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INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN GUATEMALA

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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For 30 years Guatemala has faced the menace of communist insurgency. The taking of Cuba by Fidel Castro joined with the communist strategic doctrine for world domination, plus the political, economic and social problems and crises prevailing in Guatemala, set the stage for Guatemala to be chosen for communism's next target. Nevertheless, the insurgency didn't succeed. The insurgency developed different ways of action in its political and military operations from its beginning to the present time. At each period the communists realized the strategic adjustments necessary as each effort was thwarted and defeated by the Guatemalan state. At the same time Guatemala adjusted with great flexibility to the different circumstances that the insurgent movement presented and learned to seize the initiative. Over time the threat has diminished from the most menacing and aggressive ever seen to a simple discomfort.

INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN GUATEMALA

INTRODUCTION

Thus developed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America appear to be much more vulnerable than Western Europe and North America to the current communist strategy of "peaceful coexistence" with its abandonment of global thermonuclear war as a road to communist victory and its main concentration on psychological warfare, economic penetration, political subversion, deft exploitation of colonial legacies and the many difficulties of early statehood, fomenting of civil strife and localized wars of national liberation. If, as the communist strategic doctrine maintains, the decisive battle with the strongest adversary is to be avoided with such an adversary, the United States has been isolated and encircled by overwhelming forces of communism than Asia, Africa and Latin America are precisely areas where such a strategy can best be applied at this stage of the east-west struggle.

Khrushchev

29th Congress, Soviet Communist Party, 1956

Since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the world has experienced the communist menace. Central America has experienced the intensification of communization efforts since the 1940's. In some cases like Cuba and Nicaragua the area governments have been defeated and forced to adopt that system; in other situations the struggle has continued without the insurgencies being able to impose the communist system upon the exist. To reverse the communist system toward another type has been generally impossible due to its dictatorial characteristic and alliances.

Guatemala's struggle began with efforts to defeat the subversive breakout in the 1960's and has continued to the present time. Within this struggle this study has identified three stages. These stages are based on the unchanging global aim of expansionism, special characteristics of the

insurgency strategy and the counterinsurgency measures the Guatemalan government applied.

- o Phase I: 1960 to 1969 - Breakout and quick victory versus the plan piloto strategy;

- o Phase II: 1970 to 1981 - The protracted war versus the enemy destruction strategy;

- o Phase III: 1982 to 1990 - The taking of Guatemala versus the rifles and beans strategy.

The following sections describe the subversion's actions as well as the counterinsurgency measures that throughout the Guatemalan government had to develop at each stage. Throughout the campaign, the government's aims were to reduce the threat, lead the country toward democracy, and provide the utmost well being and security for the nation.

GEOSTRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND GUATEMALA

The importance of Central America (CA), first recognized several centuries ago, increased in the 16th century when the building of an interoceanic canal was thought to make of CA one of the most wealthy regions of the world. Not until the 17th century did Martin Lobo propose this project to the Spanish crown, but he died without anybody to follow his efforts. The idea was revived some time later by Alexander Von Humboldt who recommended a canal through Honduras. Many CA leaders associated the canal idea with prosperity, believing that such a project would make of the isthmus a great center of commercial exchange. However, they realized that the project depended on foreign interests for its realization. During the rest of the 19th century British, Dutch, French and U.S. businessmen pursued a possible route through Nicaragua. Much of Central America's history in that century is centered on efforts to achieve an interoceanic connection.¹ In 1902 the United States

deployed troops on the isthmus without the consent of Colombia or Panama and made a treaty that Colombia refused to sign. The Bunau Varilla and Cromwell Company promoted the insurrection which brought to Panama its independence at the end of that year.

The United States soon recognized that independence and signed a treaty which in 1914 resulted in the opening of the canal.² Once the canal was functioning, the area acquired its present strategic importance. Although through much of its history the United States has taken its southern flank security for granted, the taking of Cuba by the communists in 1959 forced U.S. attention to Latin America that revealed threats to a number of vital U.S. interests.³ For instance, through CA and the Gulf of Mexico would pass 50 percent of the supply tonnage needed to reinforce the European front and 40 percent needed for East Asia in an emergency situation. To replace such lines of communication would represent major difficulty and high cost.⁴ During World War II the Germans sank 260 allied ships, threatening the logistics line, even though the allies used Cuba as an operations base. Now the Soviets have the advantage to operate under air defense from Cuba. Such operations could cover 13 maritime lines of communication crossing at 4 narrow sites highly vulnerable to interdiction.⁵

Until 1979 the Soviet Union was limited by a treaty signed with the United States in 1962 after the missile crisis, which limited the use of Cuba as a base to expand communist dominion in the hemisphere. The fall of Nicaragua made it available as a base of support for insurgencies in the area.

