Chapter 8

Cold War Visions

During the Cold War, the vision of the revolutionary left was thoroughly dominant among Latin American writers. Marxism had exercised a growing influence among the region's intellectuals and artists since the 1920s and 1930s, and their efforts were increasingly influential in turn. After World War II, Latin American letters gained even more international recognition with a string of Nobel Prizes for Literature—Gabriela Mistral (1945), Miguel Angel Asturias (1967), Pablo Neruda (1971), Gabriel García Márquez (1982), Octavio Paz (1990)—representing political attitudes that ranged from Mistral's feminism and antiracism to Neruda's militant communism. Over all, the vision of the revolutionary left set the tone for poets, artists, folksingers, and culturally engaged university students throughout the region from the 1950s to the 1980s. The framework of the Cold War, viewed by both sides as a titanic struggle for the fate of the planet, intensified the anti-imperialist critique of US involvement in Latin America that had been developing since the early 1900s.

During the 1950s, the US government skimped on economic aid to Latin America and directed it preferentially to European countries where communist parties were gaining electoral popularity or where it was feared that they might do so. Encouraging Europe's economic recovery would dim the communist appeal there, hoped US policy makers. They were less concerned about Latin America, whose military establishments had become firmly allied with the United States and received substantial support in equipment and training. At the same time, both government and business leaders in the United States were determined, after World War II, to win back Latin American markets for the products of US industry,

an initiative that conflicted with the region's efforts at import-substitution industrialization. Meanwhile, US-based multinational corporations rapidly expanded their operations in Latin America. The activities of such multinationals as United Fruit, Standard Oil, or the International Telephone and Telegraph Company were not generally perceived in Latin America as providing useful investment or developmental impetus but, to the contrary, as bleeding the region economically and controlling its destiny in the interest of foreign investors. Latin American writers thus echoed popular denunciations of US neglect or US meddling, both deemed inimical to the welfare of the region's poor majority. Meanwhile, wealthy Latin Americans became more closely connected with, and more strongly oriented toward, the United States than ever before.

This chapter explores Cold War visions by focusing on a single event, the overthrow of Guatemala's revolutionary government of 1944–54. Following decades of reactionary dictatorship, Guatemala had enjoyed ten years of popularly elected progressive government that advanced a series of not-very-radical projects, such as land reform to benefit the long-oppressed indigenous Mayans who made up roughly half the national population. To garner resources for these reforms, the government expropriated vast and underutilized landholdings of the United Fruit Company in Guatemala. Mexico's revolutionary leadership had carried out land reform and expropriated foreign companies in the 1930s without provoking dire social consequences or US intervention, of course, but in the context of the Cold War, and under the influence of "Red Scare" McCarthyism, the United States reacted differently to the Guatemalan "threat." While there were, in fact, no important connections between the Soviet Union and the Guatemalan government, US policy makers feared that revolutionary attitudes alone would produce a dangerous anti-US alignment and that, were the Guatemalan revolution to succeed, its example would be followed throughout the hemisphere. The 1954 intervention toppled the government of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz with the collaboration of his own military. The intervention got widespread approval (to the degree that people paid any attention at all) in the

United States. Within a few years, however, the revolutionary challenge was renewed, this time more durably and very influentially, in the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

The selections in this chapter illustrate the sharply polarized visions of Latin America in the Cold War. The first is an example of US-style anticommunist discourse, dictated in Washington for broadcast in Guatemala during the 1954 intervention. The Guatemalan army officers who turned against the revolutionary government (and other strongly anticommunist Latin Americans, of whom there were many) surely identified with that discourse. Following that are two examples of the contrasting revolutionary leftist vision: one selection that portrays the Guatemalan land reform and the forces arrayed for and against it, and another that recounts the machinations of the intervention itself.

DECLASSIFIED MESSAGE

Central Intelligence Agency

This secret communication was sent to CIA operatives in Guatemala by their superiors in the United States on 18 June 1954 as part of the planning for the US-sponsored overthrow of President Arbenz. It begins with instructions on how to translate the text and broadcast it on the radio, claiming without any basis in fact to be a message from an antigovernment "National Liberation Committee," supposedly in consultation with a (non-existent) antigovernment Assembly of the Guatemalan People. The text to be translated begins with point two. It is written in a "telegraphic" style that omits many words such as prepositions and articles, some of which have been supplied in brackets at the beginning to facilitate comprehension by readers unfamiliar with that style.

1. D DAY TODAY, 18 JUN. H HOUR 20:20. BROADCAST AT 20:20 FOLLOWING OPENING APPEAL WITH MAXIMUM IMPASSIONED INSISTENCE, INTRODUCE [with] FANFARES, CLOSE [with] NATIONAL ANTHEM. USE LIVE VOICE, MAKE ANY LAST MINUTE FACTUAL CHANGES IN [the] TEXT WHICH SUBSEQUENT INFO MAY NECESSITATE, BUT DO NOT DEVIATE FROM POLICY LINE BELOW. ELABORATE AS NEEDED, BUT DON'T MAKE TOO LONG, REPEAT [at] HOURLY INTERVALS.

2. (BEGIN TEXT) NATIONAL LIBERATION COMMITTEE COMPOSED [of] REPRESENTATIVES [of] ALL GROUPS OPPOSING COMMUNISM, ARBENZISM, DEFENDING CONSTITUTION AND PEOPLE'S LIBERTIES, HAS CONSULTED LAST NIGHT WITH THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE, SECRETLY CONVENED NOT FAR FROM [the] CAPITAL TO REPLACE CONGRESS WHICH HAS OUTLAWED ITSELF. AFTER MATURE DELIBERATION, [the] FOLLOWING APPEAL TO [the] PEOPLE [was] ADOPTED.

3. AT THIS MOMENT, ARMED GROUPS OF OUR LIBERATION MOVEMENT ARE ADVANCING EVERYWHERE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. WE ARE STILL HOPING THAT FAST, DECISIVE ACTION BY OUR LOYAL ARMY, DEPOSING OUTLAW ARBENZ AND HIS MOSCOW-CONTOLLED REGIME, WILL PREVENT MORE BLOODSHED. BUT THERE CAN BE NO MORE DELAY, NO MORE FENCE SITTING, NO MORE WISHFUL WAITING. THE HOUR OF DECISION HAS STRUCK.

