

Bilateral

the movement. For example, the Marxist Independent General Confederation of Labour (CGTI) with its 12,000 members could not come to terms with the government-patronized General Confederation of Labour (CGT) whose 10,000 members openly supported the Somozas. Thus a monolithic opposition against the Somozas from this sector of the economy was impossible.

The position of the Church was also relatively weak as an opposing force. Historically the Church tended to take a permissive stance on all governmental activities. The Church came to accept the Somozas and the Liberals as defenders of the status quo. Monsenor Alejandro Gonzalez y Robleto was not respected by Nicaraguans as a result of his open support of the Somozas. Since the early 1970s, however, the Church has manifested a reversal of its crucially conservative image. A newer and more progressive clergy challenged the government on a number of issues. It refused to endorse Somoza's "continualismo"; his determination to remain in power even though his constitutionally designated term of office had expired. The new Archbishop of Managua, Monsenor Miguel Olando Bravo, openly denounced the regime in a number of pastoral letters and by boycotting official ceremonies. By 1979 the Church was committed to the overthrow of the president.

Effective opposition to Somoza first materialized in 1974 when the Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL) was formed. Initially UDEL included all opposition parties and labour unions but was gradually joined by business, the Church and many other groups which reflected an almost universal cross-section of Nicaraguan society. Somoza's grip on Nicaragua was not seriously threatened, however, until after the assassination of the outspoken publisher of *La Prensa*, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, in January 1978. Chamorro was a prominent political leader who only three months before his death had received the Columbia University Cabot Award for his journalistic contributions to the promotion of Inter-American co-operation. His assassination was the result of his declared intentions to "end the Somoza dictatorship and establish a regime in which pluralism would fit". The demise of Chamorro gave the Sandinistas the incentive they needed to speed up their militant activities and to galvanize all opposition groups against Somoza and the National Guard. They began by organizing a two-week general strike which virtually paralyzed Nicaragua and generated increasing support from the business communities. This activity gave the Sandinistas international visibility and focused world attention on the growing vulnerability of the Somoza regime.

One of the most successful "actions" undertaken by the Sandinistas resulted from President Carter's congratulation of the Somoza regime for its "improvement of local human rights." The guerrillas attacked

and occupied the National Legislative Palace in the centre of Managua, holding over a thousand bureaucrats and legislators hostage. Among the hostages were Somoza's cousin, Luis Pallais Debrayle, who was the deputy speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, and the president's nephew, José Somoza Abrego, the son of the former acting commander of the National Guard. Somoza conceded to a list of demands which further demonstrated the eroding strength of his government. This, in turn triggered a longer general strike and uprisings in most Nicaraguan towns and cities which ultimately forced Somoza to flee for his life.

Revolution

Interesting similarities can be isolated in the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. First, in both cases the guerrilla forces remained small in number, defeating a formidable military dictatorship protected by a large contingency of combat-ready troops well armed by the United States. Even the military strategies developed during the two revolutions reveal striking resemblances. The basic strategy of the rebels was to harass isolated army positions, withdrawing immediately and then preparing ambushes for the pursuing troops. During this period the guerrillas established friendly relations with the peasants and urban dwellers to acquire food and supplies and to make certain that the location of the guerrillas would not be divulged to the enemy troops. As with the case of Batista, the brutality of Somoza and the National Guard led to increased alienation of previously neutral citizens.

There are important differences as well. In the Nicaraguan insurrection the emphasis of the struggle was on urban terrorism, the guerrillas in the countryside playing only a secondary role. Castro, on the other hand, saw the priorities in the opposite order, with the urban resistance supporting the rural guerrillas through financing, recruitment and supply. Secondly, the Nicaraguan revolution ensued in the absence of a charismatic leader; while in the case of Cuba the personal magnetism of Fidel resulted in the people's following him.

International effects

What is significant about the Nicaraguan revolution from an international perspective is the example to other nations of yet another successful guerrilla strategy as an efficacious way to achieve political change and modernization. In Latin America this is perhaps a result of the intransigent position taken by the United States *vis à vis* reformist governments of the leftist variety. In all cases where left-wing governments have emerged in Latin America by democratic means — Guatemala, 1954, Chile 1970 — or nondemocratic means — Cuba, 1959 — the U.S. has intervened in the internal affairs of the country and attempted to overthrow the government. While President Carter