Guatemala is a strategic target of great value in the region. It occupies a geopolitical position adjacent to the gateway between the Caribbean and to the Pacific. It possesses the ideal sociopolitical characteristics to expand the insurgency activity. It borders on one or more countries assailed by the

same problems. Its colonial legacy, imperial experiences, and succession of authoritarian governments make it vulnerable to ideological polarization and anti-U.S. feelings. Its proximity to Mexico and the United States did not lead to any political closeness, and regionally there was a lack of leadership. Guatemala and Cuba are the ones that indirectly sustain the ideological struggle. Guatemala is isolated in some ways from other countries of the region due to human rights criticism. In contrast to the situation in El Salvador, U.S. concern for human rights abuses has forced a cessation of military aid to Guatemala. This lack of support threatens the loss of one of the major barriers to communist domination of Central America. The region's importance has been recognized by Mexico and Venezuela which supply its oil at concessionary prices and through collaboration and assistance in the pacification of the area.

BACKGROUND

Guatemala is the most populous country with 9,000,000 inhabitants, and the third largest in Central America with 42,000 square miles of land. Guatemala's population is growing at a rate of 2.6 percent a year. It is also the most heterogeneous culturally, with over 50 percent of the people being Indians who speak over 20 different dialects.

The conquest in 1523 and subsequent colonization of Guatemala by Spain from 1520 to 1820 imposed a semi-feudal system based on large handholdings and labor exploitation. During three centuries Guatemala was plundered of its resources and governed authoritarily. The society was elitist and divided into two stratas: The high and low, rich and poor. The church and education system reinforced the social structures described. The independence in 1821 didn't change the structure, system or institutions of three centuries. The political activity was developed around the liberals, European ideas, and the

conservators of the status quo. These parties differed sharply over the state's role and its relationships with the church.

The struggle between liberals and conservatives ended in 1871 when a liberal revolution led by Justo Rufino Barrios took power and realized several political, economic, social and military reforms. Barrios introduced the coffee plantations and experimented with cotton, which created a foreign oriented entrepreneurial elite and introduced a new order that slowly began to affect the peasants.⁶

From 1898 to 1944 the republican governments of Estrada Cabrera and later of Jorge Ubico had a modern vision of the importance of economics but reversed the process that liberals had adopted from European examples. Nevertheless, the portrait of a modern society began to develop. During the Cabrera period and that of Ubico, the church retook its former role as a vestige of the colonial regime and perhaps became more conservative than before.⁷ However, in some ways the government opposed the church politically and economically, breaking the parallel authority that it claimed. The Ubico era showed two stages. From 1931 to 1937 his "Progressive" program restructured the sociopolitical and economic life of Guatemala, gaining him an enormous base of popularity. Ubico established the providad law in 1931. In an unusual effort toward social reform Ubico also established the vagrancy law, which required the citizen owners of lesser farms--15/16 manzanas of land--to work in the state farms. That system provided people with an extra income, but also gave the state cheaper hand labor.⁸ From 1937 to 1944, Ubico's "personalism and continuism" program continued. Through a fraudulent plebiscite, Ubico was proclaimed president for another period. In that time the United Fruit Company's investments increased, though as U.S. interests. There were

improvements in road communications, and German investments in coffee plantations. Those German farms were nationalized during World War II.⁹

Ubico was forced to resign in July 1944 by a massive popular strike against his way of controlling the nation's business. The government was then presided over by General Federico Ponce Vaidez, who intended to continue with the former system. The murder of Alejandro Cordova, an antigovernment journalist, broke up the revolutionary movement which, with the army participation, deposed the Ponce regime in 1944.¹⁰

The liberal constitution of 1945 reestablished civil rights and limited the president's power. The next elected president was Dr. Juan J. Arevalo Bermejo.¹¹ Arevalo was a philosopher and politician with a socialist spirit who faced the challenges of the epoch in the socioeconomic and political areas. His reforms had popular acceptance, but high and conservative sectors considered them socialistic. Fears increased with the murder of Major Arana, a conservative who had served as army chief since the revolution of 1944. This murder brought dissatisfaction and opposition.¹²