4. WE, REPRESENTING ALL GROUPS OF THE NON-COMMUNIST POPULATION, DO SOLEMNLY DECLARE: THIS IS NOT A FOREIGN INTERVENTION, BUT AN

SOURCE: Central Intelligence Agency, "Cable to Director from Lincoln re Guatemalan Coup, 6/18/54" (Declassified document). www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs.asp?doc_no=0000921724

UPRISING OF THE HONEST, CHRISTIAN, FREEDOM-LOVING PEOPLE OF GUAT TO LIBERATE OUR HOMELAND FROM THE FOREIGN INTERVENTION WHICH HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE, FROM CONTROL BY THE SOVIET UNION WHICH HAS MADE GUAT AN ADVANCED OUTPOST OF INTERNATIONAL COMMIE* AGGRESSION, FROM RULE BY SOVIET PUPPETS ARBENZ, TORIELLO, FANJUL, FROM TERROR, MASS ARRESTS, TORTURES, EXERCISED BY COMMIE AGENTS JAIME ROSENBERG, CRUZWER, AND OTHERS.

5. YOU ALL HAD DURING LAST FEW WEEKS AMPLE FORETASTE [of] COMMIE DICTATORSHIP, ABOLITION [of] CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES, ARRESTS [of] THOUSANDS [of] NON-COMMUNISTS, ARRIVAL [of] SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS, COMMIE MILITARY INSTRUCTORS, RUSSIAN SECRET POLICE OFFICERS. WE MUST PUT END TO ALL THIS TODAY, MUST SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SITUATION TODAY OR OUR COUNTRY WILL BECOME BATTLEFIELD FOR WARS AND CIVIL WARS PRESCRIBED BY MOSCOW, WHICH SEEKS ANOTHER KOREA IN CENTRAL AMERICA. OUR EXPORT CROPS WILL HELP RUSSIAN PEOPLE WHO ARE UNDERFED BECAUSE OF DISASTROUS FAILURE [of] COMMIE AGRARIAN REFORM IN RUSSIA AND EVERYWHERE. OUR PROUD, BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY WILL BE SUBMERGED IN DISASTER.

6. HEED OUR INSTRUCTIONS COMING FROM THE NATIONAL LIBERATION COMMITTEE AND FROM THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE:

A. ARMY TO TAKE ARBENZ, MEMBERS OF CABINET, OTHER LEADING OFFICIALS INTO CUSTODY, OCCUPY KEY GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, SEIZE PGT, CGTG,

*Cold-war slang for *communist*.

CNCG** HEADQUARTERS, ARREST ALL COMMIE LEADERS, CONFISCATE WEAPONS IN HANDS OF COMMIE GROUPS.

B. POLICE TO RID ITSELF OF COMMIE CHIEFS ROSENBERG, CRUZWER, OTHERS, RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS, PLACE ITSELF TEMPORARILY UNDER ARMY ORDERS OR SUFFER FATE OF COMMIE AGENTS.

C. WORKERS, PEASANTS: JOIN LIBERATION MOVEMENT WITH THE WEAPONS COMMIE LEADERS GAVE YOU. DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY COMMIE-ORDERED STRIKES, PARADES, OTHER MOVES. DISPOSE OF COMMIE UNION LEADERS AND THEIR DUPES, NOT THE LOYAL REGULAR ARMY.

D. CIVILIAN GOVT EMPLOYEES: DISREGARD ANY UNLAWFUL ORDERS FROM ARBENZ REGIME, REPORT ANY SUSPICIONS TO NEAREST ARMY COMMANDER, LOCAL LIBERATION COMMITTEE. STAY ON YOUR JOBS, BUT WAIT FOR RE-ESTABLISHMENT [of] LAWFUL GOVT.

E. NEWSPAPERS, RADIO STATIONS: REFUSE IMMEDIATELY PUBLISHING ARBENZ REGIME PROPAGANDA. DISCONTINUE PUBLICATION, BROADCASTS, UNTIL ILLEGAL COMMIE CENSORSHIP WIPED OUT BY LIBERATION.

F. POPULATION AT LARGE: JOIN IMMEDIATELY ARMED FORCES OF LIBERATION MOVEMENT. HELP YOURSELF TO COMMIE-ISSUED ARMS OR ARMS CACHES. WOMEN, OLD AND SICK MEN, CHILDREN TO STAY CLOSE TO HOME. OBSERVE, REPORT ALL SUSPICIOUS MOVES, EXPOSE COMMIE LEADERS TRYING TO SNEAK OUTSIDE COUNTRY, PREVENT POLICE FROM MURDERING POLITICAL PRISONERS BY KEEPING JAILS, POLICE STATIONS UNDER MASS SURVEILLANCE.

**Labor organizations.

G. EVERYBODY CONTINUE [to] LISTEN [to] VOICE [of] LIBERATION.

7. IF WE ALL, SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS, ACT IMMEDIATELY, WITH DETERMINATION, COURAGE AND DISCIPLINE, WE SHALL SOON SUCCEED IN WIPING MOSCOW'S SHADOW OFF THE BLUE SKY OVER OUR BELOVED HOMELAND, RESTORE OUR CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES, REESTABLISH GOOD, SINCERE RELATIONS WITH ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, BUILD A TRULY DEMOCRATIC ORDER WHICH WILL PREVENT FUTURE COMMUNIST CONSPIRACIES, BUT ALSO ANY RETURN TO REACTIONARY DICTATORSHIPS. BUILD AN ORDER BASED ON THE PRECEPTS OF CHRISTIANITY, POPULAR SELF-GOVERNMENT, EQUAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL, REGARDLESS OF COLOR, RACE, OR SOCIAL STATUS, AND ON PEACEFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN ALL NATIONS, BIG OR SMALL, ON BASIS OF EQUALITY.

8. NONE OF YOU IS ALLOWED TO ABSENT HIMSELF FROM THE STRUGGLE FOR THESE IDEALS, FROM THE FINAL BATTLE AGAINST THE FORCES OF DARKNESS, COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY, AND SOVIET RUSSIAN IMPERIALIST EXPANSION UPON OUR SOIL. DEATH TO ARBENZ AND HIS COMMIE ADVISORS! FORWARD FOR GOD, FATHERLAND, AND LIBERTY!

