

"THE GUERRILLAS — NEXT STAGE IN LATIN AMERICA?"

Sudbury, Ont., Canada

Dear Sirs: Your reprint of portions of Dr. Richard Shaull's reflections on "The Guerrillas—Next Stage in Latin America?" (*Worldview*, April) prompted a few more observations on the nature of this phenomenon, as seen from the perspective of political theory. The new Latin American theories citing guerrilla warfare as the only course left for the area's political development are understandably desperate, but desperation is not always the most prudent guide to analysis.

It is difficult, of course, to disagree with Shaull's pessimism about avoiding future Vietnams in Latin America if the United States continues to follow its present policy. On the other hand, the intellectuals behind the new theories for "building a social order" are not all, or even predominantly, "representatives of a new generation of Christians," even though the despair doubtlessly touches these groups as well. Rather, they are fundamentally innovative Marxists, who see the underdevelopment in the area as a capitalist, not a pre-capitalist, phenomenon. The logic of the new Marxist class analysis undertaken by these Latin American intellectuals leads them to conclude that guerrilla warfare is a *political* act, since the revolutionaries, in establishing the *foco* among isolated peasants, are in effect bringing the peasants out of a kind of state of nature into the first political community they have known since pre-colonialism. The theorists argue that the nation-state has been superceded and that the correct strategy against American imperialism is to attack and destroy the local bourgeoisie and state structure, where the structure of class and imperialism intertwine. They are not supporting nationalism, since they see the nation-state system as defunct.

The dangers for American foreign policy remain those foreseen by Shaull, but the popularity of the call to armed insurrection for righting wrongs does not necessarily have its basis in Christian thinking, or even, in my view, in sound theoretical analysis. In fact, I am suggesting that the consequences of their conclusions regarding armed insurrection are minimized by the Latin American revolutionaries themselves. (I leave aside the propriety of the term "theorists," a debatable term in view of the fact that Regis Debray and his sympathizers stand in an authentic Marxist tradi-

tion by affirming that the true value of the intellectual consists not in what he thinks but in the relationship between what he thinks and what he does. There are those who would argue that this position destroys the essential objectivity of the theorist and reduces him to the role of an ideologue. Or activist guerrilla?)

In their total rejection of the Latin American political process, the innovators argue, in Marxian fashion, that the Latin American bourgeoisie cannot be nationalist unless they be socialist, and that the history of the area has conclusively proven that a capitalist bourgeoisie can never play the role of a national bourgeoisie destined to liberate the several nations from the bonds of imperialism and strike out on an independent course of national economic and political development. Yet while they aspire to establish "socialist" governments in the area, the cost of the effort has yet to answer the charge that the differences between socialist and non-socialist government policy in Latin America are vastly overrated.

It may, of course, be useful as an analytical construct to think of the politics of the area as deformed, a deformity structured into the area's nations from colonialism to imperialism, in the same sense as current political analysis often regards the nation-state political system as defective in its application to Latin America. But even if and when the bonds of imperialism be one day broken, political and economic development, which the innovators see up to now denied to the area, will surely be conceivable only within a national context. It is difficult to see how the developmental task can exclude nation-building, if it is indeed a promise of development that the morrow of the guerrillas' civil war is to redeem.

There is a curious paradox of commitment to re-analysis and re-interpretation of the economic history of the area within the framework of imperialism on the one hand, and on the other, a striking absence of equal attention at justifying the situation which will most certainly result from the civil war the innovators advocate as the necessary conclusion of their analysis. While no serious analyst denies that revolutionary aspirations are required for development in Latin America, it is far from clear that the costs in sheer human energy required for the political socialization effort necessary to mobilize the peasantry for revolution in a traditional society are cheaper or more effec-

tive than alternatives that have already been spelled out. How does one compensate for the alienation of foreign enterprises, the domestic entrepreneurial, technical, and professional groups, the urban middle sectors whose livelihood is probably bound up with the commercial world-trade patterns that go with a non-diversified economy? The Cubans, for example, learned that they could not reduce sugar production in the interest of diversifying industry precisely because they needed capital equipment imports, and the socialist world suppliers do business the same way the capitalists do.

It becomes perhaps pertinent to re-examine the questions about which reform is more conducive to

imperialism and its forced underdevelopment for Latin America: that of the guerrilla revolutionary movements, or to select another example, that of the sometimes ill-fated reformist Aprista-type parties, among those "political forces that seem to offer no basis for hope."

It must be something less than theory that dictates that a deformed or imperfect political system is the absence of politics. Likewise, the "call to conscience" must involve the continued painful search for ways and means to meet the challenge of reform as much as it must consider the total meaning of abandoning that search in favor of pursuing armed insurrection.

Robert A. Monson

ANNOUNCING

NEWLY REORGANIZED:

EDITORS:
 GEORGE SHEPHERD
 EZEKIEL MPHAMLELE

**EXPANDED CONTENT
 ENTIRELY NEW FORMAT**



AFRICA TODAY

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Student Rate \$3.00

3 Years \$13.95

2 Years \$9.50

1 Year \$5.00

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Robert Browne	Fred Burke	c/o Grad. School of Int'l Studies, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado 80210
Kenneth Carstens	Stanley Diamond	
William H. Friedland	Collin Ganze	<input type="checkbox"/> Pay Now <input type="checkbox"/> Bill me
George Houser	Betsy Landis	
Tilden Lemelle	John Marcum	Name _____
Robert I. Rotberg	James Scariff	Street _____
W. A. E. Skurnik	Richard Stevens	City _____
Sheldon Weeks	Peter Weiss	State _____
Immanuel Wallerstein		Zip Code _____

July-August 1968 15