In 1950, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz was elected president and promptly instituted some reforms, one of which was the Agrarian Reform law. Its purpose was to make idle lands available to any farmer for rent of 5 percent of annual production. Arbenz also intended the expropriation of uncultivated land and the formation of farms lesser than 150 hectares. The expropriation was paid in 25 years interest bearing bonus. In 1953 Arbenz declared the confiscation of 413,000 hectares--85 percent--of United Fruit Company's uncultivated land, a move the U.S. Department of State viewed as communist.¹³ High U.S. governmental influences turned against him. The situation worsened when Guatemala supported North Korea in the Korean War and the Soviet Union in the United Nations. Weapons acquisition from

Czechoslovakia added more internal instability among political parties and union strikes. Arbenz was overthrown with U.S. intervention through the CIA which supported Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas.¹⁴ With his ascension to power the Communist Party called the Labor Union Party, infiltrated into the governmental structure and turned undercover.

In October 1954, Colonel Castillo was confirmed as President through a plebiscite. He revoked the Constitution and with it the disputed laws. Much of the expropriated land was given back to its former owners. The leftist infrastructure was replaced by one of the right.¹⁵ The fall of Arbenz produced a severe change in Guatemalan political history, virtually eliminating the center forces and radicalizing the extremes. Control by the right benefited the upper class landowners, plantation operators, and foreign investors who felt themselves protected.

Castillo Armas was murdered in 1957. General Ydigoras Fuentes took over the Presidency from 1958 to 1963, a time of convulsive political turmoil affecting the entire hemisphere. Perhaps the most significant event was the takeover of Cuba by Fidel Castro. In 1960 Ydigoras agreed to permit the training of exiled Cubans on Guatemalan soil. These exiles trained for the Bay of Pigs cover operation executed by the United States.¹⁶ It failed. The same year guerrilla activity broke out in Guatemala. The first group were military officers, who fled to the mountains after an abortive coup and later joined with the Labor Union Party. With Castro's and later on Nicaragua's support the insurgency grew to represent a serious threat to Guatemala. The insurgency has been sustained by the regional communist aggression. Given the prevailing causes of social disaffection and the connection with international communism, the insurgency has resisted a political solution. This stalemate persisted until the end of the Cold War in 1989. Guatemala's achievement has

been to control the movement from becoming a threat from the military point of view. However, the terrorist activity continues directed at the destruction of economic infrastructure and maintaining political instability.

PHASE I: FROM 1960 TO 1969 PERIOD.

SITUATION AND INSURGENCY

Besides the domestic crises, the acceptance of an anti-Castro training base on Guatemala's soil in 1959 by Cubans exiles supported by the United States, caused disaffection within the army. This base was seen as a blow to national sovereignty. The army itself was affected by disagreements between the high and middle ranks over the way the country was led. All that gave rise to a frustrated coup on 13 November 1960, led by military officers Lieutenants Yon Sosa and Turcios Lima. The movement initially had a nationalist spirit.¹⁷ Its goal was to reestablish and improve stability and order. Once defeated, its members joined the Labor Union Party, creating the insurgency movement.⁸ After a brief exile in Cuba and Honduras, the insurgent leaders returned and in 1962 organized the MR-13--Rebel Movement of 13 November-- and FAR--Rebel Armed Forces.¹⁹

The foe's strategy was defined as "foco subversive," in which a small armed group would set up in the Zacapa area and, through combat with the army, would raise the revolutionary consciousness, knowledge and fighting skills of the rural peasant population.²⁰ That strategy had a more military than political vision, because by itself it did not generate a popular base. The political base was given by the PGT, but internal disagreements within the party due to different strategic concepts about the direction to follow, helped neither the continuity nor unity of the movement. Its war concepts about leadership of the masses was deficient as was the guerrilla war itself.

Combat actions were reduced to ambushes and raids, avoiding contacts with the army.²¹

The government's effective counterinsurgency campaign defeated the insurgent movement in 1967. Its leaders fled to Guatemala City and intensified terrorist and kidnapping activities.