Analyzing the Sources: *Why does the CIA-authored broadcast so emphatically deny its true origin?*

WEEKEND IN GUATEMALA

Miguel Angel Asturias

In the immediate aftermath of the 1954 US intervention, Guatemalan Nobel laureate Miguel Angel Asturias (born 1899) wrote a collection of short stories, Weekend in Guatemala, *that was rushed into publication outside Guatemala in 1956. A good example of the revolutionary vision that diametrically opposed the anticommunist vision of the US government, the book is dedicated as follows:*

TO GUATEMALA, *my Country,*
Alive in the blood of its student heroes,
Its peasant martyrs,
Its slaughtered workers,
Its struggling People.

The collection begins with a title story narrated by a caricatured US sergeant who brags of his exploits during a "weekend (intervention) in Guatemala." A second story features an English-speaking tour guide who has taken US citizenship. He is almost killed by US bombing during the intervention and, disillusioned by the indiscriminate violence of US-hired mercenaries brought from other Central American countries, goes mad with self-hatred. A third story translated here in its entirety, displays the indigenismo *for which Asturias is best known. The story is set in the Guatemalan highlands on the eve of intervention, when the revolutionary government is carrying out its policy of land reform.*

La Galla

High on the mountain, a matasano tree swayed in the wind and spread its branches over a green hollow. The color of the matasano leaves, matasano green, a sort of ashen yellow-green, contrasted with the unchanging, emerald green of the hollow below. Beginning

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Source: Miguel Angel Asturias, "La galla," from *Week-end en Guatemala* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Goyanarte, 1956), pp. 95–107.

with those two colors, the eyes of Diego Hun Ig began to count the the eleven other greens of that place, the Grandmother of Waters, until he had observed all thirteen shades necessary to complete his happiness that morning. Diego Hun Ig, leader of the Great Brotherhood, was on his way down to meet with the council of the brotherhood, where the Councilor of the village would explain about the land reform. And that is how and why the Councilor and Diego Hun Ig met that day under the covered walkway of the village hall.

They saw one another, approached one another, greeted one another. Simultaneously, they took off their white hats and exposed their jet black hair. They extended their hands and touched them together in what seemed more a priestly gesture than a handshake. Following the greeting, the Councilor turned and moved along the walkway, bathed at that hour by the slanting rays of the morning sun, toward the meeting room, and Diego Hun Ig followed him. There was little furniture in the meeting room, only wooden benches along the walls and, at the center of the far end, a single table and heavy chair. Nothing more. The sandals of the Councilor and his visitor echoed on the stone floor.

In a corner of the room, in the semidarkness fragrant with the smell of mahogany from the big exposed beams supporting the roof of the structure, each man ceremoniously took his seat on the end of a long bench. Then they spoke of the matter at hand.

"Land reform . . . ," said the Councilor. From inside his shirt, he drew a bound notebook no larger than those which one uses to intone the devotions due to Catholic saints, and extended it to Diego Hun Ig, who accepted it respectfully and raised it to his forehead as a sign that it would enter his mind, then to his chest, as a sign that it would enter his heart.

The enormous drums echoed all that afternoon and all that night in the doorway of the assembly house of the Great Brotherhood. The incessant thunder of the enormous drums called all the members of the brotherhood—all the men, young and old, all the women, all the children—to assemble on the morning of the following day, a Saturday. It had been a very long time since the last such call. An atmosphere of gathering storm accumulated, moment

by moment, with the thunder of the drums. The afternoon came, icy chill. But the crowds—who swept the patio of the assembly house of the Great Brotherhood with wide bunches of tree roots, then sprinkled it with water to control the dust, and covered it with leaves and flowers—were hardly aware of the cold or the setting of the sun. Meanwhile, Diego Hun Ig and the other elders, Procopio Cay, Circuncisión Tulul, Julián Aceituno, Santos Chavar, and Pedro Roca, placed the insignias of the brotherhood on an altar composed of green branches.

There were nine principle insignias. Atop a wooden staff, a large silver disk with the image of Santiago Matamoros on one side, and on the other, the letters J-H-S, signifying Jesus Christ. Diego Hun Ig would hold this staff during the ceremony. The other shining insignias comprised a series of lesser silver disks. Some had borders of tiny bells that tinkled when they were moved. Some were surrounded with projecting solar rays. Some had crosses emerging from the top. Once the insignias had been placed on the altar and candles lit before them, Diego bent his knee and crossed himself, followed by the others, who did the same.

Now it was night. The village, poorly lit by a moon that could not quite get out from behind the clouds, lay deserted, empty, throbbing with drums.

The drums echoed loudly in the tiny general store that people called "the store of doña Bernardina Coatepeque" because the owner was a native of Coatepeque, although everyone referred to her as "La Galla" because her feistiness resembled that of a fighting cock. The owner paced back and forth without attending the customers who had entered to make small purchases of this and that. The drums were driving her crazy.

"Those damned Indians of the brotherhood . . . bunch of savage beasts . . . are going to keep us up all night again! Who can sleep a wink with that noise . . . and no government to put the quietus on them. . . . What do you want girl?" She turned to one of the customers.

"Five-cents' worth of incense."

"Incense . . . what for?"

"To burn . . ."

"I know it's to burn . . . what I'm asking is . . . God in heaven, those drums are going to make me puke. Damned Indians! What I'm asking is why are you going to burn incense?"

"Because today is the last day of the novena of the Dulce Nombre. . . ."

"And you, missus, what do you want?"

"Twenty-five pounds of flour . . ."

"And you?"

"One of those machetes . . ."

"Why do you want a machete?"

"To have one . . ."

"Good Lord, Good Lord, those drums!"

A hoarse voice issued from the mysterious spice-scented darkness in the shadowy recesses behind the counter of the store: "You might as well close up, Bernardina. That way it won't be so loud, and for what you're selling it's not worth staying open anyway. . . ."

"You might as well close," answered La Galla in irritation. "Get off your tail and do it yourself. . . ."

A bony man with a hat, a big moustache, and a half-smoked cigarette in his mouth raised himself from a bench, half-closed the double door, and stood waiting for the last customers to leave before closing the other half of the door and barring both halves with a plank.

