of Latin America with the exception of Colombia. Several Colombian guerrilla groups have managed to hold out in remote parts of the country. As a whole these groups have failed to make organic ties with the masses except in very isolated areas. Whatever final judgment may be made of the effectiveness of these rural guerrilla units, it is clear that even in Colombia mass work is possible and necessary to build a Leninist party.

Let us look at the other two major countries of the region: Mexico and Brazil. In Mexico there was a cold-blooded massacre of student demonstrators in 1968. Is it necessary to turn to armed struggle as a prerequisite to building a revolutionary party in Mexico, or should armed struggle be deferred until the objective situation warrants it and the masses are prepared for its use?

This question was answered by a coordinating committee of Mexican revolutionary organizations, including the Mexican Trotskyists, in the first issue of its newspaper, *Brecha*, last year. They wrote:

"We must repeat again and again that the international capitalist class has learned more from the triumph of the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions than have the workers themselves and their allies. It is utopian, therefore, to think that in these conditions victory is possible without the supreme revolutionary instrument, the Leninist

party. The Chinese won and the Cubans also won without this, but we will never win with a blunted instrument like the semi-Stalinized Chinese CP or the guerrilla movement of Fidel and Che. Today the bourgeoisie is much more adroit and will not let itself be taken by surprise again." (Cited by Ricardo Ochoa, a leader of the 1968 student movement, in an article entitled, "The Mexican Left Searches for the Answers," in the October 18, 1971, *Intercontinental Press*.)

The continuation of the student movement in Mexico despite the repression directed against it shows what is objectively possible. The development through mass work of the new Marxist vanguard in Mexico since 1968 has pointed the way by rejecting adventurist "pick up the gun" theories.

Finally, our repression theorists must turn to Brazil. Here the repression is extreme. The generals have adopted the methods of fascism to smash all the mass organizations. But even in Brazil, workers' actions are beginning, especially in the São Paulo industrial area. Underground trade-union committees are appearing. It is true that opportunities for work in the factories and among students are limited. Nevertheless, they exist. In Brazil we have had a living test of what happens if revolutionists out of desperation initiate premature armed struggles by isolated groups. They have been utterly defeated, resulting in untold victimizations.

The Brazilian working class suffered a major defeat in the rightist coup of 1964. It has only begun

my and a powerful mass uprising it is much too rash to say that the United States would inevitably win. To do so reveals a defeatist mood.

Régis Debray once posed an interesting question to those who disagree with the Guevaraist line. "Any line that claims to be revolutionary," he said, "must give a concrete answer to the question how to overthrow the power of the capitalist state." And he offered the answer presented by the Cuban leadership: rural guerrilla warfare.

Debray was not aware of what such a question reveals about his own understanding of the class struggle and of Marxism. The Marxist replies that the capitalist state will be overthrown by mass armed struggle. Debray would object that this is not very "concrete." That is the whole point. Through what forms the masses will be mobilized and the armed conquest of power achieved cannot be predetermined. Lenin answered Debray long ago. In 1906 he wrote:

"To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be

used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position." ("Guerrilla Warfare," September 30, 1906, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 214.)

Answers can be given for particular countries at particular moments, not for continents and epochs. We hold that in 1971 in Bolivia and in 1968 in France the workers could have taken power. We can even suggest what forms such a revolutionary struggle could have taken. But it would have been foolish to have attempted in advance to lay down a schema on the course of events in Bolivia or France. It would be just as foolish to suggest that the exact form of the next revolutionary situation in those countries will be the same as the previous one. The only revolutionary instrument flexible enough to meet any contingency and not be caught up in some preconceived schema that can be bypassed by reality is the mass revolutionary party constructed on the Leninist model.