THE GOVERNMENT

In 1963 Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia before the existing instability overthrew the Ydigoras government.²² Peralta defined a soft counterinsurgency campaign against the guerrillas. His vision was mostly aimed at the real sociopolitical and economic problems that faced the country. He treated the insurgents as mere bandits. Though the guerrillas were not a threat and the army was dealing successfully with them, from the political point of view it was important that the United States notice that Guatemala needed military aid. Peralta reinforced the army's request for that aid.²³

In 1966 Lic Julio Cesar Mendez took charge of the government and defined a counterinsurgency strategy which ran as part of a whole integrated action to achieve stability, development and progress in the country. The end to achieve was the country's stability especially in the east and the capital city where the fight showed the greatest effects.

Initially he decreed a general amnesty for politically connected misdemeanors, hoping that the rebels could be integrated into the constitutional order and find peaceful solutions to their demands. To bestow security to achieve people's tranquility was the security force's mission. The army was employed in search and destroy missions against the principal subversive foci. To achieve that goal it was necessary to raise the army's skill and training related to that new kind of fighting. The greatest need

was an efficient intelligence system to find the enemy's center of activity. The United States' military assistance was important to achieve this goal. The civic action program named "plan Piloto" ²⁴ was the basic program directed not just to improve the government's image through psychological operation, but also to provide aid and assistance for the construction of roads, potable water, electricity, health, irrigation systems and agricultural tools. The execution of that strategy, achieved by 1967, defeated the subversive movement. The government's action was very successful, helping the people learn to direct their demands to the central government. The civic action program was executed with paternalism and the individual didn't take active part in the program's development, even though their communities had the benefit. This new aim as part of counterinsurgency strategy was assisted by the "Alliance for the Progress" aid given to Guatemala.²⁵

PHASE II: FROM 1970 TO 1981 PERIOD.

SITUATION AND INSURGENCY

The Central American Common Market (CACM) in the 1960's permitted certain industrial and agroindustrial based in the infrastructure and banana production were diversified by the penetration of transnational monopoly capital in the oil industry and nickel. Consequently, some changes occurred, national investments were distributed in agricultural industry, commerce and finance. The CACM energized the intraregional commerce which grew 2 1/2 times more than the rest of the world in those years and doubled per capita income.²⁶ Guatemala exported 85 percent of its products through the CACM. New roads and harbor infrastructure were built, telephone and electric needed were met, advances were made in education and health. The centers of traditional power lost hegemony under the ideological changes. The society

was made more complex. New middle groups emerged, especially in the fast growing cities, but at the same time the separation between wealthy and poor persisted and in most cases worsened.²⁷ The Salvador and Honduras War in 1969, Nicaragua's 1972 and Guatemala's 1976 earthquakes, the fall of the value of the principal export products, the oil price increases in the 1970's and finally Nicaragua's fall into the Soviet orbit, affected progressively the CACM, finally making it useless.

In 1975 Guatemala's reactivation of its claims over Belizean territory led the United States to limit its assistance, fearing that Guatemala would take military action to recover this territory from the British occupation.²⁸ Also requirements for Guatemala to meet certain human rights demands and conditions in order to get security assistance, made Guatemala reject such aid. In 1977, the United States withdrew its assistance. This situation opened a new opportunity for the insurgent's aspirations, making more viable their triumph. The opportunity increased when Nicaragua was taken by the Sandinistas in 1979.²⁹

The sociopolitical environment by 1981 became nearly critical. Terrorist actions had harmed the economy seriously. A significant impact is the international slander campaign, which caused tourism, a strong source of foreign exchange income, to be paralyzed. Government authorities and development projects were systematically attacked and destroyed.³⁰

At the end of the 1960's some subversive leaders left Guatemala and others took refuge in the capital city. At the time the FAR was declining, a second generation of insurgent parties was formed from the left and dissidents of FAR and FGT. Although it is difficult to establish a unified rebel strategy due to each group's different ideological conception about how to run the

struggle,³¹ generally some facts can be defined which directed the insurgent's efforts.

The objectives remained to take the country's power by armed struggle. The means chosen were creating instability in the administrative and political order, subverting the population, producing economic bankruptcy, and achieving international isolation.

Contrary to the previous experience of the "foco subversive" in the 1960's,³² the new approach worked principally in the political field. This clandestine organizational work began with the formation of the two most important parties: EGP 1971 which appeared in 1972 and ORPA--Organization of the Armed People--formed in 1971 and appearing in 1979.³³ The groups had success and by the end of the 1970's had infiltrated 80 percent--18 of the 22 departments--of the national territory.