The resounding drums were immediately muffled. In the dim light, the cat awoke, arose, walked over to its dish—which, though smelling of milk, lay empty, washed, and ready for the morning ration of milk. In disgust, it leapt away between the stacks of straw hats that stood in a row on a table beside the door.

"I'm going to see what we did today," said La Galla, "and then we'll have supper."

From underneath the counter she extracted the drawer that contained all the profits, in coins and bills, from that day's sales, along with a pencil and a notebook, in which she proceeded to do the accounts.

"I know why you can't stand the sound of those drums."

"You know everything, don't you? . . . Let me do the accounts."

"It gets on your nerves. . . ."

"Leave me alone or get out of here. I don't need hassles in my own house."

"It gets on your nerves."

La Galla clutched the braided leather whip that she always wore at her waist and struck the counter with it, where it lay like a dead snake.

"Shut up, I said!"

The bony man looked sideways at the menacing whip, then shrugged in protest without saying anything further, went to one of the shelves, and helped himself to a bottle of beer.

"That's better, right. Go ahead and drink all the beer in town, and don't bother me with bad memories."

The bony man did not respond. He had gone through the door that led into the house behind the store and into the dining room, where he was drinking his beer with his head hunched sullenly between his shoulders.

La Galla's voice could be heard from the store.

"Hey, Freckles . . . I was rude because these damned Indians and their drums are driving me crazy, okay?"

"Rude! You threatened me with that whip that I don't know why you have to wear at your waist all the time . . . and I do know why . . . because it was what your father liked to beat the daylights out of the Indians with."

La Galla burst through the door, whip in hand.

"Shut up or you'll be sorry."

"I'll shut up, but the drums won't. . . ."

"What did you say?"

"That I'll shut up. . . ."

"Let's see what the cook left me," said La Galla. "They take work as cooks and can't scramble an egg . . . and you read the newspaper. Do something useful. I pay for that subscription, and I've never seen you read it."

"Freckles" extracted a newspaper from a sleeve bearing his real name, Luis Marcos, and moved closer to a lamp.

"Bernardina," he said loudly, the moment that he laid eyes on the paper. "No wonder they are drumming. Listen to this." And he

read: "Land Reform Law. Property to be distributed tomorrow to the Indians of the Great Brotherhood . . ."

"Steamed potatoes are what she left, with parsley. Do you like parsley, by any chance? And fruit salad, but without bitter orange, so it's as bland as can be. What did you say about the newspaper?"

"It says property to be distributed tomorrow to the Indians of the Great Brotherhood."

"How awful to take land away from the rightful owners to give it to those Indians! I was hungry, and now . . . pass me the bread . . . no, no, I can't swallow it," she said nibbling a bit of fruit salad. "The sound of those drums will make it stick in my throat. You eat, and excuse me for not keeping you company. . . ."

Of moderate height and weight, La Galla normally walked with feminine grace, but now she dragged herself toward her bedroom like a prisoner condemned to death and not fully in control of her body. Cold tears on her cheeks, her lips not quite closed, sobbing, she threw herself headfirst on the bed. The drums would not let her sleep. They rumbled just as loudly in the distance, it seemed, as in the doorway of the Great Brotherhood.

Just the way they had sounded all night on the eve of the Indian uprising in which her father was killed. Her father, a personal friend of the president of the Republic, had been all-powerful in the locality, much feared and hated among the Indians. "Shepherd boys" was his term for the Indians, because the young ones watched over his flocks. He more or less owned them, and when they grew up, he "sold" them to the other owners of nearby coffee haciendas or banana plantations on the coast.

Luis Marcos folded the newspaper, or rather, half-folded it, and left it on the table. He lacked, not exactly the strength, but the will-power, for certain things. He flattened the paper with a thump of his fist. That's the way the drums had rumbled on and on, he thought, as he stretched, got up, and went into the store to get another beer. The store was dimly lit by a single candle that flickered in front of a saint's image.

That's the way the drums had rumbled on and on when they killed the old man, or rather, when his secretary Rafael Procol put him out of his misery with a bullet so that the Indians wouldn't kill

him, as well. A treacherous favor. But if Procol had not shot the old man down point-blank at that moment, the Indians would have cut both of their throats. As it was, when the Indians finally got to them, they found the old man stretched out on the ground and let Procol live.

Poor Galla, thought Marcos, running his tongue over the beer foam on his lips. That's the way she grew up, and she just can't get used to treating the Indians like people. The idea revolts her, makes her blood boil. Her father, who has a terrible hold over her even now, had a kind of dungeon at his plantation on the coast, with stocks to put the Indians in if they got uppity. And his accounts were crooked as a corkscrew! He never paid the workers what he really owed them. Indians who started to work on the old man's plantations could never leave because the more they worked, the more indebted they got. And when they died, their children inherited the debt and had to stay on the plantation. . . .

Diego Hun Ig paused in the door of his hut to tell his wife that he would be back after midnight, and then he went like a nocturnal bird along fences and across fields to the Quebrada de Melgarejo, home of Tucuche, the eldest elder of the locality. Hun Ig took the old man coffee, bread, and a piece of hard cheese bundled in a handkerchief. Tucuche was pleased. He motioned his visitor to sit on the ground, and then sat there himself like a stone idol.

"Consider, father, that the whites are going to give us land," said Diego, after bowing his head deeply. "How can we know if their offer is for good or ill? One must always take care in dealing with *them*."

Tucuche's eyelids lowered over his milky, ancient eyes, and he sat for a long time, breathing deeply, a dancing whirl of wasps inside his head, his hands—dark spiders of bone and hide—resting on the ground, to either side.

"Do you consider it for good or evil, father?"

"It is not an evil thing, Diego Hun Ig. But evil will come with it. The time is not ripe for the land to return to our hands. We must wait more years before the return of Big Feathers. Nine times I have been within the wheel of the moon, and nothing indicated

this offer of lands to be the will of Big Feathers. I already knew, yes. I knew about it all."

"What will be the evil, father?" implored Diego with an anguished voice.

"More whites will come. There will be new struggles and new tributes. And great suffering."

Very far away, like waves pounding on a distant beach, the echo of drumming could be heard.

"Whites?"

"Yes, with demands and more demands. There will be a . . . very strange war. Unseen enemies, enemies we will never know, will rain death upon us. Those who understand will say nothing. To take away the lands, war will come against us from the sky, and we will never understand the reason, Diego. It will be a secret and a mystery."

"Father, father . . ."

"Many of our leaders will bow their heads and allow the whites to take our people and our money in tribute once again."

The midnight wind blew in his ears like the cold and leathery wings of a bat as Diego Hun Ig made his way home, stumbling at every instant in the dark, unable to find where to put his feet. The drums swelled the heart of the sky, the immensity of the night, within the circle of the mountains that surrounded his town with their emerald walls.

It was unthinkable for a *principal* of the Great Brotherhood to tell anyone of the secrets confided to him by the eldest elder of the town, and dawn was a long time coming for Diego. His wife had left him food: six tortillas above the dying embers of the fire, a jar of coffee nestled in the ashes, and a piece of dried meat on a plate nearby. He did not eat when he got home after midnight, but he got hungry before dawn. The food was cold by then, and his teeth colder. Around him everything was cold, cold and damp. He thrust his hand into the ashes, so much did he want a glove, and his eyes observed that the remaining, tiny embers spilled between his fingers like rubies without burning him. He thought it odd.

The sound of drums continued. The steady, sleepy rhythm made him think for a moment that the sun might never rise, and that everything—stars, waters, hearts—might simply stop, suspended in

time. The sleeping birds might never awaken to greet the rising sun, and everything, for a time, a time of innumerable years, might simply stop. Only old Tucuche would continue to breathe and await the Plumed One, the Bejeweled Lord of Green Feathers, who would finally descend to return the lands to them—finally, and this time, truly.

The ceremony was a simple one. The principal leaders of the Great Brotherhood, with their insignias and crosses, went out to receive the government commission that had come to distribute lands. At the head of the group walked Diego Hun Ig with his round silver sun on its silver staff, flanked by other principals. They practically had to push their way out through the crowd around the door of the assembly house of the brotherhood. Everybody wanted to see—young men and old men, women and children. Everybody wanted to see what the famous "distribution" would be like.

The members of the brotherhood formed a line to receive a piece of paper giving them title to a parcel of land. Some tried to kiss the hands that extended the title, but the commissioners withdrew their hands and would not allow it. They explained that they were doing no more than carrying out the program of the Revolution. Luis Marcos had run his sleepy sick-man's eyes over the ceremony without getting very close to it because he did not like the smell of Indians, and being in a crowd of them made him feel that he was drowning. He climbed on a pile of earth and stones at a construction site in front of the assembly house of the brotherhood to watch the ceremony.

Diego Hun Ig and the chief commissioner stood front-and-center with the other principals arrayed on either side. In front of them was a table covered with the national flag. Each Indian filed past to receive his title, and the commissioner gave a speech with so many and such dramatic gestures that the speech seemed to issue more from his sleeves than his mouth. Diego answered him briefly. Then the drums started again, the Indians played marimbas and fired rockets that exploded high in the air, and a military band played.

"Shall we play the national anthem?" the bandleader came to ask.

"No," replied the commissioner. "Play the anthem when we go to the lands being distributed at the moment when each of the new property owners occupies his parcel."

And that was what they did. The parcels had already been marked, and each Indian family went to stand on its new property, each family in sight of the next. The groups of property-owning parents, surrounded by their children and grandchildren, all dressed in their bright clothing, their faces shining with happiness, formed multicolored splotches on the green mountainside, some of them large and nearby, some tiny and far away. From a distance one could count hundreds and, eventually, thousands of them, and when all were in place, they sang the Guatemalan national anthem with one voice, not like poor and disinherited Indians, but like people with their feet on their own ground.

Months later, La Galla got a visit from one of her old schoolmates, whom she was astonished to see. They understood each other immediately, however. A simple comment about the "difficult situation" was all it took for them to know each other's mind and agree. La Galla's task would be merely to write down the names of all the local communists on a piece of paper.

"Are there a lot of them, Bérnar?" asked Bernardina's visitor, with her best long-toothed smile, remembering the high-school nickname.

"Everybody in the Great Brotherhood, how's that for trivia?"

"But brotherhoods like that are a church affair, dedicated to devotion of a patron saint or the Virgin. . . ."

"Right, it's the Brotherhood of Santo Domingo. They're the ones who got the land that was distributed around here. They call it the Great Brotherhood."

"They have infiltrated everything. But they're not going to enjoy things for long because our plans are already in place, and that's why, remembering how your daddy died, I came to talk to you. Our people are making lists of communists for every locality, so that not a single one escapes."

When her visitor left, La Galla's eyes got hard. Amid her soft features, those two dark coins fixed their gaze on a single point, never wandering.

Luis Marcos entered with a young man who carried a large camera and said he was a journalist.

"He's the son of a friend of mine," explained Marcos, and turning to the journalist, he added: "I worked with your father on the boundary-survey commission. That's where I got this cold that never goes away. . . ." He coughed. "And how's your father?"

"Father died three years ago."

"I didn't know. You can't imagine how sorry I am. We were such good friends."

"Is he going to interview somebody?" said La Galla, prompt and curious. "Who's he going to interview, unless it's the Indians?"

"It's the Indians that I'm coming to interview," said the journalist, looking at the tip of his shoe, as he frequently did when speaking.

And, accompanied by Marcos, he marched off in search of the head of the Great Brotherhood, Diego Hun Ig.

They called from the gate in front of the house, through the ample fenced-in yard shaded with fruit trees, asking if the owner were at home. A small woman's form appeared, Hun Ig's daughter. She quickly covered her face behind her hands. They asked for Diego's whereabouts.

"He is home," answered the girl uncertainly.

"Then run tell him a man's here to see him. . . ."

"I'll tell him," she said and vanished.

Then the figure of the principal appeared, his hair combed with pomade, his shirt very clean, his calf-length pants embroidered, his sandals new.

He approached and said hello to Marcos. They told him that the journalist was going to interview him. They had to explain what that meant: "ask a few questions."

"He's not with the police?" objected Diego.