The strategy of taking power rapidly was changed for one of the protracted war³⁴ that gave enough time to achieve a very efficient organization and political indoctrination. The insurgency was projected toward rural area--Indians and peasants--as well as the urban areas. Its infiltration methods secured an ample social base, able to act in all strata of Guatemalan society: governmental and nongovernmental institutions, commerce, education, cooperatives, universities, the unions and the Church.³⁵ The earthquake in February 1976 left 25,000 dead and many others wounded and around a million homeless, a situation that enabled the rebels to expand their organization free of military pressure because for three and one half months the army was employed in the clean up and rebuilding. The leadership of the insurgency comprised intellectuals, Marxists, and students surviving from the 1960's insurrections³⁶ who defined doctrinaire conceptions of development which were used as a means to approach communities, both internal and international.

The insurgents outlined a political program that included the end of repression, social and economic reform, land distribution, free elections and free political and religious association.³⁷

The leadership was strengthened by religious leaders coming from the Maryknoll and Jesuit orders--mostly foreigners³⁸--, who basically supported themselves on the liberation theology, and used the existing communal organizations to form new ones in the guise of unions. Its military and political infrastructure provided an effective means to get intelligence, and enable it to know some counterinsurgency activities. Thus military operations were also an important resource to obtain enough recruits to fill their ranks.

At the end of 1981 insurgents were already prepared to declare the western region of the country "liberated territory." They hoped to achieve international recognition especially from the non-democratic countries. A government military offensive drove them to flight toward Mexico, taking with them the civilian population, some who were part of their organization, others who were deceived and others who were forced. Forty-five to fifty thousand people were moved to Mexican soil, to remain clandestinely organized, serving as the base of support and supplies for the insurgent groups.³⁹

THE GOVERNMENT

In 1970 General Carlos Arana received the presidency. After the insurgent movement was defeated, the situation remained relatively calm, except for some terrorist activity. To encourage popular participation through peaceful means, Arana tolerated the existing of reformist groups. In 1974 General Kjell Laugeroud succeeded Arana in the presidency. His election was perceived as fraudulent by the population and other political parties. Much as Arana

had, he permitted even more freedom to the formation of political organizations.

The interval allowed the various political groups to be infiltrated and manipulated by the subversives, who converted them into part of the rebel organizations. Other than the government development plans, no governmental counterinsurgency strategy was articulated. The army was employed in search and destroy missions against insurgent units. To improve its professionalism the Military Studies Center was created in 1975. The center aimed to prepare the officers beyond their military subjects in political, social and economic subjects, so they would be more concerned about the current national problems. Also created was a counterinsurgency school. When assistance from the United States was withheld, Guatemala turned to other areas for help, including Europe, Middle East and Asia. Guatemalan activities were centered around military operations. At the end of 1981 a major military operation was executed to expel from the northwest the insurgents. Probably this operation was the base for the successive actions, that integrated with the other, elements of national power changed the dimensions of counterinsurgency strategy.

PHASE III: FROM 1982 TO 1986 PERIOD.

The 1982 presidential election voting selected General Anival Guevara. The population and political parties perceived the election as a fraud. That raised the instability level. On 23 March of the same year, the army deposed the government, in turn preventing national collapse.⁴⁰ The military government led by General Efraim Rios defined a strategy with the general purpose of:

Achieving reconciliation of the Guatemalan family, benefiting the peace and national concord, proposing a secure and calm environment based on total respect for human rights; reestablishing the constitutional order, so that exercising a true democracy, there would be respect for political participation, avoiding frustrations, and thus pursue the necessary stability for the economic power to generate the welfare required.

National Objectives:

- o Pursue a peaceful solution to its territorial dispute with Great Britain, which both nations' interests find a common benefit;
- o Pursue internal peace and security;
- o Institutionalize democracy; and
- o Pursue economic development.

The "government's 14 fundamental points" described the policies to achieve the national objectives. They can be summarized in the following paragraphs:

Administrative:

Reorganize the governmental administrative system providing better control and efficiency in the development of programs, assisting in the elimination of corruption, instructing the state employees and officers on their duty to attend and serve the citizen.

Legal:

Restructure the judicial system, for its modernization, working based on norms of morals, ethic and professionalism. Moreover, reestablish the legal system so the citizens learn and practice their rights and responsibilities in a democratic system, all within a framework based on an absolute respect for human rights, to provide individual and collective security and tranquility.