"What a brute!" said Marcos. "A newspaper reporter, you know, the kind that writes for the newspapers? Understand?"

"I understand," he said, and addressed the younger man: "And what do you want to ask?"

"Let us inside first," said Marcos.

"Doesn't matter," said the journalist, who had not spoken until then. "The interview has more character this way." He could just

imagine: communist leader interviewed, an exclusive for *Visiones* magazine, international edition.

"If you would like, of course you can come in," said Diego stepping out of the doorway.

"No, no, I don't want to bother you. Just two or three questions. Are you a communist?"

Diego did not know the word. His daughter, bringing with her the fragrance of verbena, came to stand at his side, and six other children of a variety of sizes also appeared to surround their father.

"What's that mean?" It was Diego's turn to ask.

"It's uh . . . free love, having a lot of women," Marcos explained, "and turning over your children to the state."

"I've got just one woman and these children," said Diego, confusing a Spanish gender distinction in even so simple an utterance. "The big ones go to school, and I'm going to send all of them so that all will learn."

"That's it, communism," clarified Marcos. "You want to turn your children over to the state."

"Well, I don't know, but I want to send them to school to learn to read."

"Tell me, please," said the journalist, "if, now that your brotherhood has received land, you plan to buy a tractor and other equipment and build a silo."

"Yes, sir, that's just what we want to do."

"Fine," chortled the freckle-faced Marcos, "that's just fine."

"Write this down," said the Indian, with a different attitude. "Now that we're all property owners with land of our own, we're going to get rich and have money."

"Just one more question. Is what you have just yours or does it belong to everybody?"

Diego answered instantly:

"Mine, just mine. Everybody's got their own. Now, what's going to be everybody's is the image of our patron saint, Santo Domingo, which the brotherhood commissioned three months ago."

"And the tractor and the silo?"

"All that will belong to everybody, too, sure, like the image of Santo Domingo. Everybody will contribute, sure."

"There you go," said Marcos. "Communism comes from the idea of community ownership."

"Whatever it is, the land belongs to individual families. The land that they gave me is mine and only mine and nobody is going to take it away from me. That's why they gave it to me."

And it was in that very spot that the guns later cut down Diego Hun Ig. A time of great suffering for the Indians. La Galla, with the support of Luis Marcos, not only supplied a list of all the supposed communists in the locality, but also gave the mercenary invaders a guided tour, pointing out houses. In the meeting house of the Great Brotherhood the invaders set up a sort of tribunal chaired by La Galla, and the henchmen that arrived from far away blindly obeyed her orders to cleanse the village and the surrounding countryside.

After the first day of killing members of the brotherhood, La Galla collapsed on her bed without taking off her scarf or removing the combs that adorned her hair, without turning on the light, and in the dark she said to Luis Marcos, who stood at the door, locking it:

"Let them try to play their drums . . . now . . . the drums . . . can shut up. I order it."

Marcos did not reply. He stood there in the dark not knowing whether to turn on the light, unsettled by the tone of her voice, which was unusual, anguished, and violent.

Each of them turned toward the other in the dark, two fluttering shadows.

"The drum," shouted La Galla. "The drum! Are you hearing it?"

He heard nothing but did not say so.

"Go tell those damned Indians to make less noise! Orders of La Galla, Bernardina Coatepeque. Kill the owners of those drums. Are you listening to me?"

"I'll go . . ."

"Me, too . . ."

He went out, with La Galla right behind him, her face transformed by visions, raising her skirt to her knees as if she were wading through a shallow river, screaming for the drums to stop. The village smelled of gunpowder and blood. Only the two of them

were in the street. The bodies of a number of Indians still lay unburied. They tripped over them.

Then a sound of drums made "Freckles" think that he, too, was losing his mind. They were in the town square, not far from the door of the meeting house of the Great Brotherhood, when he heard drums, huge, enormous drums in the sky, rumbling through the clouds.

Quickly he realized that they were airplanes. He tried to hold on to La Galla and squeeze her against his ribs, but she was stronger than him, bag of bones that he was, and she barely brushed the two-day growth on his cheek as she got away.

"Galla, don't worry, they're the airplanes . . . the airplanes of our allies . . . bombing. Those aren't the Indians' drums. They're the gringos' airplanes! Galla!"

Tucuche, the eldest elder, climbed to the edge of the Quebrada de Melgarejo to look around at the sky. His hands of hide-covered bone grasped at the air, at something invisible in the air, like a fluid, and when he had taken it to himself, his entire body turned green.

"Diego Hun Ig," he said, speaking to the absent dead man who remained just as alive for Tucuche as the water, the sun, and the air. "Now they don't hang us, they shoot us. Now the disaster is complete. Many have been killed secretly in villages, on roads. It is not yet time for the land to return to our hands, but the time will come. . . ."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed La Galla in the village square, snapping her whip. "I thought they were drums, but they're airplanes. I like gringos and how they shut up the drums with their airplanes! Ha, ha, ha! Indian idiots, trying to use rawhide-covered drums against modern warplanes!"

The next day, the sons of Diego Hun Ig all went to work on the highway, without pay, without food. Diego's daughters carried them lunch in baskets. That is when the road boss, Cirilo Pilches, went after one of the daughters and took her by force. "Indian communist," he said as he raped her. "This is the free love that your father wanted to proclaim around here. Now you can have children for the state, because that's what your daddy wanted, he wanted you all to belong to the state. So here's for your tractor and your silo. . . ."

The Indian girl hardly resisted. She just let him do it, like an animal. The road boss, on the other hand, was a person. He had a military rank, two pistols, and a sword. He was valiant, a distinguished hero. After they triumphed over a bunch of defenseless peasant drummers, the gringo bombardiers had decorated him. Satisfied, he walked away from his victim, who left without picking up the remains of the broken dishes, and returned to his job of watching over the forced laborers doing road work. In his back pocket, he carried the most recent issue of *Visiones*, which he continued reading. . . .

"The Communist ringleader Diego Hun Ig, fearing, no doubt, that we would discover Marxist literature and pictures of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao-Tse Tung in his house, met us in the doorway. And there, clutching a machine gun and surrounded by fierce dogs, he confronted the author of these lines, who had appeared in the company of a respectable man of the neighborhood, merely to ask a few questions . . ."