Social:

Direct efforts to achieve national reconciliation, through the recuperation of dignity and nationalism, establish a national spirit, create the bases to integrate and make participant all the ethnic groups of Guatemala.

Economic:

Raise the people's quality of life, diminish the inequities, expand private enterprise and investment, diminish controls, centralization and state meddling; extend the opportunities to attract and encourage foreign investment.

Political:

Restructure the electoral system, to favor the free political competition existing in a democracy, respect the results as the product of the popular will. Stimulate the participation of all groups with a reformist and nationalist direction.

In the long-term the direction of the effort was aimed to achieve the objectives described through four stages:

- o Security and development;
- o Peace consolidation;
- o Reestablishing the constitutional order; and
- o National stability.

For the execution of the operative strategy plans were defined and executed in six months to a year. These were successively articulated.

CAMPAIGN PLANS

Victory 82:

Its objective was to pursue the security and welfare of the population through the following actions:⁴¹

- o Isolating the insurgents from the population;
- o Rescuing the population that was forced to collaborate with the insurgents, the irregular local forces, popular resistance and sympathizers; and
- o Combating the military units of the subversives.

Through military operations with a partial mobilization of the reserves the isolation campaign was pursued,⁴² assigning objectives and tactical dispositions dispersed throughout the country including the most hostile areas; pressing the guerrillas, preventing them from joining to form major units. At the same time they were prevented from obtaining support from the civilian population. The units kept an offensive, aggressive and quick deployment mentality to locate and destroy the guerrillas on their terrain. Command, control and direction of the operations were improved, emphasizing planning, execution and direction of the operations to achieve the political objectives. The units remained in the assigned areas, giving security and communicating with the population. To encourage the community and army relationship a Soldier Conduct Code of Laws, that included respect for the people, their properties, conduct of operations in populated areas, and especially the treatment of noncombatants, was issued.⁴³

The inhabitants of the conflicting areas had priority under a newly established program called "Food for Work," also known as Assistance for Conflicting Areas--APAC.⁴⁴ The communities exercised their will to organize for their community's defense with advice. Such organizations exercised the democratic process to elect their representatives and leaders, guaranteeing that their actions had community representation. These organizations provided their own defense and thus were the base for the realization of projects of development.⁴⁵ Also created were the interinstitutional coordinators, who

were organized at the national, departmental, municipal and local levels, and paralleled the administrative state organization with representatives of governmental, nongovernmental, private and religious organizations. These were able to plan, execute and speed the programs of socioeconomic development that were realized in those areas.⁴⁶

An amnesty decreed by the government settled the legal base to recover the ones willing to integrate to the normal life through the pacification process. Subsequent psychological operations added to that effort. With the experience of the 1960's civic action was given special attention so that the effort was directed to gain the people's will--a struggle for the people's mind and heart--providing security, supporting their own security efforts or advising them on matters of development. This activity was integrated into their administrative processes to make them more efficient.

Firmeza 83:

This plan's objective was to consolidate the peace. Its effort was directed to achieve the maximum level of security and the implementation of development. "Poles of Development" were established, integrating with major intensity the organizations of public service and thus increase the dynamic of the pacification process.⁴⁷ This effort gave continuity to plan Victory 82 and assured the extension of the success achieved. To increase security commands were increased from 9 to 22, one in each department, establishing a unit of battalion or larger in each.⁴⁸ Always in the most hostile areas a coherent program of development poles was executed, building within those areas "model villages" through the program "roofs, tortilla and work." In those villages displaced people were located. Three factors were integrated into the system: land, loans and technology. The government provided the loans to buy materials and people did work filling their basic needs.⁴⁹ The

program "Food for Work" had continuity in which people worked to build their houses and support their community. Also initiated was the rebuilding of houses which had been destroyed by insurgency action. To function within a legal frame, laws were passed that supported the new poles program. As the current of refugees and repatriated and displaced persons increased, legal procedures provided for their management and the care of their basic needs. The civic affairs units were increased to 11 more companies, increasing their training and the psychological operations capabilities.

Institutional Reencounter 84:

Once security conditions were established, this plan had the following objectives:

- o Return to constitutionality;
- o Continue reconstruction of the destruction wrought by the insurgency;
- o Resettlement of the displaced people;
- o Dynamize the activities in the poles of development;⁵⁰ and
- o Continue the military pressure against insurgent units.