The sun came out again. High on the mountain, the matasano tree still swayed in the wind and spread its branches over its always-green hollow. The golden, ashen green of the matasano leaves contrasted with the emerald green of the hollow below. Beginning with those shades of green, now that the eyes of Diego Hun Ig were forever closed, other eyes, other generations of eyes would continue to count the eleven further shades visible at that place, the Grandmother of Waters. Together, thirteen shades of green would be necessary to adorn the image of Our Lord of the Quetzal Feathers when, on a certain one of nine mornings, he returned to make his definitive distribution of lands to his Indian drummers.

Analyzing the Sources: *How does the author help readers to understand the mentality of people such as "La Galla" as well as villagers such as Diego Hun Ig? Why was it so necessary to brand the people who wanted land reform as communists?*

MEMORY OF FIRE

Eduardo Galeano

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano (born 1940) was another of the many Latin American writers presenting a sharp anti-imperialist vision of US intervention in Latin America during the Cold War. Like many other artists and intellectuals, Galeano spent years in exile because of his leftist allegiances. Galeano's most influential works, The Open Veins of Latin America *(1971) and* Memory of Fire *(1986), are "works of remembering," history written with fiery conviction and a literary freedom of style. The excerpt that follows, from the second of those works, gives an overview of the 1954 Guatemalan intervention from a top-down perspective.*

1953: Boston
United Fruit

Throne of bananas, crown of bananas, a banana held like a scepter: Sam Zemurray, master of the lands and seas of the banana kingdom, did not believe it possible that his Guatemalan vassals could give him a headache. *"The Indians are too ignorant for Marxism,"* he used to say, and was applauded by his court at his royal palace in Boston, Massachusetts.

Thanks to the successive decrees of Manuel Estrada Cabrera, who governed surrounded by sycophants and spies, seas of slobber, forests of familiars; and of Jorge Ubico, who thought he was Napoleon but wasn't, Guatemala has remained part of United Fruit's vast dominion for half a century. In Guatemala, United Fruit can seize whatever land it wants—enormous unused tracts—and owns the railroad, the telephone, the telegraph, the ports, and the ships, not to speak of soldiers, politicians, and journalists.

Sam Zemurray's troubles began when President Juan José Arévalo forced the company to respect the union and its right to strike. From

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Source: Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire, Volume III: Century of the Wind*, trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 149–54, 157.

bad to worse: A new president, Jacobo Arbenz, introduces agrarian reform, seizes United Fruit's uncultivated lands, begins dividing them among a hundred thousand families, and acts as if Guatemala were ruled by the landless, the letterless, the breadless, the *less*.

1953: Guatemala City
Arbenz

President Truman howled when workers on Guatemala's banana plantations started to behave like people. Now President Eisenhower spits lightning over the expropriation of United Fruit.

The government of the United States considers it an outrage that the government of Guatemala should take United Fruit's account books seriously. Arbenz proposes to pay as indemnity only the value that the company itself had placed on its lands to defraud the tax laws. John Foster Dulles, the secretary of state, demands twenty-five times that.

Jacobo Arbenz, accused of conspiring with communists, draws his inspiration not from Lenin but from Abraham Lincoln. His agrarian reform, an attempt to modernize Guatemalan capitalism, is less radical than the North American rural laws of almost a century ago.

1953: San Salvador
Dictator Wanted

Guatemalan General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, distinguished killer of Indians, has lived in exile since the fall of the dictator Ubico. Now, Walter Turnbull comes to San Salvador to offer him a deal. Turnbull, representative of both United Fruit and the CIA, proposes that Ydígoras take charge of Guatemala. There is money available for such a project, if he promises to destroy the unions, restore United Fruit's lands and privileges, and repay this loan to the last cent within a reasonable period. Ydígoras asks time to think it over, while making clear he considers the conditions abusive.

In no time word gets around that a position is vacant. Guatemalan exiles, military and civilian, fly to Washington to offer their

services; others knock at the doors of US embassies. José Luis Arenas, "friend" of Vice President Nixon, offers to overthrow President Arbenz for two hundred thousand dollars. General Federico Ponce says he has a ten-thousand-man army ready to attack the National Palace. His price would be quite modest, although he prefers not to talk figures yet. Just a small advance . . .

Throat cancer rules out United Fruit's first preference, Juan Córdova Cerna. On his deathbed, however, Doctor Córdova rasps out the name of his own candidate: Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, trained at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas—a cheap, obedient burro.

1954: WASHINGTON

THE DECIDING MACHINE, PIECE BY PIECE

Dwight Eisenhower President of the United States. Overthrew the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran because it nationalized oil. Has now given orders to overthrow the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala.

Sam Zemurray Principal stockholder in United Fruit. All his concerns turn automatically into US government declarations, and ultimately into rifles, mortars, machine guns, and CIA airplanes.

John Foster Dulles US Secretary of State. Former lawyer for United Fruit.

Allen Dulles Director of the CIA. Brother of John Foster Dulles. Like him, has done legal work for United Fruit. Together they organize "Operation Guatemala."

John Moors Cabot Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Brother of Thomas Cabot, the president of United Fruit.

Walter Bedell Smith Under-Secretary of State. Serves as liaison in "Operation Guatemala." Future member of the board of United Fruit.

Henry Cabot Lodge Senator, US representative to the United Nations. United Fruit shareholder. Has on various occasions received money from this company for speeches in the Senate.

Ann Whitman Personal secretary to President Eisenhower. Married to United Fruit public relations chief.

Spruille Braden Former US ambassador to several Latin American countries. Has received a salary from United Fruit since 1948. Is widely reported in the press to have exhorted Eisenhower *to suppress Communism by force in Guatemala.*

Robert Hill US ambassador to Costa Rica. Collaborates on "Operation Guatemala." Future board member of United Fruit.

John Peurifoy US ambassador to Guatemala. Known as *The butcher of Greece* for his past diplomatic service in Athens. Speaks no Spanish. Political background: the US Senate, Washington, DC, where he once worked as an elevator operator.

1954: BOSTON

THE LIE MACHINE, PIECE BY PIECE

The Motor The executioner becomes the victim; the victim, the executioner. Those who prepare the invasion of Guatemala from Honduras attribute to Guatemala the intention to invade Honduras and all Central America. *The tentacles of the Kremlin are plain to see,* says John Moors Cabot from the White House. Ambassador Peurifoy warns in Guatemala: *We cannot permit a Soviet republic to be established from Texas to the Panama Canal.* Behind this [fuss] lies a cargo of arms shipped from Czechoslovakia. The United States has forbidden the sale of arms to Guatemala.

Gear I News and articles, declarations, pamphlets, photographs, films, and comic strips about communist atrocities in Guatemala bombard the public. This educational material, whose origin is undisclosed, comes from the offices of United Fruit in Boston and from government files in Washington.

Gear II The Archbishop of Guatemala, Mariano Rossell Arellano, exhorts the populace to rise *against communism, enemy of God and the Fatherland.* Thirty CIA planes rain down his pastoral message over the whole country. The archbishop has the image of the popular Christ of Esquipulas, which will be named Captain General of the Liberating Brigade, brought to the capital.

Gear III At the Pan-American Conference, John Foster Dulles pounds the table with his fist and gets the blessing of

the Organization of American States for the projected invasion. At the United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge blocks Jacobo Arbenz's demands for help. US diplomacy is mobilized throughout the world. The complicity of England and France is obtained in exchange for a US commitment to silence over the delicate matters of the Suez Canal, Cyprus, and Indochina.

Gear IV The dictators of Nicaragua, Honduras, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic not only lend training camps, radio transmitters, and airports to "Operation Guatemala," they also make a contribution to the propaganda campaign. Somoza calls together the international press in Managua and displays some pistols with hammers and sickles stamped on them. They are, he says, from a Russian submarine intercepted en route to Guatemala.

1954: Guatemala City
The Reconquest of Guatemala

Guatemala has neither planes nor anti-aircraft installations, so US pilots in US planes bomb the country with the greatest of ease.

A powerful CIA transmitter, installed on the roof of the US embassy, spreads confusion and panic: the Lie Machine informs the world that this is the rebel radio, the Voice of Liberation, transmitting the triumphal march of Colonel Castillo Armas from the jungles of Guatemala. Meanwhile, Castillo Armas, encamped on a United Fruit plantation in Honduras, awaits orders from the Deciding Machine.

Arbenz's government, paralyzed, attends the ceremony of its own collapse. The aerial bombings reach the capital and blow up the fuel deposits. The government confines itself to burying the dead. The mercenary army, *God, Fatherland, Liberty*, crosses the border. It meets no resistance. Is it money or fear that explains how Guatemala's military chiefs could surrender their troops without firing a shot? An Argentine doctor in his early twenties, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, tries in vain to organize popular defense of the capital: he doesn't know how or with what. Improvised militias

wander the streets unarmed. When Arbenz finally orders the arsenals opened, army officers refuse to obey. On one side of these dark, ignoble days, Guevara has an attack of asthma and indignation; on another, on midnight after two weeks of bombings, President Arbenz slowly descends the steps of the National Palace, crosses the street, and seeks asylum in the Mexican embassy. The army of Castillo Armas takes over Guatemala.

1954: Guatemala City
Newsreel

The archbishop of Guatemala declares: *"I admire the sincere and ardent patriotism of President Castillo Armas."* Amid a formidable display of gibberish, Castillo Armas receives the blessing of the papal nuncio, Monsignor Genaro Verrolino.

President Eisenhower congratulates the CIA chiefs at the White House: *"Thanks to all of you. You've averted a Soviet beachhead in our hemisphere."*

The head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, assigns to a *Time* journalist the job of framing Guatemala's new constitution.

Time publishes a poem by the wife of the US ambassador to Guatemala. The poem says that Mr. and Mrs. Peurifoy are *optimistic* because Guatemala is no longer *Communistic*.

At his first meeting with the ambassador after the victory, President Castillo Armas expresses his concern at the insufficiency of local jails and the lack of necessary cells for all the communists. According to lists sent from Washington by the State Department, Guatemala's communists total seventy-two thousand.

The embassy throws a party. Four hundred Guatemalan guests sing in unison "The Star-Spangled Banner."

1955: Guatemala City
One Year after the Reconquest of Guatemala

Richard Nixon visits this occupied land. The union of United Fruit workers and five hundred thirty-two other unions have been banned by the new government. The new penal code punishes with

death anyone who calls a strike. Political parties are outlawed. The books of Dostoyevsky and other "Soviet" writers have been thrown into the bonfire.

The banana kingdom has been saved from agrarian reform. The vice president of the United States congratulates President Castillo Armas. For the first time in history, says Nixon, a communist government has been replaced by a free one.

Analyzing the Sources: *The importance of anticommunism is clear in all the readings for this chapter. What other factors, revealed here, clearly influenced the US decision to engineer the overthrow of the Guatemalan government in 1954?*

Chapter 9

GUERRILLA WARFARE

The triumph of the 1959 Cuban Revolution suggested to revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries alike that guerrilla warfare would shape the political future of Latin America. Insurgent groups, both rural and urban, soon appeared in virtually every country of the region. Meanwhile, the armed forces of Latin American countries had entered into firm alliances with the US military, which encouraged, aided, and advised their counter-insurgency operations.

While inspired by a Marxist analysis of social conflict and by a sense of participating in a global process, Latin American insurgents believed themselves to be, above all, reenacting a centuries-old struggle against imperialism. That is why many of them took the names of past rebels whose fight they envisioned themselves to be continuing. Uruguay's Tupamaros were remembering Tupac Amaru (the eighteenth-century rebel, as well as other historical rebels who called themselves Tupamaros), Nicaragua's Sandinistas were remembering a rebel leader of the 1920s who fought against US marines, and so on. Guerrilla warfare—an "asymmetrical" battle waged by "irregular" forces (without uniforms or a state organization behind them) against a "regular" army (with both)—has a long history in Latin America. The word *guerrilla* itself (meaning "little war") was coined in Spanish around 1810. Many of the patriot fighters who won independence from Spain were guerrillas, and Argentine insurgents of the 1970s were invoking independence-era guerrillas when they called themselves Montoneros. This sense of history was largely absent in the US State Department as it organized a hemispheric counter-insurgency war against Latin American guerrilla movements.