In this stage, to strengthen the democratic spirit the most important success was the election of a National Constituent Assembly in July 1984, in which 72.66 percent of the eligible electorate cast ballots.⁵¹ This gave credibility and respect to the democratic process internally as well as internationally. The administrative decentralization was pursued through the interinstitutional coordinators to speed the realization of projects to achieve the greatest level of development given the proximity of giving up power. The projects grew in magnitude, constructing irrigation systems, improving agriculture through technology. Efforts increased to convince the refugees to return. As the process gained credibility the stream of refugees from Mexico and Honduras increased. These people were located on the

poles. All this strengthened the self-defense organizations, and thus the infrastructure for the people to acquire a normal life, and benefited the reconstruction. The army members that worked in public jobs began to retire in favor of civilians. These were familiar with government activities and able to secure a smooth and progressive transition to institutional reform.

Stability 85

Three objectives were pursued :⁵²

- o Increase the activities in all the elements of national power, to create the framework of security and confidence for the people to exercise their political will in the process, election and taking charge of the new government;

- o Actions to crease the environment of confidence that the electoral process would have the openness needed, encouraging all the citizens to support it with their active participation;

- o The actions to orient and prepare the army for the transition of the country's political conduct to the civilians, and the army's development in the future situation.

The consecutive actions for the 1986 and 1987 related to the army were directed to its strengthening, through the professional leadership in all its levels of command, its efficient administration and maximum maintenance of the existing resources.⁵³

CONCLUSIONS

Communism manipulated an internal insurgency with external support. The taking of Guatemala would achieve geopolitical and strategic benefits for the cause of international communism in Central America.

The respective governments from the 1960's to 1980's developed effective countersubversive strategies, which combined the full use of the elements of national power. The strategies recognized that with or without external aid, there exist real political causes for conflict that are not only military. Therefore, the countersubversion campaign was composed of tactical as well as "soft means of countersubversion." These were civic action, civil defense, psychological operations, population control, and control of resources and refugees.

Civic and military action provided economic and social assistance to alleviate the problems of the people as well as obtain their support. An amnesty allowed the rebels in arms to express their dissent through legal means. The commitment to build a more just society improved the human rights treatment and established reforms to construct a system based on democratic principles. A better judicial system and economic reforms for the common good were established.

The military means were employed effectively in pursuit of the campaign's political objectives. Instead of being used in a defensive forum for position and denial, or of strategic maneuver, the force was expanded and deployed throughout the national territory, especially in the most hostile areas, in response to the insurgent pressure in 1982. Michael A. Sheehan describes how the armed forces used the principle of mass in an unconventional way to counter an unconventional threat.⁵⁴

Presence favored the security and organization of the population and a preliminary phase to maneuver units in the search and destruction of the enemy armed forces structure. It also brought other benefits, spread out in company level units isolated from their headquarters, units with clear missions assigned, were decentralized to develop their own staff functions.

As they were immobile and without almost any reenforcement capabilities and threatened by large guerrilla forces, they were pushed to increase their combat power by mobilizing the civilian population into civil defense. All this created an intimacy with the people which favored the action of civil affairs as well as obtaining intelligence.

In 1986 an elected president took charge of the government, which makes us believe that so far the campaign has been successful, giving the people what they asked for--a legitimate government which could achieve their common aspirations of sovereignty and well-being.

As we witnessed the coming to power of a new government in 14 January 1991. From 10,000 to 12,000 guerrillas permanent military units estimated of the Guatemala'an National Revolutionary Unity and 100,000 local guerrillas sympathizers in 1981, still 800 armed guerrillas and 5,000 sympathizers remain in Guatemala. About 25,000 refugees provide cover and sanctuaries in Mexico. Their present activity aims to promote political instability through terrorist activities, also by indiscriminately destroying resources and economic infrastructure. Its involvement with the comun delinquency makes it difficult to differentiate between criminal and political violence. That makes us think that the insurgent leaders have lost some control of their units and their goals.

Soviet support stopped in 1989 and Cuba is facing more obstacles to aid insurgencies because Nicaragua is democratic. Negotiations with the insurgents through government initiatives are developing, giving hopes for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Even though the insurgents are not a military threat, the people of Guatemala through its government offered them a chance to work out their aspirations through the institutionalized political system. Guatemala faces an enormous challenge which is to fulfill the needs

and aspirations of its people. If we fail to achieve it, new and genuine insurgent organizations will emerge and will threaten the security of Guatemala.

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